

RETAINING — WHAT YOU HAVE — RECEIVED

RECEIVING AND
SUSTAINING BY FAITH



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WORD OF LIFE MINISTRIES

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Losing a Gift We've Received From God

This is a concept that the church has limited knowledge about. Is it actually possible to lose something that the Lord has given to you?

The answer to that is an emphatic YES. It is possible. Christians do it all the time. It has nothing to do with God taking it back. God gives his gifts freely, and he doesn't take them back.

"For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. (He never withdraws them when once they are given, and he does not change his mind about those to whom he gives his grace or to whom he sends his call.)"

Rom. 11:29 — AMP.

The problem comes when we either:

- (1) don't hold on to what we've received by faith, or;
- (2) we willfully give up and let it go. (How this happens will be described later)

Let's begin by looking at one of the spiritual principles/laws that God has this earthly creation working under. This is how God has set up the physical and spiritual systems to operate. Unless we understand the following principle, most things of faith will not make much sense.

Receiving and Sustaining by Faith

I want to keep this straight-forward and understandable. So I won't make a huge teaching out of it. But we need to understand this concept.

God created everything by Faith

The way he has designed Faith to work is through Words and Speaking. Faith originates in the heart, and is then spoken with the mouth.

"Because if you acknowledge and confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and in your heart believe (adhere to, trust in, and rely on the truth) that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Christ) and so is justified (declared righteous, acceptable to God), and (declares openly and speaks out freely his faith) and confirms [his] salvation."

Rom. 10:9-10 — AMP.

"Yet we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken. We too believe, and therefore we speak."

2 Cor. 4:13 — AMP.

God lives by Faith — and is delighted by it

(Mark 11:22a in Young's Literal Translation and the Wycliffe Translation; Heb. 11)

Without operating in Faith, we can't even please God. (Heb. 11:6) In fact the three mentioned in 1 Cor. 13 that 'remain', (or are eternal) are (1) Faith, (2) Hope, (3) Love. The first two go together because you can't have Faith until you have Hope. (Heb. 11:1 — "Faith is being sure of what you Hope for.") And faith works by the third one — Love. (Gal. 5:6b) All three of them are of and wrap into the eternal & God. He's the God of Faith, Hope, and Love. And all three are eternal.

A. Faith is an eternal principle. When we get to heaven, Faith will still be active and it will remain active for eternity. IT WILL REMAIN. (1 Cor. 13:13)

He created all of creation, holds it together, and reigns over it (Col. 1:15-18)

A. Who is the 'HE' in this scripture?

1. He goes by a number of names: Jesus, Lord, King of Kings, etc. The FIRST name we knew him by was 'THE WORD'. This was his pre-incarnate name. (John 1:1-3, 14; Rev. 19:13) It was by THE WORD (Jesus) that everything was created. That's why it says in Gen. 1 that God spoke creation into existence. It's referring to the 2nd person of the trinity being active with the Father

when he was creating. That second person is 'WORD'. (That's one of his names)

2. So when God re-created the earth, Jesus spoke it into existence. (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3)
3. Jesus holds the world together and keeps it in motion by Faith and his Words.

"Yet for us there is [only] one God, the Father, Who is the Source of all things and for Whom we [have life], and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through and by Whom are all things and through and by Whom we [ourselves exist]."

1 Cor. 8:6 — AMP.

"[Now] He is the exact likeness of the unseen God [the visible representation of the invisible]; He is the Firstborn of all creation. For it was in Him that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities; all things were created and exist through Him [by His service, intervention] and in and for Him. And He Himself existed before all things, and in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together). He also is the Head of [His] body, the church; seeing He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead, so that He alone in everything and in every respect might occupy the chief place [stand first and be preeminent]."

Col. 1:15-18 — AMP.

"He is the sole expression of the glory of God [the Light-being, the out-raying or radiance of the divine], and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power."

Heb. 1:3 — AMP.

This whole creation is brought into being and sustained by the spiritual law of 'WORDS'

God operates and lives in the 'words' realm. It's the tool he used to create everything. And it's the tool he uses to sustain and hold it all together. Words are the primary tool WE too must use to release our faith, because it's the spiritual law/principle the whole system operates under. In order for us to imitate him, (Eph. 5:1) we need to learn to live in the realm of the Spirit and Faith. That's why Jesus is called the author and finisher of OUR faith; (Heb. 12:2) the apostle and high priest of OUR confession; (Heb. 3:1) Faithful — or full of faith. (Rev. 19:11) And we are told to hold firmly to the faith/hope WE profess. (Heb. 4:14; 10:23)

THE MAIN POINT OF ALL THIS — WE MUST DO IT LIKE GOD DOES IT

A. God makes everything happen by Faith.

1. This is done by his Words. He Speaks it. He Calls it. AND IT IS.

2. THIS IS HOW THE SCRIPTURE SAYS WE MUST DO IT.

a. This is how we receive anything from God. We BELIEVE and we SPEAK.
(Matt. 7:7, 21:22; Mark 5:36, 9:23; Luke 11:13b; John 1:12, 14:1, 13, 15:16, 17:20, 20:31; Acts 13:39, 16:31; Rom. 3:22, 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 4:13; Gal. 3:22; 1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 11:6; James 4:2; 1 Pet. 2:7)

3. THE THING WE MUST REMEMBER: IT IS GOD'S WORD(S) THAT CARRY HIS POWER. WE MUST LEARN TO SPEAK, PRAY, MEDITATE, ETC. ON HIS WORD(S). The words that originate in us do not produce near as much as when we quote the words that originated with God. HE EMPOWERS HIS WORDS TO PROSPER. When we speak his Word or what is in agreement with his Word, that's when faith can produce great things.

"No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."

Deut. 30:14, 19

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Josh. 1:8

"Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it [for death or life]."

Prov. 18:21 — The Message Bible & AMP.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

Heb. 3:1 — KJV

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of

judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:33-37 — NIV

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Isa. 55:11 — NIV

B. He keeps all of creation going, sustaining it — by Faith.

1. Scriptures: see the cluster above (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:3).

C. Application:

1. EVERYTHING WE RECEIVE FROM GOD COMES BY FAITH AND IS ACTIVATED BY OUR WORDS.
2. EVERYTHING WE RETAIN (That stays with us) IS SUSTAINED/RETAINED BY FAITH AND IS ACTIVATED BY OUR WORDS.

We are made in his image and likeness. (Gen. 1:26-27) What we do has to be done like he does it. It's a law of how the spirit realm functions. WE ARE LIKE HIM!!! (1 John 4:17) WE MUST DO IT LIKE HIM!!!

3. Everything we receive and retain from God is done by faith. If at any point, we give up on our Faith — WE ARE IN JEOPARDY OF LOSING WHAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN.
4. God isn't taking it back. We simply (1) are not holding on to it by Faith, or (2) we simply gave up and let it go.

D. That includes EVERYTHING we get from God.

1. Examples: Our Salvation, Baptism in the Spirit, Healing, Peace, Freedom, Miracles, Speaking in Tongues, Being Loving, Patient, Kind, Etc., Etc., Etc.

Scriptural Examples of Losing/Rejecting Things We Have Received From God

(1) Our Salvation.

A. Ezek. 18; 33:12-20; Num. 15:22-30.

B. Rom. 11:11-24; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31.

(2) Faith.

A. Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:19; 4:1; 5:12; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim. 2:18; 4:7 (Kept); Heb. 3 & 4; 10:39.

(3) The Truth.

A. Rom. 1:25, 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:10-13; 2 Tim. 2:18, 3:8, 4:4; Titus 1:14.

(4) Peace.

A. John 14:27; Phil. 4:4-7; Col. 3:15; 1 Pet. 3:10-11.

(5) The Holy Spirit.

A. 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 51:11.

(6) Healing.

A. Gen. 20:1-18; (The first recorded affliction on a human entered because of sin) John 5:1-14; Matt. 12:43-45; (tie to Luke 13:11).

(7) Earthly *psuche* Life and Godly *zoe* Life.

A. Matt. 10:39.

(8) We can lose our effectiveness and productiveness.

A. Matt. 3:10; 2 Pet. 1:8.

(9) We can fall from the position we've been given in Christ.

A. Matt. 7:26-27; Heb. 6:6; 2 Pet. 1:10.

(10) We could go on listing scriptures that indicate we can lose or abandon anything that comes from God. Love, Joy, Self-Control, Discipline, Purpose, Focus, Clarity of Thinking, Wisdom, Etc. The List can go on-and-on.

The only true assurance we have of continuing on in any of the good things of God is when we continue growing, maturing, and faithing:

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly

kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

2 Pet. 1:3-11 — NIV

IF WE STOP DOING WHAT'S IN THAT SCRIPTURE, WE CAN GIVE AWAY AND/OR LOSE ANYTHING WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD!!!

The list in 2 Pet. 1:3-11 (Above) is our guarantee of producing fruit, retaining fruit, as well as our eternal security. We must live that section of scripture!!! It's talking about a continual Growing and Maturing taking place in us. IT NEVER STOPS.

What Actually Happens In Us When We Lose, Give Up On, or Reject The Things That Come From God

An Excellent explanation of this in a single passage is found in Mark 4

“And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the Word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.’”

Mark 4:13-20 — NIV

The 4 Ways we can receive the Word

Remember: Everything in our covenant comes via the “Word” — Jesus. It’s by his work on the cross that we are Redeemed, Forgiven, Reconciled, Sanctified, Justified, Healed, Delivered, Empowered, Brought into the Family of God, Etc. EVERYTHING WE RECEIVE FROM GOD COMES VIA JESUS AND WHAT HE DID IN ESTABLISHING THE NEW COVENANT.

So whatever can be received from God, through Jesus, (the Word) fits into this parable. This parable talks about a farmer going to seed the Word. Jesus, The Gospel, The Good News — that is what is being sown here when it’s talking about the ‘Word’. That’s probably why Jesus said, if you “don’t understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? (v. 13) This parable is a basic foundation to how God operates with the human realm, and why the things of God work the way they do in our lives.

- A. #1 — We Don’t Receive because our heart is so hard that it is demonically stolen from us before it even has a chance to germinate. (Word sown along the path)
- #2 — We receive it. It produces in our lives. But they quickly lose it and what it’s producing. (Word sown on rocky ground)
- #3 — We receive it. It produces in our lives. But over time it is lost. It doesn’t produce in the person long term. (Word sown among the thorns)

#4 — We receive it. It produces in our lives. In some of us it does more than in others. The results can vary. It says 30 — 60 — or 100 fold. (Word sown on good soil)

B. If we're going to compare this to receiving and/or losing healing, miracle, financial prosperity, peace, joy, patience, etc. — WHICH ALL COME BY THE WORD — We would find approximately 15 different types of things can happen in a person's life.

#1 — We never get healed, etc. The Word never gets a chance to produce anything in us. (This is the word sown along the path)

#2 — We get healed, etc. But we quickly lose it when it's challenged because we're still immature/young spiritually and weak in our faith. This is shown by the phrase: "They have not root". (This is the Rocky Ground)

a. They're still unskilled in dealing with afflictions/trouble.

b. They're still unskilled in dealing with persecution.

c. And they are still easily offended and stumble or fall away. (AMP.)

#3 — (The ground with Thorns) We get healed, etc. But over time we lose it because we don't nurture it. This is shown by three phrases:

a. "Cares of this World" (KJV) "Worries of this life" (NIV) come in and choke the Word.

b. "Deceitfulness of Wealth/Riches" comes in and chokes the Word.

c. "The Lust for Other Things" (KJV) "The Desire for Other Things" (NIV) "come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."

#4 — We get healed, etc. (The Good Soil)

a. Verse 20 says we hear & accept it. Depending on how we hear and accept it (v. 24) will determine how much it is effective in our life and how much it produces a healing, etc. in us.

b. Matthew's rendering of this parable adds in Matt. 13:23, the person "Understands" the word he received.

Note: Depending on how well we understand the "word" in connection to healing, miracles, financial prosperity, peace, joy, patience, etc. — that level of understanding will determine the size of the crop being produced in our lives.

c. Luke's rendering adds other dimensions in Luke 8:15. He says it this way:

"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." (NIV)

"But as for that [seed] in the good soil, these are [the people] who, hearing the Word, hold it fast in a just (noble, virtuous) and worthy heart, and steadily bring forth fruit with patience." (AMP.)

Notice the differences that can determine the kind and amount of crop we receive.

1. Hearing & Accepting it FULLY. (v. 24)
2. We Understand it.
3. We have a Noble/Virtuous Heart.
4. We have a Good/Worthy Heart.
5. We are Retaining the Word.
6. By Perseverance produce a crop. (We're persevering)
7. Steadily Bring forth fruit (the result) With Patience. (We remain constant)

This is speaking of someone with good character, honesty, sincerity, and likely some spiritual maturity. (So it behooves us to grow and mature)

The more of these qualities we have, the bigger the crop/harvest will be in what we have received from God.

- C. Applying this to Losing our harvest. Remember: even in good soil we can lose out on a 60 or 100 fold return. According to what we just read, here are some of the ways that happens.
1. Immature Christians will not always retain what they receive as easily as a mature one.
 2. If we are playing games spiritually, we won't retain as easily.
 3. If our faith is not strong enough to maintain what we've been given, we can lose it.
 4. Without patience and perseverance, we can lose it.
 5. If we don't really understand what just happened to us, we can lose it.
 6. If our healing, miracle, etc. was handed to us by a Gift of the Spirit, or someone else's Faith — and we didn't really have to participate in receiving it — we can lose it. We must quickly engage spiritually with what the Spirit just did in us, (that healing, miracle, etc.) or we may not have what it takes spiritually to retain it. (How to engage is developed later)

How Do We Guard/Protect What Was Given To Us?

Returning to the Mark 4 passage

What I'm about to say here is Vital. The human race, and it's weaknesses that keep the word unfruitful are described in this parable. WE ARE THE PEOPLE JESUS IS TALKING ABOUT HERE!!! To Guard and Protect what God gives to us, we must overcome the weaknesses that pertain to us as they are described in this parable. To overcome something, we must first locate it in our lives. So as we go through this portion, find the weaknesses you battle with.

A. The first type of ground is the hard ground along the wayside.

1. I won't spend much time here, because this person doesn't receive anything from God. Their heart is so hard and/or they are so demonically influenced, that even though they hear the truth, the answer, the promise, (the Word) it never goes into them enough to even start growing.
2. So they won't lose what they've received, because it never did take root in them and begin to grow. They've received nothing.

