

# Seeking My King & His Kingdom

## Lesson #2 - Break Up Your Fallow Ground

Jeremiah and Hosea, Old Testament prophets, spoke to the children of Israel regarding their lazy, apathetic and disobedient service to God. These 2 passages of Scripture issue a challenge to us to commit to surrender and seek the Lord God with all our heart.

Jer. 4:3-4a ..."Break up your fallow [unplowed] ground and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, ..."

Note: God, through His prophet, had to rebuke His people, not only because they had left their prepared ground unused, but because they were actually sowing their seed on thorn-choked ground. They were turning to idols and forsaking God.

### A. The Fallow Ground

1. Fallow ground is ground that could be productive but is currently unusable.
2. It had in time past been plowed, fertile and sown with crops and yielded fruit.
3. But now it lies in waste and has been allowed to lie useless and unproductive.
4. It is a neglected field and does not know the travail of the plow.
5. It always remains the same - a plot of land overcome by weeds and inactivity.
  - a. Picture of stability - never does it change.
  - b. Never sees the miracle of growth or the wonders of the seed springing to life
  - c. Will never see fruit because it is afraid of The Plow and the pain it brings.
  - d. Puts up a fence to surround it and never lets the Farmer in to work the land.
6. If the ground is UNPLOWED, it is also BARREN as far as the farmer's needs are concerned. It does not produce what he needs for life.
7. Because it has not been plowed and tilled, it has become hard, full of ruts and yields nothing but weeds, thorns and thistles.
8. The hard ground prevents seeds from penetrating, germinating and growing to maturity.

Tozer: "The fallow field is smug, contented, protected from the shock of the plow and the agitation of the harrow. Such a field, as it lies year after year, becomes a familiar landmark to the crow and scavengers. They knew it was safe and there would be no plow in that field. Had it intelligence, it might take a lot of satisfaction in its reputation: it has stability; nature has adopted it; it can be counted upon to remain always the same, while the fields around it change from brown to green and back to brown again. Safe and undisturbed, it sprawls lazily in the sunshine, the picture of sleepy contentment."

It pays a terrible price for its tranquility; the curse of barrenness is stamped upon it. "Never does it feel the motions of mounting life, nor see the wonders of bursting seed, nor the beauty of ripening grain. Fruit it can never know, because it is afraid of the plow and the harrow."

Jeremiah: Break Up Your Unplowed Ground And Do Not Sow Among Thorns.

- They were sowing seed without preparing the soil and pulling out the thorns.

- The seed had little to no effect.

## B. Do Not Sow Among The Thorns - Thorns Choked the Plants

Mark 4:7 And some Seed Fell Among Thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

Thorns rob plants of essential nutrients so they cannot produce. Notice: no attention is given to weeding or removing the thorns. They are allowed to grow alongside the plant having access to the same nutrients and water supply. The weeds flourish, grow strong, overtake the plants and make them unfruitful.

Mark 4:18-19 "Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the Word; but the worries [cares] of this life, the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts [desires] for other things enter in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful."

Note: These thorns may represent sexual temptations and lust, self-indulgence, pride, anger, selfishness, a love of entertainment and recreation, addictions, greed, and other thorns. Each of these chokes the Word and has a devastating effect on the crop that God wants to grow in you and me.

My Life Reflects What I've Planted: Whatever you focus your attention on: grows. Careful attention must be given to the seeds you want growing in your life. Weed seeds can be planted unintentionally by whatever we take in. Life is full of distractions. Busyness is a terrible enemy! We fill our lives with activities. A lot of seeds are tossed our way during the day. Then when we are at home, it is easy to spend most of our time in front of a TV or a computer. If we do not root them up right away, they are also allowed a share of soil in which to grow.

By comparison, the time spent reading Scripture or meditating on God's word is minimal. The Word needs to dominate your thoughts to produce a fruit-bearing field.

How to Weed Your Garden If you let weeds grow wild they will sap vital nutrients from any Scripture you plant. However, if you continually plant the Word, then it will choke out and overtake the weeds keeping them from producing.

