

General Church Education



**Family Lesson: Mark 4**  
**The Parable of the Sower**

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Family Lesson 31-D

*Parable of the Sower*  
*Mark 4*

**Family Talk**  
**PARABLES**

When the Lord spoke to people, His words often caused them to pay more attention to their surroundings. He invited people to consider the lilies of the field, the trees and the birds who nest in their branches. As He spoke to people, pictures flashed in their minds. And with the pictures came reflective thoughts. People could think to themselves, “Yes, if God so clothes the fields and feeds the birds, surely He will care for me, too.”

Yes, the Lord could make people think from the things they already saw and knew, but He also wanted to present to them things they had not seen or did not know. What is heaven like? The Lord said, “**To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?**” (Mark 4:30). Things on earth correspond to things in heaven, and things that happen on earth can picture to us things that happen in the kingdom within us. For example, we plant a seed one day, and at night we sleep, and things start happening with the seed while we slumber and are unaware. And as the days pass and we see the plant sprout and develop, we confess that we don’t really know how it happens.

*“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how” (v.26, 27). The Writings say this is about “the Lord’s work” (Apocalypse Revealed 911).*

For a person to become an angel, changes have to take place within while the process of rebirth or regeneration is taking place. This is the Lord Himself building the kingdom of God within us. We have our part to play while we realize so much of it is done secretly while we sleep and rise night and day, hoping to lead the life that leads to heaven.

Speaking of heaven, you probably know that there are three heavens and that the highest heaven is called the celestial heaven in which love to the Lord and conjugal love are at the heart of angel lives. Well, you might think of the three heavens when you hear of the Lord’s saying, “**Some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some a hundred**” (Mark 4:8).

This is from the first of a series of parables the Lord told. When He talked of a sower whose seeds fell on different kinds of ground, some people may have only listened to the story, but the disciples felt that there was something valuable within the story, and so they went to the Lord and asked Him about it. This led, as you know, to His teaching them such things as that “**the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things**” (Mark 4:19) are like thorns that choke good things that should grow in our lives.

The Lord at that time said to His disciples, “**To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God**” (Mark 4:11). And to those who want to be disciples of His New Church, He has said, “**Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the arcana of faith**” (*True Christian Religion* 508).

**The Parable of the Sower**  
**Mark 4**  
**LEVEL 1 – THE SOWER**



**THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER**

*(Parents may read this to the children or simply talk about what “sower” means and who sows most of the seeds around the world.)*

Today we read a story about a Sower from the WORD.

A “sower” is a person who plants seeds. You are a sower when you plant a seed; a farmer is a sower when he plants corn in his fields; even a squirrel is a sower when he buries an acorn.



The most important sower of all is the LORD.

He plants all the forests and fields, and He gives us all the seeds we plant. He also plants things inside each of us! Not flower seeds, but idea seeds, which grow in our minds. When you love your mother or obey your father, one of the Lord’s seeds is growing.