B. The second type of ground is the rocky ground. (Mark 4:5-6, 16-17)

1. These people get something from God. (Answer to prayer, healing, miracle, etc.)
2. They heard the Word. They received it. They become joyful about it. So we know they see it producing in their lives. It's visible, recognizable to them.
3. But according to Jesus, they have a problem. They have no root. So what's he talking about?

a. The context of the whole parable is the "Word".

b. NOW PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THIS: according to verse 15, the Word Is "A Seed" that gets sown into the hearts of people.

"The ones along the path are those who have the Word sown into their hearts..." (AMP.)

c. It's the ground (the person's heart) of the person that will allow the Word to grow or stop its growth. So what is that ground? It's defined in Strong's and Thayer's as:

"Arable Land; the material from which man has been formed"

It is talking about the material that has formed the person, and that produces results/fruit in their life. What has formed you the way you are? Why do

you think the way you do? Feel the way you do? Act the way you do?
Etc.????

Notice: The things that are listed in the next 3 types of ground, largely have to do with the soul of man. (The soul is the mind, will, emotions, intellect, and reasoning) The soul is the battle ground. It's where the things of the flesh and the spirit collide, clash, war with each other. Our mind, will, and emotions is the place where the decision is actually made if we're going to do it God's way (the spirit) or the Devil's way (the flesh — old nature).

Our mind, will, and emotions are largely formed from our environment. Our parents, friends, school, music, television, movies, advertising, magazines, books, etc., etc. These all form our thinking processes, reasoning, emotional outlook on life, and ultimately the way we make decisions and choices. Since much of the early forming of our soul comes from physical and 5-sense input, we get formed wrongly. As a result we find ourselves battling with spiritual concepts, thinking, etc. as we begin to grow in God and his Word. That's why we must have our minds (soul) renewed, changed, transformed from the way the world looks at life to the way God looks at it. (Rom. 12:2)

It's this poor forming of the soul (mind, will, emotions, etc.) that has gotten into us that gets in the way of Receiving from God. And it definitely gets in the way of Retaining the things we Received from God. That's what Jesus is talking about in this parable. He's identifying some of the general categories of things that get inside of us and mess us up.

Again remember: We know the word 'ground' is not referring to physical dirt, because Jesus already defined it as the heart. ('Ground' is a picture of a person's heart. See the next point)

- d. Verse 15 says it is the heart. ("Word sown in their hearts" — AMP.) Verse 20 gives us another bit of insight. Especially when you tie it into the other gospels who deal with this parable. (Matt. 13:23; Luke 8:15) Both of those scriptures indicate it's the condition of the person's heart. (See B-4-c of the previous section, "The 4 Ways We Receive From the Word.")
 - e. So just like in the first kind of ground, the problem that stops the Word from producing and staying productive is in the person's heart. So let's go on and see what Jesus said the 'heart' problem really was.
4. The stones in their heart keep the 'Word' from really taking root. The Word doesn't grow deeply in them. So what are the rocks/stones that inhibit the growth of the Word? Jesus lists them in verse 17.
- a. (#1) — They don't handle trouble (Gr. — "A pressing, pressure; to suffer affliction, to be troubled due to the pressure of circumstances, or the antagonism of persons") very well. (The word for trouble in the KJV is 'affliction')
- So, they don't do well with standing up for the Word, or standing true to what the Word says, when there is opposition. The opposition may be

circumstantial, (like physical pain, bad news, no change in the situation, etc.) or the opposition may be personal. (Negative comments from people, a speaking against, questioning the validity of something, derogatory remarks, etc.)

Needing a life that is trouble free, or a life of ease will wreak havoc in our ability to receive from God. And when we're wanting to stay free of pressure and opposition, what we're really looking for is a life of ease. Very few challenges or obstacles that need to be overcome. Jesus said that the kingdom moves forward forcefully, and the forceful lay hold to it. (Matt. 11:12) SOME THINGS IN LIFE YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR. (Rev. 12:11) Paul said we will need to go through many hardships (Tribulations — KJV — "Applying of pressure; pressures") to enter the kingdom. (Acts 14:22)

Wanting life to be too easy — free from "pressure, having to press, or suffer affliction" — fosters laziness, complacency, the 'whatever will be, will be' attitude. WHEN THINGS GET TOO DIFFICULT, AND REQUIRE TOO MUCH ENERGY — WE BACK OFF. THAT ATTITUDE WILL DEVASTATE OUR ABILITY TO RETAIN WHAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN.

According to the AMP. version: Mark 4:17, when these type of things happen: *"They immediately are offended, become displeased, indignant, resentful, and they stumble and fall away."*

WHAT'S THE RESULT: THEY LOST IT. DID NOT RETAIN IT.

(#2) — They don't handle persecution (Gr. — "To pursue; to drive away; to pursue with hostility; to follow; to follow after; persecute") very well.

Persecution is different than affliction (or trouble) in that affliction may often be a casual look, comment, some negative input, questioning, etc. Persecution on the other hand is an intentional pursuing with the intent of driving away. It may try to drive you away. It may try to drive the truth/miracle/answer, etc. away from you. It's done with hostility. It is a continual following after you to convince you that what happened to you is not real, it's not of God, etc.

It is usually very forceful, intentional, relentless, etc. Typically we think of persecution coming from people. But if you look closely at the definition above, demonic activity in a person's life where they come to torment or harass can also be persecution.

And again, since they don't handle this type of opposition very well, According to the AMP. version: Mark 4:17:

"They immediately are offended, become displeased, indignant, resentful, and they stumble and fall away."

b. Instead of the 'Word' (or result of the 'Word' — like salvation, healings, deliverance, miracles, signs & wonders, etc.) being given time to really take root in the person's heart and life — the person makes the choice to

get their feelings hurt, thinking affected, and they back away. As a result
— THEY WILL LOSE WHAT THEY RECEIVED.

C. The third type of ground is the ground with thorns. (Mark 4:7, 18-19)

1. Again, these people did hear the Word. (Notice: it does not say they received it like the the people with the rocky soil, or the people with the good soil. But they did hear it and I presume must have received it to some degree. Because they kept it in them long enough, it started to grow and produce some form of fruit.)
2. It also was made fruitless/unfruitful. (v. 19b)
3. Again, according to Jesus, there is a problem in their life/heart. It's the thorns.
4. The thorns in their heart choke the 'Word' out. They kill it. When something is choked out, it takes a while for it to die. In the case of a plant — like Jesus is using in this example — it can take weeks to choke out a plant. The end result, The Word doesn't keep growing in them. So what are the thorns that choke the growth of the Word? Jesus lists them in verse 19.

a. (#1) — "Worries of this life" (NIV)

— "Cares and Anxieties of the World and distractions of the age." (AMP.)

People who struggle with worry are actually having trouble with fear. Worry, anxiety, etc. are all fear based emotions and thoughts. Unless they overcome their worry, it will suffocate the truth. They will soon believe the fear and worry of what possibly could happen, more than the truth of the Word which states what God says is to happen. The problems of the world and their life distracts them from staying focused on the Word and what they've received. Standing firm in Faith. So as a result they lose it.