## C. The Fallow Christian Life

Amos 6:1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,

Amos prophesied during a time of prosperity that was also marked by corruption, immorality and complacency.

Complacent: Feeling of being satisfied with how things are; not wanting to make them better; self-satisfaction, especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual danger

- They were at ease with a false sense of security.
- Given to luxuries and material possessions
- Did not see impending danger of God's judgment

Truth: Many Christians today are at "ease in Zion."

- Lukewarm, lethargic and lulled to sleep by Satan
- Given to pursuit of luxuries and material possessions
- Fail to consider the coming judgment of God

### Fallow Life: Like Laodicea

1. Contented with himself and the fruit he once bore; Do Not Disturb
2. Religious; maybe evangelical
3. Smiles in tolerant superiority at revivals, self- searching, and the travail of fruit bearing.
4. Steady, "faithful," in his accustomed place (like the old field), but he is fruitless.
5. Proper church members: give to missions each year [certain amount that doesn't bite]; pray some; attend church; not bothered by anything spiritual
6. The curse of such a life is that it is fixed, both in size and in content. "To be" has taken the place of "to become." The worst that can be said of such a man is that he is what he will be.
7. They don't like the bite and sting of the plow.

He has fenced himself in, and by the same act he has fenced out God and the miracle.

- They don't like the bite and sting of the plow.
- No plow has gone into their soul. There is no fruit; no glory; no life.

Hosea 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy [unfailing love]; break up your fallow ground: for it is Time To Seek The LORD, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.

1. It is poor stewardship and a bad testimony for God's people to ignore His righteousness and fail to cultivate His grace in their lives. Complacent and unbroken heart
2. Instead they chose the philosophies and pleasures of the world.

Consider: We have far greater opportunities and privileges than ancient Israel. We have the complete Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit, yet our lives are even more cluttered with the thorny ground of worldliness and paganism than theirs.

"Break off your evil ways, repent of your sins, cease to do evil, and then the good seed of the Word will have room to grow and bear fruit."

Hear the Prophet's Command: Spiritually = *Let The Farmer Plow Your Field*

1. All Stumps Must Be Removed.

When the pioneers moved West, they began by logging the trees on their land and rooting out the stumps. It's hard work. You must dig down and cut each of the main roots with an axe, hatchet, or chainsaw. Then you attach a rope or chain to the stump and pull it out with a team of horses, oxen, truck, or winch. Finally, pile the stumps together and burn them.

Consider: What has been growing in my heart? Do I Have Root Rot? Hatred; bitterness; lust; greed; envy; critical spirit; judgmental... These must be rooted out so a new crop can be planted.

### The Plowed Field

The cultivated field has YIELDED itself to produce life and fruit.

1. The protecting fence has opened to admit the plow and yield to the farmer's hand.
2. The plow bites down into the ground and turns the ground over and finds pretty good soil.
3. Peace has been shattered by the shouting farmer and the rattle of machinery.
4. The plow cuts, tears, rearranges, disturbs the ground. It causes travail and pain.

Rewards await:

1. Soon the kind rains of God come upon the field. The seed begins to grow.
2. New things are born to grow and mature. The field becomes a green thing full of life.
3. The dormant powers are released which are necessary for fruitfulness.

### The Plowed Christian Life - Broken To Bring Forth Fruit

Tozer: It is a life which starts with a desire to draw closer to God, willing to change everything, to become fruitful. You cannot get fruit without first enduring the pain of The Plow.

1. Throws down the protecting fences and allows the plow of confession into the soul.
2. The stirring and conviction of the Holy Spirit + pressure of circumstances + distress of fruitless living = discontent with spiritual life > Humble myself & full of contrition
3. Word of God and His truth convict me; I desire to be right with God
4. Repentance Welcomes The Plow.
5. I confess my sins easily and am intentionally seeking the Lord.

Tozer: In their lives you will find no fences, no safety, but lives which know and accept the pain of The Plow. This life is, "Discontent, yearning, contrite, courageous obedience to the will of God: these have been bruised and broken until the soil it is ready again for the seed.

As always fruit follows the plow. Life and growth begin as God "rains down righteousness."