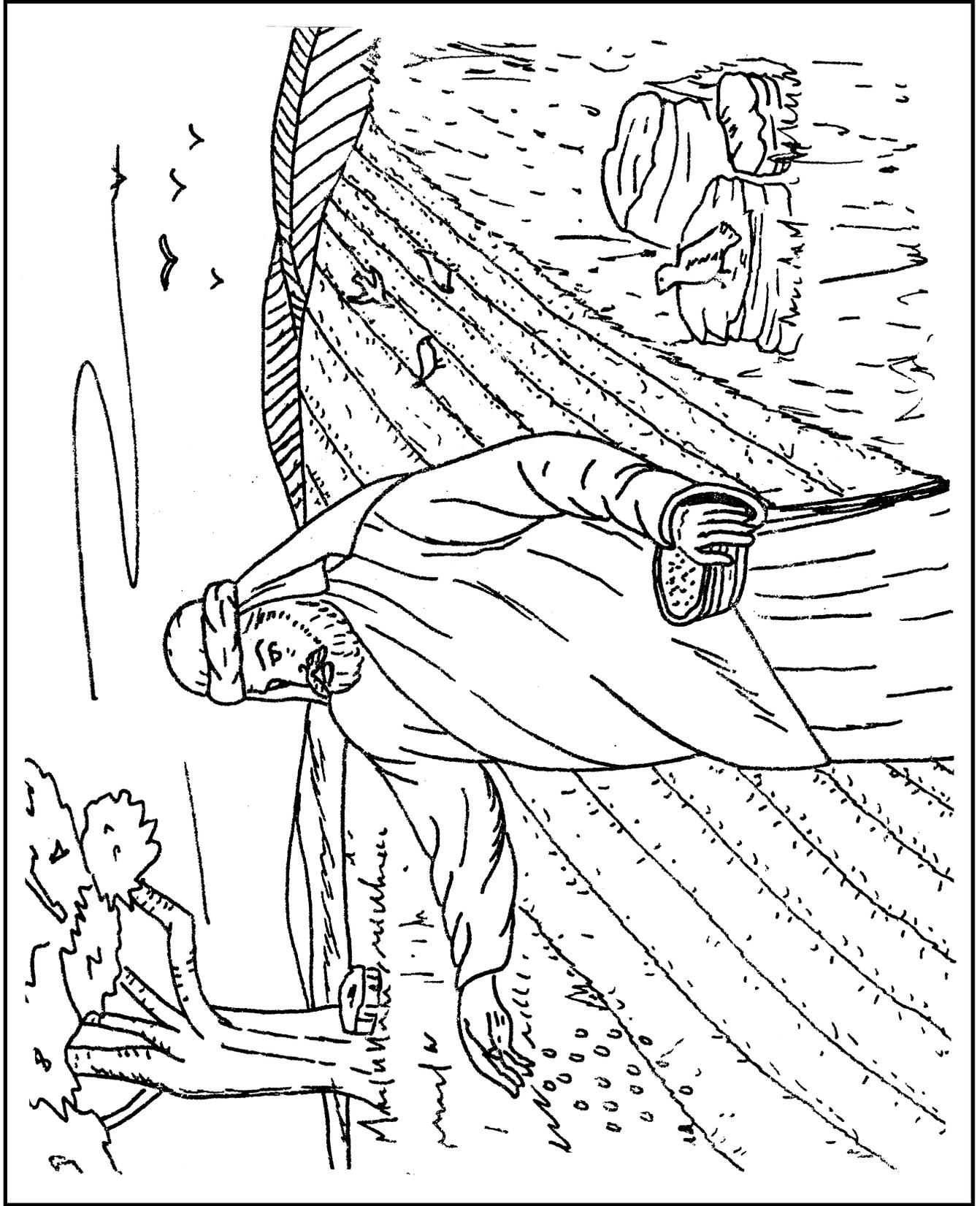
**Project**

On page 2 is a picture of the Sower from the story in the WORD.

1. Color the picture
2. Then paste on some seeds:  
Either go outside with a big person and find some seeds, or maybe you can find some in an apple or a tomato or a bean from the refrigerator.

Paste them to look like the Sower is tossing them around on the ground so they will grow.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER



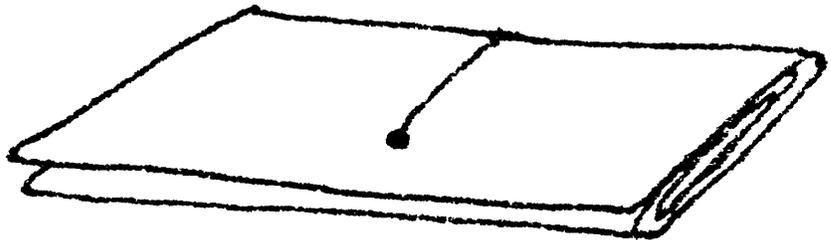
**The Parable of the Sower**  
**Mark 4**  
**LEVEL 2 – ONE TINY SEED**

*(These instructions are written for the parent or teacher to read and demonstrate the first steps, leaving #6 for the child to discover after he has tried the project himself.)*