(#2) — "Deceitfulness of wealth" (NIV)

— "The pleasure & delight & false glamour & deceitfulness of riches" (AMP.)

— "the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in" (KJV)

Again, it is a distraction, or possibly wrong motives, priorities etc. in the persons life that pulls them away from the things of God and what the Word says. They're pulled into what the world would call the good things in life. Money can buy things, entertainment, prestige, power, position, life-styles, etc. It can also buy false security and peace in doctor/hospital visits, medications, health care, therapy, prescription drugs, etc. These things can deceive us.

The things listed above can also be very PRIDE based. Like the AMP. and KJV say it, we are desiring 'false glamour', and 'lusts of other things'. These are typically very Pride based. Again, when you study what the scripture has to say about pride, and how that God will fight against us if we have pride — so he can humble us — it's easy to see that we won't receive or retain much when we are in pride.

Instead of Pursuing and becoming strong/standing strong in the things of God and the Word, we get drawn back into spending our time and energy on money related things. They can be either the things we already have, or the things we are trying to get.

- b. Instead of the 'Word' (or result of the 'Word' — like salvation, healings, deliverance, miracles, signs & wonders, etc.) being given time to really take root in the persons heart and life — the person makes a choice. (1) They choose to either give in to the worry, anxiety, and fear — should that be their weakness. Or, (2) if money and the desire for the things money can produce is their weakness, they decide it's better to pursue the money (financial) route. Solving their problems, or getting what they think they need — via money. As a result they become deceived and eventually THEY WILL LOSE WHAT THEY RECEIVED.

D. The fourth type of ground is the good ground. (Mark 4:8, 20)

1. The people heard and received the Word, and Produced a Crop.
2. But there's a difference here. Again it's in their heart. They are described as:
 - Grasping and Comprehending it (Matt. 13:23 — AMP.)
 - Understandeth it (Matt. 13:23 — KJV)
 - Hold it fast in a Just, Noble, Virtuous, & Worthy Heart (Luke 8:15 — AMP.)
 - Honest & Good Heart (Luke 8:15 — KJV)
 - Retain/Keep the Word (Luke 8:15 — NIV & KJV)
 - By Perseverance produce a crop (Luke 8:15 — NIV)
 - Steadily Bring forth fruit (the result) With Patience (Luke 8:15 — AMP. & KJV)
3. According to these qualities in the heart and life of the person, we produce what the Word says we're to have — the things we've received from the Lord. (Our life is always a reflection of our heart — Prov. 23:7; 4:23. And as we've already stated — everything we receive from God, comes via the Word) The amount we produce — 30, 60, 100 fold — is directly related to these qualities and the purity of our heart.
4. Now we also need to see the other side of this principle. If by having these qualities we can produce a harvest of the things of God, then by not having them we can lose a harvest of the things of God.
 - a. THAT IS HUGE!!!! If this is what is needed in our soil to hear, receive, and produce, then Jesus has also given us MORE INSIGHT INTO WHAT THE OTHER SOILS DID NOT HAVE.
 - b. So to enlarge on the list under #2 above, we could say it different ways:
 - If we don't grasp and comprehend what is happening to us, we could lose it.
 - If we don't understand it, we could lose what we've been given.
 - We must hold on to what we've been given in a:
Just Heart — "Right, Fair, Impartial, Upright"

Noble Heart — “High Moral Qualities and Character”

Virtuous Heart — “Right Action & Thinking; Goodness and Morality”

Worthy Heart — “Intrinsic Excellence resulting as from superior Moral, Cultural, or Spiritual Qualities”

Honest Heart — “Will not lie, cheat, or steal; truthful or trustworthy; showing fairness and sincerity; straightforward; free from deceit”

Good Heart — “Suitable to a purpose; effective, efficient; fertile; unspoiled, uncontaminated; valid; genuine; real; healthy; strong”

The less our heart is like what is being described here, the more difficulty we'll have in receiving and retaining.

- We must work to Retain and Keep the Word in us.
 - We need to live with Perseverance. Not easily discouraged, hindered, or stopped.
 - Cultivating Patience in our life. Which is defined as “Endurance; Constancy”. Or in layman’s terms Patience can be defined as keeping a Steady Pressure on the situation until we see the result we’re looking for.
5. Some people may feel at this point that this is TOO DIFFICULT. THAT IF THIS IS WHAT IS REQUIRED, (the good soil characteristics) THEY MAY NEVER MEASURE UP TO WHAT’S NEEDED TO RECEIVE FROM GOD AND RETAIN IT. GOD DOESN’T PLAY THOSE KIND OF GAMES. HE NEVER OFFERS SOMETHING THAT WE CAN’T RECEIVE AND RETAIN THROUGH HIM.
- HOWEVER, WHAT IS BEING POINTED OUT IS THAT THESE ARE THE QUALITIES JESUS SAID ARE NEEDED IN A PERSON TO PRODUCE A HARVEST.
- A harvest that doesn’t stay in the bin, is a worthless harvest. So part of producing a harvest, is Retaining it. It would also appear that the more of these qualities we carry, the bigger the harvest will be that is Retained. (30 — 60 — 100)

How Do We Obtain The Change In Our Life So We Can Receive And Retain?

On-going or Progressive Receiving and Retention

What I'm referring to here is something we receive from God over a longer period of time. This can be days, weeks, months, and even years. Whether we realize it or not, scripturally speaking — this is the most common way we receive from God. We all like the immediate and quick miracles, healings, answers, etc. And when you study Jesus ministry, you see a lot of that. However, when you follow through the epistles, and study the words patience and perseverance, you will find a very large arena of receiving from God happens in and over time. (The same was true in the Old Test.) There were many quick or instantaneous answers to prayer. But there were more that came as a progressive answer over a period of time.

A. The hard ground along the path. Hears but Receives nothing, so there is nothing to Retain.

1. If this is our type of heart, WE NEED TO START WITH REPENTANCE. Deal with every area of sin and unbelief we are able to recognize.

In Jer. 4:3-4 and Hos. 10:12 God is talking to Israel concerning their hard ground. The same concept carries through into what Jesus is saying in Mark 4.

"This is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: Break up your unplowed ground ("fallow ground" — KJV) and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts..."

Jer. 4:3-4a (NIV)

"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; ("fallow ground" — KJV) for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors"

Hos. 10:12-13 (KJV)

2. We can learn a number of things from these passages.

- a. It's our responsibility to break up our ground. We must take the first steps in repentance.
- b. Circumcise our hearts. Begin the process of going full-out after God. MAKE GOD AND SERVING HIM THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IN OUR LIVES. LET GO OF OUR BAD HABIT PATTERNS AND EXISTING UNGODLY LIFE-STYLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

c. Begin to seek the Lord, and continue to do it until things start to change. Do it until he shows up with his showers of righteousness. The rain will start softening your heart.

d. The things we have been doing to harden us:

- “Planted wickedness” — We have been actively participating with sin.
- “Reaped Evil” — We have been actively involved in the harvest of the sin.
- “Eaten the fruit of deception” — We have willfully allowed ourselves to take in deception and be deceived to what we’re doing.
- “Depended on your own strength and on your many warriors” — We have chosen to do it our way — Not God’s. And deal with the obstacles and problems/trouble in life via our own methods.

These things have to be dealt with in our lives. If they are not dealt with, the hard ground will never change, and this person will never receive anything from God.