Stanley: "My brokenness is God's requirement for maximum usefulness."

### Miracles Follow The Plow - A. W. Tozer

1. The only way to power is to come out of hiding and take the danger-encircled path of obedience. Its security is its deadliest foe.
2. The power of God comes only where it is called out by the plow.
3. The Christian who fears the plow writes his own epitaph.
4. The Christian who uses the plow walks in the Spirit and the way of revival.
5. Ground broken by The Plow yields a fruitful, obedient life
6. Only the life that has been broken by THE PLOW will be able to heed the command to BECOME a Disciple and MAKE Disciples.

Luke 9:23 If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and MAKE DISCIPLES...

7. The life of the DISCIPLE is a miracle given to those servants who are empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Hand Of The Plow.
8. The miracles of grace, power and fruitfulness = result of a heart willing to be plowed.

Truth: Only the Hand Of The Plow can accomplish the miracle of A Transformed Life

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

<sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

II Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as By The Spirit Of The Lord.

Every believer who states: I am a follower of Jesus Christ is presented a choice.

The type of ground you choose will lead to two different outcomes.

1. Will it be fallow ground? A life without Biblical discipleship

2. Will it be ground ready for the painful upset of The Plow? Fruitful life of Discipleship

There is NO middle ground!

This dynamic seed [life of Jesus Christ] produces nothing on a path that's been trodden down by religion, by hypocrisy, by disobedience. When it falls upon that hardened path, it lies there in a heart of defiance, a heart that refuses to change. Week after week, you hear the Word of God; yet week after week, your marriage doesn't change; your lifestyle doesn't change; your ambition doesn't change. The reason they don't change: your heart is hard. Satan comes immediately. You hear the Word of God, and you go, "Yes!" but by the time you get to your car, you're in bondage again.

You need to heed Hosea's words: *"Break up that fallow ground. It is time to seek the Lord."*

Consider: If that is not your heart's desire, the problem is not the Word, your friends; your husband; or your job. The problem is your heart.

Truth: Good ground is a heart that is dead to self-will, ambition, pleasure and independence. When the Word enters good ground, it will produce fruit, thirty-, sixty-, and one hundredfold.

Finney: So much preaching and teaching is wasted because Christians will not break up their fallow ground. A preacher may wear out his life, and do very little good, while there are so many "stony ground" hearers, who have never had their fallow ground broken up. They are only half converted, and their religion is rather a change of opinion than a change of their hearts. There is mechanical religion enough, but very little that looks like deep heart-work."

God is the great Vinedresser. If you'll break up the additional fallow ground in your life, He will extend and enlarge your fruitfulness.

God's Power In Your Life Is Waiting On The Plow.

Plow Deep: Heartfelt Repentance And Confession [from Albert Finney's sermon 1600's]

1. Hardness In Your Heart: If you've been hurt in a relationship or by your father or mother or you may have sealed off an area of your life because it's just too painful.

2. Unbelief Lurking In Your Soul: Sometimes we have been hardened by unbelief. You prayed that a grandparent wouldn't die and your prayer wasn't answered. You've been out of work or have chronic illness that has taken its toll on your faith. You've come to the conclusion that God doesn't answer prayer — at least for you. The Hardness Of Unbelief must be faced squarely and broken up if God is to plant something new and fruitful in your heart.

### 3. Ingratitude

- a. Failed to thank God for His blessings, goodness, care, His mercy, longsuffering
- b. Failed to thank Him for His protection and guidance.

### 4. Lack of love to God

- a. What else absorbs your heart, thoughts and time? He is a jealous god.

### 5. Neglect of the Bible

- a. How long do I go without delighting in His Word? days, weeks, months?
- b. Is my reading just on my list of things to do?

### 6. Unbelief

- a. God has given us many precious promises.
- b. Have I virtually charged Him with "lying" because of my unbelief?

### 7. Neglect of prayer

### 8. Neglect of the means of His grace

9. The manner in which you have performed your "spiritual" duties - with lack of feeling and lack of faith in a worldly frame of mind, so that your words were nothing but the mere chattering of a wretch who did not deserve that God should feel the least care for him.