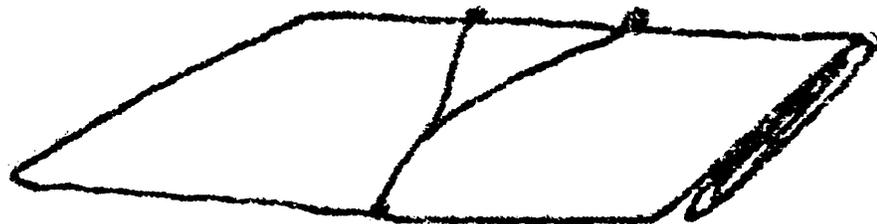
1. Take a piece of plain paper (regular computer paper is fine), and roll it into a tube about 1-inch in diameter. Flatten it into a folded roll.



2. With edge of flattened roll facing you, “plant” a mustard seed (make a dot with pencil, felt marker or crayon). Make a “stem” (draw a line) from the seed--extending over the edge of the fold.



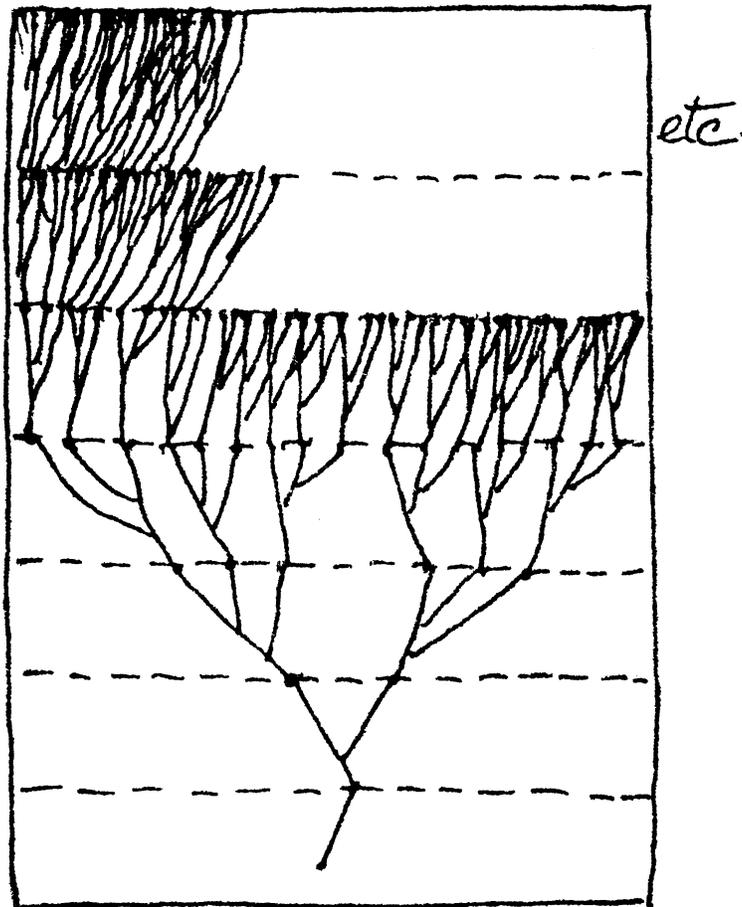
3. Turn the roll and continue the line to the next fold, drawing a line branching from the first one--both lines continuing over the edge of the fold.



4. Unfold the roll one lap, and draw three “branches” from each point at the edge of the roll.



5. Unfold the roll one more lap and add three branches from each point again. Continue to unfold and add three branches from each point each time.
6. Turn the paper over to see what a beautiful large plant can come from one seed, just as one affection, planted in our mind by the Lord, can grow in many ways to eternity.