REPENT: GET NEW INFORMATION, REGRET THE OLD WAY, AND MAKE THE CHANGE!!!

3. Since Jesus stated that the demonic is strong in a persons life with this type of ground, some deliverance may be needed before they can live victoriously.
4. Stay submitted to God as he begins the process in us of killing the flesh. There will be some suffering to die to our sin, but that’s the only way our heart will soften. (1 Pet. 4:1-2)
5. And the first thing mentioned in Hos. 10 was to begin to sow righteousness and reap the harvest of unfailing love.
 - a. Not only does the person need to stop sowing and reaping from sin, they need to begin cultivating the new life of doing what’s right. (Stop the wrong, and do what’s right) Doing what is wrong will continue to harden us to spiritual things. It needs to be replaced with doing what is right — righteous. That will soften us.
 - b. Begin cultivating the Love walk. Study Love. Learn what scripture says it is, how it thinks, behaves, acts, chooses, plans, decides, relates, views the past — present — and future, etc. Grow in it, and then Willfully Choose to do it. (Reap it’s fruit)

B. The stony/rocky ground. Hears and Receives but does not retain.

1. If this is our type of ground, WE WILL NEED TO DEAL WITH OUR NEED FOR APPROVAL. (People’s and otherwise) Being overly concerned how people, our friends, and/or the community thinks or feels about us is destructive to God working in our lives. To retain what God is doing, we must learn to please him first. In fact, in Paul’s dealing with it he came to the conclusion that it was not possible to please and be popular with people and still be a servant of God. (Gal. 1:10) In John 12:42-43 it says that many of the leaders believed on Jesus, but wouldn’t confess their faith because they’d be put out of the

synagogue by the Pharisees. Verse 43 says: “For they loved the praise of men more than praise from God.”

Sometimes our need for approval can stem from a belief system, previous teaching, our own personal goals, habits, etc. And when we start making choices, decisions, changing our belief systems, and living in a way that is different (even opposite) of how we’ve always done it — we can’t cope with our own conscience or mind condemning us and disapproving. In these situations, WE MUST RENEW OUR MINDS, (Rom. 12:2) or our old traditions, will literally make the Word of God useless to us. (Matt. 15:6)

LEARNING TO DEAL WITH TROUBLE/AFFLICTION & PERSECUTION (Defined Above) ARE PARAMOUNT TO RECEIVING AND RETAINING. If we do not confront and deal with this weakness in us, it will cause us to consistently lose what God has given to us.

2. WE ALSO MUST CONFRONT OUR DESIRE AND NEED TO HAVE OUR LIFE BE EASY AND CONFLICT FREE. (Described above) SOME THINGS IN LIFE YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR.

Wanting life to be too easy — free from “pressure, having to press, or suffer affliction” — fosters laziness, complacency, and the ‘whatever will be, will be’ attitude. WHEN THINGS GET TOO DIFFICULT, AND REQUIRE TOO MUCH ENERGY — WE BACK OFF. THAT ATTITUDE WILL DEVASTATE OUR ABILITY TO RETAIN WHAT WE’VE BEEN GIVEN. We must mature beyond that attitude.

3. THE TWO ISSUES (Listed Above) ARE DESTROYING THE WORD’S/GOD’S ABILITY TO PRODUCE LONG TERM AND LASTING RESULTS IN OUR LIVES.

Why? Because our faith, commitment, priorities, beliefs, courage, ability to stand alone will always be challenged as a christian. We must become strong enough in our spirits, and in our souls (mind, will, emotions) to stay focused and on course whether people agree, like it, or not. This also includes staying focused and on course whether a physical answer comes easily or not. Needing things easy and comfortable in our lives will not work to receive and retain. Sometimes the physical and/or emotional doesn’t respond quickly. (IT ISN’T ALWAYS QUICK AND EASY) There can be ongoing symptoms, pain, problems, etc. During that period of time, we must stand on what God has said. And like Abraham, not making the problem our biggest consideration. (Rom. 4:19a — KJV)

Until we reach that point of maturity, we can easily lose most of what we receive from God.

4. If this problem is, or begins cycling in our life, it will often stop us from going after God to receive. Why, because we already know what will be required of us to retain it. We know we don’t want to do that because it will make us too unpopular. Or it may be difficult and not an easy thing. So we will stop seeking, pulling on God, believing, and receiving.

What are these two types of hearts (people) to do in these situations?

5. If you are able to recognize what your particular tendencies are:
- a. CONFESS & REPENT OF THEM. Get it washed in the blood. (1 John 1:9)
 - b. Approach the throne of Grace Boldly to obtain Grace and Mercy to help you. (Heb. 4:15-16)
 - Grace is when God gives to us what we don't deserve.
 - Mercy is when God doesn't give to us what we do deserve.
 - c. Both of them will help buy you time to grow and change while you are Retaining what you were offered from the Lord.

Make a list of the weaknesses that the Lord is showing to you. Post them someplace where they are consistently in your sight. YOU CANNOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO GO INTO DENIAL TO WHAT YOU NEED TO DEAL WITH. Believe me, your flesh will want to. (Esp. now that you have your answer) Grace and Mercy will cover you so that you have time to grow. But if you don't take advantage of that window of time, at some point the thing you Received will likely be lost.

Get into the Word and GROW, GROW, GROW.

What is the aim of your growth.

- a. Over-coming your weakness and the evil tendencies of your heart.
- b. Cultivating the characteristics of the Good Ground/Heart.

Don't allow the cycle of receiving and retaining to be stopped. Either by our need for approval, or our desire to take the easy way out. Or possibly a combination of them. TO RETAIN, WE MUST WORK ON OVERCOMING THESE.

C. The ground with thorns.

1. This is an interesting situation. They hear it and retain it long enough to take it with them for a while. (Luke 8:14 — AMP.) Scripture doesn't say they received it. In Luke 8:14 it says:

"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature."

When we simply go on our way, we haven't received it. When we truly receive something from God, IT WILL CHANGE OUR LIFE. It affects our thinking, emotions, outlook on life, etc. These people go back to THEIR life with a business-as-usual attitude. As a result of that, what they've heard isn't with them long enough to mature and bear fruit. The seed is choked out before it produces anything in their life.

2. First of all, THEY WILL NEED TO OVER-COME THEIR FEARFUL, ANXIOUS, AND WORRYING TENDENCIES AND REPLACE THEM WITH FAITH. (See definition

above concerning ground with thorns) These things are the foundational basis they live their life by. These things form the choices, decisions, and beliefs this person carries in life. Obviously, the faith that is needed to support the things we receive from God, and ultimately hang on to (retain), obviously that faith is not being used correctly or they wouldn't be so fear based.

3. THE NEXT ISSUE BROUGHT UP IN THIS TYPE OF HEART DEALS WITH MONEY AND FINANCES. (See description above) Past, present, and future decisions are being based on money and finances. Jesus said you can't serve both God and money. (Matt. 6:24) Serving money is very fleshly and carnal and will not mix with the things of God's kingdom. RECEIVING AND RETAINING FROM GOD CANNOT BE MONEY BASED. Here the Fearful and Worrying tendencies may be mixing with money issues. (Fear and money often go hand in hand) IF MONEY OR FINANCES ARE AFFECTING OUR DECISIONS IN HOW WE LIVE FOR GOD, THE CHOICES WE MAKE, OUR PRIORITIES, ETC. — IN ANY WAY — I CAN GUARANTEE YOU, THE WORD WILL COME OUT THE LOSER AND BECOME INEFFECTIVE.