When you have fallen down upon your knees and "said your prayers" in such an unfeeling and careless manner that if you had been put under oath five minutes after, you could not have said for what you had been praying.

### 10. Lack of love for the souls of your fellow-men

You have stood by and seen them going right to hell, and it seems as though you did not care if they did go. How many days have there been, in which you did not make their condition the subject of a single fervent prayer, or display a glowing and devoted desire for their salvation?

### 11. Lack of care for the lost

Measure your desire for their salvation by the self-denial you practice, in giving of your substance to send them the Gospel. Do you deny yourself the unnecessary desires of life, such as tea, coffee? Do you cut back on your style of living, and hesitate not to deny yourself any inconvenience to save them? Do you daily pray for them in private?

12. Neglect without self-denial There are many professors of Christ who are willing to do almost anything in religion that does not require self-denial. But when they are required to do anything that requires them to deny themselves-oh, that is too much. They think they are doing a great deal for God, and doing about as much as He ought in reason to ask. They are not willing to deny themselves any comfort or convenience whatever for the sake of serving the Lord. Nor will they deny themselves the luxuries of life, to save a world from hell. They do not remember that self-denial is a condition of discipleship. They only give of their surplus wealth.

13. Worldly mindedness. What has been the state of your heart in regard to your worldly possessions? Have you looked at them as really yours-as if you had a right to dispose of them as your own, according to your own will?

14. Pride. Recall all the times you can, in which you have detected yourself in the exercise of pride. Vanity is a particular form of pride. How many times have you thought more and taken

more pains, and spent more time about decorating your body to go to Church, than you have about preparing your mind for the worship of God?

15. Envy. Look at the cases in which you were envious of those whom you thought were above you in any respect. Or perhaps you have envied those who have been more talented or more useful than yourself. It has been more pleasant for to you to dwell upon their faults than upon their virtues, upon their failures than upon their success.

16. Bitterness. Instances in which you have had a bitter spirit or harbored a grudge toward someone? How many times have you spoken of Christians in a manner completely lacking charity and love? Love always hopes for the best but count the times in which you suspected the worst.

17. Slander and gossip. The times you have spoken behind people's backs of the faults, real or supposed, of members of the Church or others, unnecessarily, or without good reason. You need not lie to be guilty of slander: to tell the truth with the design to injure is to slander.

18. Lying. Any form of designed deception. God call them LIES, and charges you with LYING, and you had better charge yourself correctly. How innumerable are the falsehoods perpetrated every day in business, and in social intercourse, by words and looks, and actions, designed to make an impression on others, for selfish reasons that is contrary to the truth.

19. Cheating. Set down all the cases in which you have dealt with an individual, and done to him that which you would not like to have done to you. God has laid down a rule in the case: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them." That is the rule. If you have not done so you are a cheat. Mind, the rule is not that you should do "what you might reasonably expect them to do to you: for that is a rule which would admit of every degree of wickedness. But it is: "As you WOULD they should do to you.

20. Hypocrisy. Set down the instances in which you have prayed for things you did not really want. And the evidence is, that when you have done praying, you could not tell for what you had prayed. How many times have you confessed sins that you did not mean to break off and when you had no solemn purpose not to repeat them? Yes, have confessed sins when you knew you as much expected to go and repeat them, as you expected to live.

21. Robbing God. Think of the instances in which you have misspent your time, squandering the hours which God gave you to serve Him and save souls, in vain amusements or foolish conversation, in reading novels or doing nothing; cases where you have misapplied your talents and powers of mind; where you have squandered money on your lusts, or spent it for things which you did not need, and which did not contribute to your health comfort, or usefulness.

22. Bad temper.

23. Hindering others from being useful. Perhaps you have, weakened their influence by insinuations against them. You have not only robbed God of your own talents, but tied the hands of somebody else. What a wicked servant is he who not only loiters himself but hinders the rest! This is done sometimes by taking their time needlessly; sometimes by destroying Christian confidence in them. Thus you have played into the hands of Satan, and not only showed yourself an idle vagabond, but prevented others from working.