***The Parable of the Sower***  
**Mark 4**  
**LEVEL 3 – PARABLES**

*While the Lord was in the world, He taught people by means of stories that had a meaning, called parables. This today's chapter tells several of these parables having to do with growing things. One about planting tells how the seed is received. One about growing plants tells how it is only the Lord who can make things grow. And one about a mustard seed describes how a small seed can grow into a huge and useful tree. By answering some questions (by filling in the chart on page two) about these three parables, see if you can see that the Lord is teaching us through them.*



<p><b>The Sower</b> <i>Mark 4:3-20</i></p>	<p>List the places the seed landed (vs.4-8).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>	<p>What did Jesus say the Sower sowed? (v. 14)</p>	<p>Jesus says the places the seed fell are different kinds of people. What is each kind? (v. 15-20)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The Seed At Night</b> <i>Mark 4:26-29</i></p>	<p>What does the man do?</p>	<p>What happens that the man does not know how?  What does he do when it becomes useful?</p>	<p>What useful things does the Lord cause to grow in your life without you knowing how?</p>
<p><b>The Mustard Seed</b> <i>Mark 4:30-32</i></p>	<p>How can you picture the Kingdom of God?  When is it small?  When is it big?</p>	<p>What good is the tree to birds?</p>	<p>If birds are like thoughts, what good is the kingdom of God to your thoughts?</p>

## **The Parable of the Sower**

### **Mark 4**

## **LEVEL 4 – LEARNING THROUGH PARABLES**

### **Why the LORD came into the world**

The Lord came into the world to make it possible for all people to go to heaven. The hells had gotten very powerful and were trying to take over heaven. The Lord had to defeat the hells and show people the way to heaven. He did this by teaching truth, doing good, and overcoming temptations.

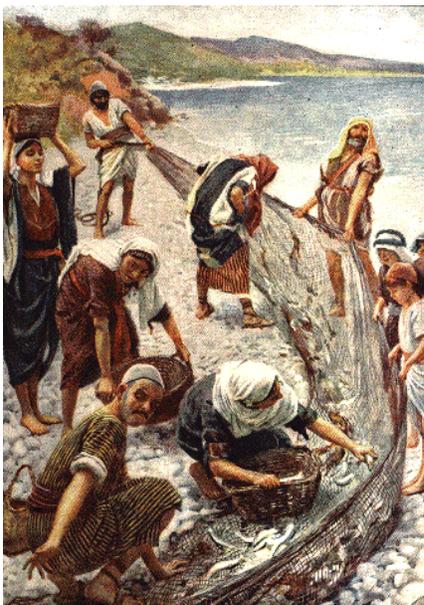
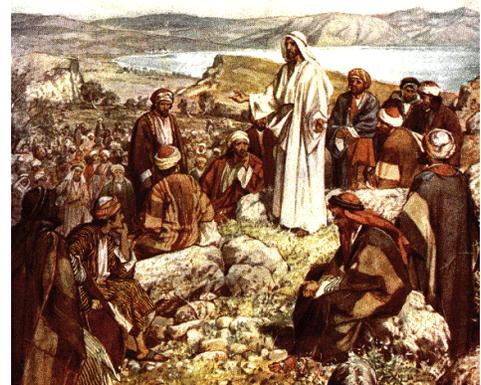


### **The LORD performed miracles**

The Lord did good by performing miracles. Do you know the miracle of the healing of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof (Mark, chapter 2). The Lord did many other miracles, also.

### **The LORD taught through parables**

The Lord taught truth by telling parables.  
In this chapter, the Lord told three parables.



### **What is a parable?**

*What is a parable? It is a story with a meaning hidden within it. The people and objects in the story stand for (or correspond to) things which teach us about the Lord and how to lead a good life.*

You can read the meaning of the parables in the Writings.

**The parable of the sower** is explained in the *Doctrine of Life* 90:

“The sower here is the Lord, and the seed is His Word...the seed by the wayside is with those who do not care about truth; and the seed upon stony places is with those who care for truth, but not for its own sake...The seed among thorns is with those who are the lusts of evil; but the seed in the good ground is with those who from the Lord love the truths which are in the Word, and who practice them, and thus bring forth fruit.”



**The parable of the grain of mustard seed** (*Matthew* 13:31) is explained in the *Arcana Coelestia* 1941.



“With a man who is in good...the seed that comes from the Lord is made fruitful and multiplied to such an extent that it cannot be numbered for multitude; not so much while he is living in the body, but in the other life to an incredible degree...just as the seed of a tree springing up from the ground grows into a sapling, then into a great tree, which is afterwards multiplied into a garden of trees.