WE MAY ALSO BE NEEDING TO DEAL WITH OUR PRIDE. Typically, people with or without money become very proud, stubborn, and arrogant when their pocket book is touched. God hates pride, and so should we. God will not bless and prosper something he hates.

What are these two types of hearts (people) to do in these situations?

4. If you are able to recognize what your particular tendencies are:
- a. CONFESS & REPENT OF THEM. Get it washed in the blood. (1 John 1:9)
 - b. Approach the throne of Grace Boldly to obtain Grace and Mercy to help you. (Heb. 4:15-16)
 - Grace is when God gives to us what we don't deserve.
 - Mercy is when God doesn't give to us what we do deserve.
 - c. Both of them will help buy you time to grow and change while you are Retaining what you were offered from the Lord.

Make a list of the weaknesses that the Lord is showing to you. Post them someplace where they are consistently in your sight. YOU CANNOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO GO INTO DENIAL TO WHAT YOU NEED TO DEAL WITH. Believe me, your flesh will want to. (Esp. now that you have your answer) Grace and Mercy will cover you so that you have time to grow. But if you don't take advantage of that window of time, at some point the thing you Received will likely be lost.

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What is the aim of your growth.

- a. Over-coming your weakness and the evil tendencies of your heart.
- b. Cultivating the characteristics of the Good Ground/Heart.

Don't allow the cycle of receiving and retaining to be stopped. Either by our fear, our money related issues, or pride. Or possibly a combination of them. TO RETAIN, WE MUST WORK ON OVERCOMING THESE.

D. The good ground. This person hears, receives, and produces a crop.

- 1. You will Retain what you just Received.
- 2. THE BEST THING THIS PERSON CAN DO IS CONTINUE CULTIVATING THE QUALITIES IN THEIR LIFE THAT ARE WORKING FOR THEM.

- a. Just, Noble, Virtuous, Worthy, Honest, and Good Heart.
- b. Understanding and Comprehension of the Word.
- c. Effort to keep Retaining the Word.
- d. Perseverance.
- e. Patience.

(See Definitions — Above)

- 3. The extent to which the Word will produce in you — 30, 60, or 100 fold — will be determined by the depth of the characteristics of the good heart/soil.
- 4. Throw yourself fully into what you already know to do. Make it your focus. That way you continue to grow and you Retain what you just Received.
- 5. Keep Faithing for more than what we are currently Receiving from God.
- 6. If you are having a measure of success, keep growing and working at it. Improving the condition of our heart will insure the Production and Retention of fruit.
- 7. DON'T TAKE ANYTHING FOR GRANTED. KEEP THE FAITH SWITCH TURNED ON.

Quick or Miraculous Receiving and Retention

What I'm referring to is when we receive very quickly. This happens quite often in prayer lines, laying on of hands situations, where the Gifts of the Spirit are in operation, and where signs and wonders are manifesting. Whatever the setting, the end result is that in a matter of minutes or hours, we have our answer.

A. Again, in the first ground — hard ground along the path — this is not an issue in Receiving and Retention.

1. This person is not receiving anything. So nothing is manifesting. They will leave the prayer line and nothing happened to them. No healing. No miracle. Etc. Their ground is so hard, nothing was able to penetrate.
2. What do they do? They need to break up their ground. I will again repeat what I said above concerning this kind of ground.

If this is our type of heart, WE NEED TO START WITH REPENTANCE. Deal with every area of sin and unbelief we are able to recognize. In Jer. 4:3-4 and Hos. 10:12 God is talking to Israel concerning their hard ground. The same concept carries through into what Jesus is saying in Mark 4.

"This is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: Break up your unplowed ground ("fallow ground" — KJV) and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts..."

Jer. 4:3-4a (NIV)

"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; ("fallow ground" — KJV) for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength and on your many warriors"

Hos. 10:12-13 (KJV)

3. We can learn some things from these passages.
 - a. It's our responsibility to break up our ground. We must take the first steps in repentance.
 - b. Circumcise our hearts. Begin the process of going full-out after God. MAKE GOD AND SERVING HIM THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IN OUR LIVES. LET GO OF OUR BAD HABIT PATTERNS AND EXISTING UNGODLY LIFE-STYLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
 - c. Begin to seek the Lord, and continue to do it until things start to change. Do it until he shows up with his showers of righteousness. The rain will start softening your heart.
 - d. The things we have been doing to harden us:
 - "Planted wickedness" — We have been actively participating with sin.

- “Reaped Evil” — We have been actively involved in the harvest of the sin.
- “Eaten the fruit of deception” — We have willfully allowed ourselves to take in deception and be deceived to what we’re doing.
- “Depended on your own strength and on your many warriors” — We have chosen to do it our way — Not God’s. And deal with the obstacles and problems/trouble in life via our own methods. These things have to be dealt with in our lives. If they are not dealt with, the hard ground will never change, and this person will never receive anything from God.

REPENT: GET NEW INFORMATION, REGRET THE OLD WAY, AND MAKE THE CHANGE!!!

4. Since Jesus stated that the demonic is strong in a persons life with this type of ground, some deliverance may be needed before they can live victoriously.
5. Stay submitted to God as he begins the process in us of killing the flesh. There will be some suffering to die to our sin, but that’s the only way our heart will soften. (1 Pet. 4:1-2)
6. And the first thing mentioned in Hos. 10 was to begin to sow righteousness and reap the harvest of unfailing love.
 - a. Not only does the person need to stop sowing and reaping from sin, they need to begin cultivating the new life of doing what’s right. (Stop the wrong, and do what’s right) Doing what is wrong will continue to harden us to spiritual things. It needs to be replaced with doing what is right — righteous. That will soften us.
 - b. Begin cultivating the Love walk. Study Love. Learn what scripture says it is, how it thinks, behaves, acts, chooses, plans, decides, relates, views the past — present — and future, etc. Grow in it, and then Willfully Choose to do it. (Reap it’s fruit)

B. The second type of ground — the stony/rocky heart.

1. Since this individual is very focused on what people think, feel, say, believe, etc. — they can be easily talked out of what just happened. Or at the very least brought to question it. THAT PROBLEM WILL NEED TO BE OVERCOME. As long as it is a weakness in our lives, someone will ALWAYS say the ‘right’ thing to cause us to question or doubt what just happened. When a miracle, healing, answer is still in it’s infant form in us, it can easily be destroyed, or stolen from us.

Again, THE APPROVAL OF PEOPLE, BEING LIKED, ETC. MENTALITY WILL HAVE TO BE OVERCOME.

In the growing time to overcome this problem, be honest with God and confess this weakness as sin. (1 John 1:9) He will forgive you, and cleanse you of it. By his Grace you are buying yourself some time to grow and not lose what you just received.

Next, since you’ve realized you have a problem in this area — DON’T LISTEN TO THE INPUT OF PEOPLE. YOU HAVE RECEIVED YOUR ANSWER. FOCUS ON IT

AND TAKE YOUR STAND RIGHT THERE. This is one of those battles where you need to take the attitude of — ‘This is to death’. In other words, nothing is more important than beating this. You must get solid in what the Word says about what you’ve just received. Listen to, be in agreement with, stand on the Word above what people may say to you that is negative about your answer, and/or contrary to what the Scripture says. Retaining your answer likely depends on it.

