

# CHRISTIAN GROWTH

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Growing During Times of Stress

Discussion

Gardeners know that hot, dry, sunny weather over a long period of time will stress a lawn. It's amazing that during such a stressful time weeds still prosper. The same can apply to our lives as we walk and grow with Christ. During those dry, arid times when life seems to stress beyond imagination, weeds can grow and prosper in our lives as we struggle with the challenge.

Curiously, it turns out that heat and pressure over long periods of time can also be used for good as well. For example, this is the process that transforms coal into diamonds and limestone into marble.

It is important to realize that God brings times of stress, or testing, into our lives as a part of the transformation process. Romans 12:2 tells us about being transformed so that we can know the perfect will of God, and James 1:1-3 says "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

But it is also during those long periods of stress and testing that, just like a distressed lawn, weeds can prosper. In our lives, those weeds might be doubt, lack of faith, loss of prayer time, or inattention to the regular reading of God's Word. In fact, during times of testing, weeds of bitterness, murmuring, envy, jealousy, and pride can prosper.

There is also another truth here for us to see: Grass, if properly watered over a long period of time, will have long and healthy roots. This root system is then able to sustain the lawn with nutrients during long periods of heat and stress. As followers of Christ, we are blessed by the living water that Christ provides us to grow our roots deeper and deeper.

In the Gospel of John, Christ tells us about this living water when he speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well. In John 4:13-14, Jesus instructs us that "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Furthermore, in John 7:37-38, Jesus invites us to have that living water in our own lives when he says "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

Seasons of hot, dry, stressful times are sure to come to each of us, but with them comes the reassurance that as Christ raises us up to be His faithful followers, he will provide that living water so that our roots may grow deep and strong.

Knowing these days will come, or may be here for you today, consider this: If you are facing a time of testing, remember what James wrote in James 1:12, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

God always will provide the best for us, and His testing actually proves that He loves us and wants us to become all that we can be, as we live and grow in Christ. It may be a long hot summer in someone's life this year, but if it is, God will use it for good. It's our job to keep out the weeds during the process, and to be filled with living water that only comes from Christ.

In Christ,

**Wes**

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