For all knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, delights and happiness...increase to eternity, and this from the smallest seed, as the Lord teaches respecting the grain of mustard.”

Why did the LORD teach in parables?

Why would the Lord want to hide the truth in a parable?

Some people in those days were not ready to understand the truth, but they could hear the parables and remember the stories.

Then, as they learned more and became ready to understand truth, they could think of the parables and see the truths hidden in them.

If the people who were not ready to learn truth had been told the truth directly, they might not have believed it, or they might have hurt the truth by not doing what it taught.

The disciples were ready to understand the truth. The Lord explained the parable of the sower to them in verses *Mark* 4, verses 13 to 20. The Lord also used other parables and explained them to His disciples:

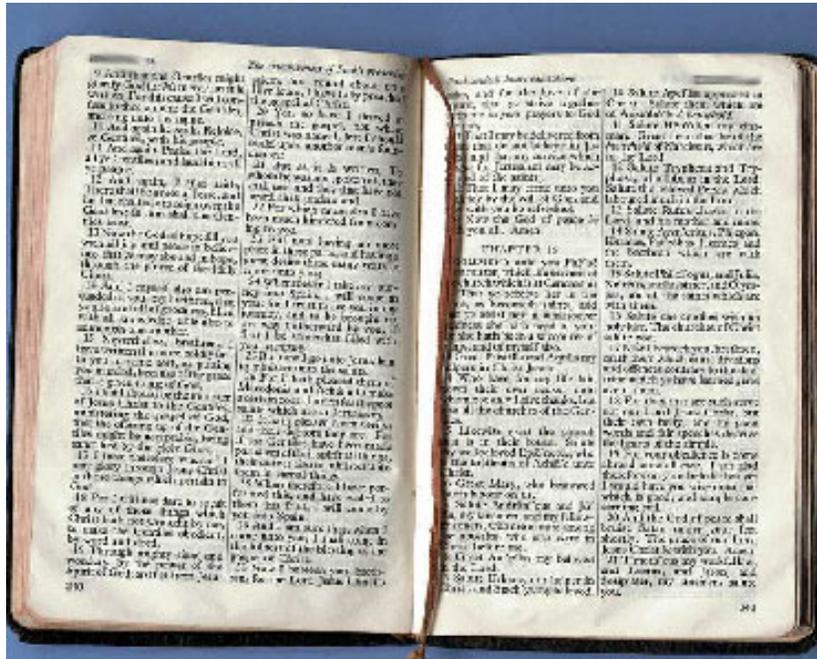
“And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.”

(Mark 4:33, 34)

### We still learn through parables

The Lord used parables to teach truth while He was in the world. But we still learn truth through parables today.

### All of the Word is a parable



All the stories of the Word have different levels of meanings hidden in them.

We can learn stories from the Word when we are young, and as we got older we will be able to understand more what they mean.

When we become angels, we will understand the meaning so well that we will think and speak in parables.

**Your activity for this lesson is on the next page.**

**Application**

1. How did the Lord teach truth?

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2. Why did the Lord choose to teach truth in this way?

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3. The Lord explained the parable of the sower to the disciples. Use the Lord's explanation in verses 13-20 to discover what the following things from the parables (verses 3-8) stand for or correspond to.

ITEM IN PARABLE:	MEANING:
<b>The Seed</b>	
<b>Birds in the air</b>	
<b>The sun scorching</b>	
<b>The thorn choking</b>	
<b>Good Ground</b>	

4. Can you think of a story in the Word which means more to you now than when you first heard it and tell what it meant to you then and what it means to you now?

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## ***The Parable of the Sower***

### ***Mark 4***

#### **LEVEL 5 – THE LITTLEST THINGS THAT HAVE BIG CONSEQUENCES**

##### **LITTLE THINGS CAN GROW TO SOMETHING BIG**

Think from your own experience about little things that have grown to something big or have had a great series of consequences. Do you know of actual examples in one of the following?