2. We also may struggle with standing up against circumstantial opposition. Things like returning pain, hearing bad news, being given a bad report, symptoms that indicate nothing supernatural has taken place, etc. can cause them to wonder, doubt, disbelieve, and back off their faith.

The desire to find an EASIER AND MORE CONFLICT FREE way of dealing with this may arise. This type of person/heart has very little Tenacity, Perseverance, and Determination. They are accustomed to taking the easy way out. If we are going to hold on to what you’ve just received, WE CANNOT TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT.

Again, THIS WEAKNESS OF WANTING LIFE TO BE COMFORTABLE AND EASY and having trained our spirit and soul to always look for that avenue — WILL OFTEN KILL THE HEALING, MIRACLE, ANSWER BEFORE WE LEAVE THE SERVICE.

Should any type of symptom or opposition surface, this person will immediately begin to question if God really did anything for them, and contemplate an easier way out of this situation — just in case he didn’t. They won’t stand solid in faith. Nor will they persevere in calling things that are not as though they were. This is a perfect setup to lose what they have just been given.

What are they to do? In addition to the information given in #1 above, guard your heart against the input of your flesh (and maybe even your soul). Counter the input with the Word. We cannot go by emotions in this fight. Counter and overcome the emotions with the Truth of the Word.

Take a life & death stand against the unbelief that will try to stir up in your heart. Your flesh will need to be disciplined and brought under the control of your spirit and soul.

3. In the beginning of this study we showed how that the things of God are ‘Sustained’ by faith. Once that faith is facing opposition, trouble, persecution — this person caves in to the opposition. Now they are without the faith to sustain what they have just received from God, so they will be in danger of Losing their answer.

Many times in prayer lines, or services/situations where the Gifts of the Spirit or signs and wonders are manifesting, it wasn’t the person’s faith that brought the answer. It was someone else’s faith, giftings, etc. that the Spirit was working through. So even though the person Received, they may not have the

understanding and faith to Retain what they were just given. That dramatically increases the chances of them losing their answer in a very short period of time.

In those situations, be honest with yourself about where you are in faith. Go to God and confess any unbelief as sin. (1 John 1:9) And then go to the throne of God, and ask for Grace and Mercy to help you in this time. (Heb. 4:15-16) GOD IS NOT TRYING TO TAKE THE ANSWER AWAY FROM YOU. HE'S TRYING TO KEEP IT IN YOU. He will help you any way he can. Grace and Mercy are his avenues to getting into situations and working in people's lives when they don't have the faith to carry it. Ask for Grace and Mercy in your situation to give you time to grow in the Word and your Faith.

What are these two types of hearts (people) to do in these situations?

4. If you are able to recognize what your particular tendencies are:
- a. CONFESS & REPENT OF THEM. Get it washed in the blood. (1 John 1:9)
 - b. Approach the throne of Grace Boldly to obtain Grace and Mercy to help you. (Heb. 4:15-16)
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Make a list of the weaknesses that the Lord is showing to you. Post them someplace where they are consistently in your sight. YOU CANNOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO GO INTO DENIAL TO WHAT YOU NEED TO DEAL WITH. Believe me, your flesh will want to. (Esp. now that you have your answer) Grace and Mercy will cover you so that you have time to grow. But if you don't take advantage of that window of time, at some point the thing you Received will likely be lost.

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- a. Over-coming your weakness and the evil tendencies of your heart.
- b. Cultivating the characteristics of the Good Ground/Heart.

Don't allow the cycle of receiving and retaining to be stopped. Either by our need for approval, or our desire to take the easy way out. Or possibly a combination of them. TO RETAIN, WE MUST WORK ON OVERCOMING THESE.

C. The third type of heart — the ground with thorns.

1. This person struggles with worry, anxiety, fear. As well as, money related issues come under this type of ground. Money issues involve things like pride, the desire to take it easy in life, pleasure, entertainment, power, position, etc. These are a focus of this person.

In either case, the fear or the money related issues, will cause them to Lose what they just encountered.

2. This is how that can work. Fairly quickly they come out from under the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit that they were being influenced by as the Holy Spirit was moving on them via the prayer line. They just experienced the Gifts of the Spirit, the signs and wonders, etc. Once they come out from under that atmosphere, it now depends on what's inside of them to retain what they were just given.
3. If they are a person of fear and worry, that weakness will immediately shift into gear. All different kinds of thoughts, feelings, may-be's will begin to flood them. In that type of mindset, it will be extremely difficult to Retain what they've just been given. Remember, we must Retain/Sustain by Faith. THE MORE MATURE WE CAN BE AS A CHRISTIAN WHEN WE RECEIVE FROM GOD — THE MORE EASILY IT WILL BE TO RETAIN. SO BEFORE WE EVER NEED AN ANSWER FROM GOD, WE NEED TO BE WORKING ON GROWING AND OVERCOMING OUR WEAKNESSES. THE GREATER THOSE WEAKNESSES ARE IN OUR LIVES, THE MORE LIKELY IT WILL BE THAT WE WILL NOT RETAIN WHAT WE'VE JUST RECEIVED.
4. If the money related issues are active in them, their mind is trained to think and meditate on the wrong things. After they leave the presence of the Spirit, instead of focusing on retaining what just happened, their mind goes else where. It will immediately go into realms that serve them, their selfishness, their plans, desires, etc.

It comes from having been trained into thinking about how to serve themselves. Faith doesn't operate in that type of setting. Faith operates in the realms of ministering to others, and using what you've just been given for the benefit of others. Since they are not used to thinking and flowing in that realm, they won't know how to continue ministering what was just received — to themselves.

WITHOUT OUR FAITH BEING FOCUSED ON THE THINGS NEEDED TO RETAIN, WHAT HAS JUST BEEN OFFERED WILL LIKELY BE CHOKED OUT.

Many times in prayer lines, or services/situations where the Gifts of the Spirit or signs and wonders are manifesting, it wasn't the person's faith that brought the answer. It was someone else's faith, giftings, etc. that the Spirit was working through. So even though the person Received, they may not have the understanding and faith to Retain what they were just given. That dramatically increases the chances of them losing their answer in a very short period of time.

In those situations, be honest with yourself about where you are in faith. Go to God and confess any unbelief as sin. (1 John 1:9) And then go to the throne of God, and ask for Grace and Mercy to help you in this time. (Heb. 4:15-16) GOD IS NOT TRYING TO TAKE THE ANSWER AWAY FROM YOU. HE'S TRYING TO KEEP IT IN YOU. He will help you any way he can. Grace and Mercy are his avenues to getting into situations and working in people's lives when they don't have the faith to carry it. Ask for Grace and Mercy in your situation to give you time to grow in the Word and your Faith.

What are these two types of hearts (people) to do in these situations?

5. If you are able to recognize what your particular tendencies are:
- a. CONFESS & REPENT OF THEM. Get it washed in the blood. (1 John 1:9)
 - b. Approach the throne of Grace Boldly to obtain Grace and Mercy to help you. (Heb. 4:15-16)
 - Grace is when God gives to us what we don't deserve.
 - Mercy is when God doesn't give to us what we do deserve.
 - c. Both of them will help buy you time to grow and change while you are Retaining what you were offered from the Lord.

Make a list of the weaknesses that the Lord is showing to you. Post them someplace where they are consistently in your sight. YOU CANNOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO GO INTO DENIAL TO WHAT YOU NEED TO DEAL WITH. Believe me, your flesh will want to. (Esp. now that you have your answer) Grace and Mercy will cover you so that you have time to grow. But if you don't take advantage of that window of time, at some point the thing you Received will likely be lost.

Get into the Word and GROW, GROW, GROW.

What is the aim of your growth.

- a. Over-coming your weakness and the evil tendencies of your heart.
- b. Cultivating the characteristics of the Good Ground/Heart.

Don't allow the cycle of receiving and retaining to be stopped. Either by our fear, our money related issues, or pride. Or possibly a combination of them. TO RETAIN, WE MUST WORK ON OVERCOMING THESE.

- D. The good ground. This person hears, receives, and produces a crop.
- 1. You will Retain what you just Received.
 - 2. THE BEST THING THIS PERSON CAN DO IS CONTINUE CULTIVATING THE QUALITIES IN THEIR LIFE THAT ARE WORKING FOR THEM.

- a. Just, Noble, Virtuous, Worthy, Honest, and Good Heart.
- b. Understanding and Comprehension of the Word.
- c. Effort to keep Retaining the Word.
- d. Perseverance.
- e. Patience.

(See Definitions — Above)

- 3. The extent to which the Word will produce in you — 30, 60, or 100 fold — will be determined by the depth of the characteristics of the good heart/soil.
- 4. Throw yourself fully into what you already know to do. Make it your focus. That way you continue to grow and you Retain what you just Received.
- 5. Keep Faithing for more than what we are currently Receiving from God.
- 6. If you are having a measure of success, keep growing and working at it. Improving the condition of our heart will insure the Production and Retention of fruit.
- 7. DON'T TAKE ANYTHING FOR GRANTED. KEEP THE FAITH SWITCH TURNED ON.

Jesus Gives Further Instruction

Here we are going to look at Mark 4:21-34. This is what it says:

“He said to them, Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

“Consider carefully what you hear, he continued. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you — and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”

“He also said, This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

“Again he said, What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.”

“With many similar parables Jesus spoke the Word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.”

Mark 4:21-34 — NIV

A. We are to See, Hear, and Understand how this works.

1. Verses 21-23 — Jesus asks a question? Why do we bring a lamp and put it on a stand? So we can see. (Remember: Jesus is the Light of the World. — John 1:4-9; 8:12) Jesus gave us light on a very huge issue by explaining this parable. Why is the light given? (Why did he explain this parable) Because what is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and what is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.

So whatever is going on in our lives that keeps us from Retaining what God has given to us, WE ARE SUPPOSED TO SEE. God is not hiding it from us.

Then he says — Pay attention to what I’m saying. If you can hear, listen up. (Paraphrased) Why would he say that? Because he really wants to make sure everyone gets this.

2. Verses 24-25 — Jesus gives another huge revelation. “Consider Carefully” what you hear. Why? Because to the “proportion/degree” you hear the Word — to that same “proportion/degree” you will see & hear the answers just given in this parable.

If we are willing to listen and understand this parable, we will be given more understanding. If we don’t give heed, even the little bit we do understand will be removed from us.

What is Jesus saying? ‘Pay attention’ and ‘seriously think about’ what is being said. Ultimately, IT WILL DETERMINE HOW MUCH YOU RECEIVE FROM GOD, AND HOW MUCH YOU RETAIN.

B. This is how the Word works.

1. Verses 26-27 — Once seed is scattered on the ground, (in your heart) it is growing inside of you day and night. (24/7)
2. Verses 28-29 — If that seed is allowed to grow, the combination of the human heart and the seed will produce a plant. The plant starts small (the stalk), grows and develops (the head), and then matures (the full kernel in the head). Once it is ripe and mature, it is harvestable.

We must let the seed grow. Deal with the rocks and the thorns. Don’t pull the seed or the plant out via unbelief. LET IT GROW. It will produce a harvest, and in good soil the harvest will be Retained.

3. Often, we tend to want quick answers. When it’s not happening in a short period of time, we begin to doubt and go into unbelief. KEEP THE FAITH TURNED ON. GIVE IT TIME. Remember, it’s like a growing plant. It will take a season of time before we see the full results of what was planted in us. (What we received) Also, seasons are not always around 90 days. Our season may be a week, month, a year, or in some cases it can be even longer. If we give up someplace in the process, our plant will die and we never will see the full harvest on what we were believing for.

NOTICE: Jesus is saying that the typical way the Word produces in us is over a season of time. A longer period of time. It’s not instantaneous.

C. The end result that God is looking for.

1. Verses 30-32 — says if the Word is allowed to grow in us, over time it will become a very large and productive plant. Not only will it reproduce good things in our lives, but it will produce in other people’s lives. (The birds come and eat what? The seeds of the plant. Those seeds are the same seeds that grew in us.)

The picture is that other people will take into themselves the same Word that produced in us. Now the process starts all over again.

Conclusion

When a person loses something they've received from God, it doesn't mean:

- (1) It never did really happen.
- (2) It was in their head. They wanted it so badly they deceived themselves.
- (3) It was a false manifestation.
- (4) It was demonic.
- (5) God changed his mind.
- (6) They have sinned.
- (7) They are unworthy.
- (8) Etc. — Etc. — Etc.

Most of the time, WHAT IT DOES MEAN is that there is a weakness in their heart. THEIR FAITH IS NOT AS STRONG AS IT NEEDS TO BE.

Even if we have lost something in the past. Don't be discouraged or give up. Work to identify the problem. Study the two soils that are not able to retain the Word. (Stoney and Thorns) Find out where our weakness lies. GROW, MATURE, AND FIX THE PROBLEM!!! Also study the qualities that are found in the good soil. Work the soil (heart) so that those good qualities are developing in us also.

Believe me, there are more opportunities coming your way to Receive and Retain. Don't allow yourself to get into some form of 'Pity-Party' or 'Woe is Me Attitude'. If you do, that will practically guarantee that you will not Receive and Retain much of what God has for you in the future.

Lastly, if you are one of those people who literally Never, or Rarely receives anything from God, here is what you need to do.

- (a) Recognize and admit your heart is that hard. Don't receive that as condemnation. If you do, that'll become your excuse for never getting past where you are.
- (b) Honestly go to God with this issue. He knows exactly what is the problem, and what is needed to fix it.
- (c) ASK HIM FOR WISDOM.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

James 1:5 — NIV

God is not into playing games with his people. Jesus said:

"Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?"

Matt. 7:7-11 — The Message Bible

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."

Matt. 7:7-11 — New Living Translation

"You do not have, because you do not ask God."

James 4:2 — NIV

Set your heart to the attitude that you will pursue this with tenacity, vigor, perseverance, and patience. The Length of time it takes for the answer to manifest is irrelevant. You will do this as long as it takes. If it's the last thing that kneels before an Almighty God before you leave this earth, you will stay with it that long if necessary.

YOU WILL GET YOUR ANSWER.

"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

Heb. 10:35-36 — NIV

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Gal. 6:9 — NIV