1. Deciding to learn a certain musical instrument
2. Choosing to participate in a certain sport
3. Choosing one's career

In any one of these choices, can people trace it back to a chance conversation or something they read or some other little thing that sparked off an interest?

Have you heard a couple tell how they met or how they started getting interested in each other? Did it begin with a seemingly little thing?

##### **THE Word TEACHES HOW GOOD CAN GROW FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS**

###### **1. The mustard seed**



The most vivid example of the little becoming big is the tiny mustard seed to which the Lord referred in *Mark 4:30-32*:

but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.

###### **2. Loving our neighbor**

There is a most encouraging teaching in the Writings about a little bit of a good love in this life being able to grow tremendously in heaven, where we can even learn to love our neighbor more than ourself. Number 406 in *Heaven and Hell* speaks about some spirits who had recently come from the world. They were told:

If they would be like angels, they ought to love the neighbor more than themselves.

They couldn't imagine how that would be possible. But then they were told about how a degree of good love can really grow a lot in the other world:

But they were told that every good grows immeasurably  
in the other life...

They were given examples from everyday life that proved to them that loving others more than self is possible:

They were told that the possibility of such love is shown  
in the world from the conjugal love of some who have suffered  
death to protect a consort from injury, from the love of parents  
for their children, which is such that a mother would rather  
starve than see her child go hungry; and from the sincere  
friendship, in which one friend will expose himself to danger for  
another...

### 3. A little effort brings great results

We very readily see faults and evils in other people. To see them in ourselves and make some honest effort against them is a great thing in human life, even when it looks like a little.

In the *Doctrine of Life* 97 we are told that even a little resistance to evil leads to meaningful change in our lives:

Let them resist evils in intention only once a week, or twice in a month, and they will perceive a change.

Number 530 of *True Christian Religion* says that if on occasion we look at ourselves and determine to resist our evils, this is "sufficient" to get us "on the way to heaven."

This is pictured in the parable of the mustard seed:

If a man by combat against evils as sins has procured for himself in the world anything spiritual, although it be a very little, he is saved: and his uses afterwards grow like the grain of mustard seed, into a tree. (*Divine Love* 17)

### 4. Growing into a garden



We are told in *Apocalypse Explained* 974 that when a man turns away from evils then the things that he does are outwardly and inwardly good and "living" from the Lord:

For they are then like fruits...in the center of which are sheaths of many seeds, from which new trees, even to whole gardens, may be produced.

**5. No end to learning and wisdom**

Never underestimate the value of learning a little bit from the Lord's Word. The Lord's Word has infinite consequences.



With a man who is in good, the seed that comes from the Lord is made fruitful and multiplied to such an extent that it cannot be numbered for multitude; not so much while he is living in the body, but in the other life to an incredible degree. This increases to eternity from the smallest seed, as the Lord teaches about the grain of mustard seed. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1941)

**Application**

Can you think from your own experience, about *little things* that have grown to something *big* or have had a great series of consequences.

Think of some little thing that has influenced your life? Maybe a word of encouragement from a teacher, or maybe a small act of kindness that is remembered for a long time?

Write about it here (and if you get eloquent use another sheet).

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### **A seed pictures the Lord**

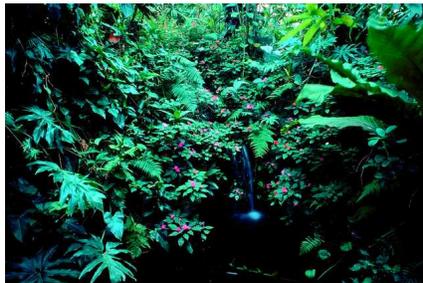
A seed is a picture of the immensity and eternity of the Lord (*True Christian Religion* 32).



In every seed there is implanted a certain immensity and eternity: an immensity because it can be multiplied to infinity, and an eternity, because that multiplication has continued without interruption from the creation of the world, and still continues, and will continue forever.

Then examples are given of what would happen if all the seeds produced came to fruition:

In a very little time the fish of the sea would fill the ocean,



and plants would cover the surface of the earth.



You may enjoy reading this number from *True Christian Religion* for yourself.