

The Parable
of the
Tiny Seed

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THE PARABLE OF THE TINY SEED

I saw in my dream a tiny seed. Why my mind would ever focus its attention upon such a small and insignificant object was beyond me. For some reason, however, I was captivated by this little object. As I took a closer look, I noticed nothing particular. To all appearances it was a simple, ordinary seed.

In my dream, however, I heard a small frail, nervous type of voice, barely audible at first. As my ears began to adjust themselves, I discovered the source of the sound. It was the seed itself. My interest grew. I strained to hear exactly what he was saying. What a sad tale he told. He was all alone. A lonely apple seed cast aside by a passerby, who considered him not worthy of keeping. There he lay, alone in the grass, unnoticed by anyone but me, with

a very bleak future indeed. "For what chance," he said, "has a lonely, insignificant seed to survive the scorching heat of summer, and the constant caravan of birds in search of breakfast." Oh how he wept. How downcast he was. He had given up all hope in life.

As I listened, I heard him say, "Why did God make me like this? Why did I have to be born a silly seed? Why, I could think of a hundred things I would rather be. A bird, for example, how beautiful and graceful they are as they soar carefree in the sky, exploring here and there, diving and gliding with the greatest of ease. What ability they have. Oh, to be a creature like that would be so exciting. Or how about an ant, busy, intelligent, and creative, making their own homes and carrying objects many times their own weight. "Oh," he cried, (this time uncontrollably), "here I am a silly seed with no such ability or intelligence, doomed to be picked up by some animal and eaten, or to remain here and shrivel up in the sun." I found myself feeling sorry for the little seed. What a desperate situation. How terrible he must have felt. Yet I could do nothing to help him. I continued to watch, however, to see what might happen to him. Days went by

and nothing seemed to change. The little seed lay there motionless, ever weeping, with no hope.



One day the Master, himself, passed by and noticed the small seed lying in the grass. How He would notice such a small seed I have never been able to understand, but what struck me even more was how He stooped down to look at it. As I looked at the Master, I noticed a tear forming in His eye. What compassion, I thought. As I watched, I heard the Master speak. "Little seed," He said, "why do you weep?"

The little seed, with his feeble voice responded, "Oh Master, why do you waste your time talking to me. I am nothing. I have no ability. I do not have the intelligence of the ant. I cannot soar in the sky like the bird. I am doomed to lie here until someone comes and eats me, or the sun shrivels me up."

With His eyes now full of tears, the Master, Himself weeping, spoke to the little seed. "Little seed," He said, "I have a use for you. If you will allow me, I can do many great things through you, but you must obey me and be able to endure much suffering."

"Oh," cried the seed, "I do not know how You could you ever use me but Master, may Your will be done." "Very well," said the Master, and with that He picked up that little seed and carried him away.



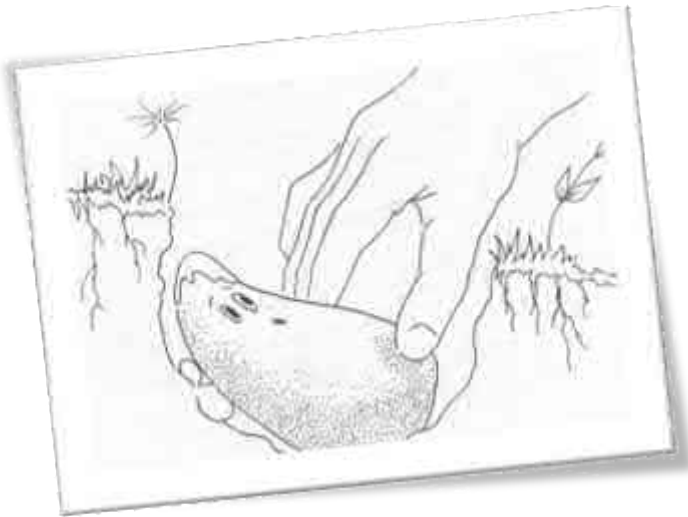
As I watched, I saw the Master, with great care and concern, take the little seed with Him to a green pasture, one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. After several minutes of looking here and there, the Master headed for the middle of the pasture, where there was a beautiful river. After sitting on a rock beside the river, the Master looked down to the little seed that had been securely kept in the warmth of His hand. "Little seed," He said, "this will be your new home."

"It is indeed a most beautiful place," replied the little seed. "How can I ever repay You for the love You have shown me this day?"

"I will know you love me in return," said the Master "if you obey Me and are faithful to the end. This will mean many struggles. Are you willing to face these for me?"

"You have already blessed me with more than I could ever have imagined by your kindness and love. How could I refuse to obey You to the end," answered the little seed?

"Very well," said the Master, as he began to dig a small hole in the ground. The seed stared at the hole that had just been dug. "What, may I ask, is the purpose for this hole in the ground," questioned the seed.



"The first lesson you must learn," replied the Master, "is that to truly live, you must first die. Your outer shell of pride and sin must be done away with and you must learn to put off the old self to gain the new."

With this, the seed began to shake and tremble, but somehow in his heart he must have been at peace, for I noticed his reaction was one of trust and confidence in the Master. He willingly surrendered himself, and the Master, with great care and skill, placed the seed in the hole He had just dug.

As I watched, the Master covered the tiny seed with earth and put a small fence around him that no predator might come to disturb or uproot what He had just planted. Then I heard the Master call forth and the rain began to fall and soak the bed where the little seed lay.

Down under that ground, the little seed began to feel the cold and dampness. He shivered greatly. For several hours the rain fell. During all that time I noticed how miserable the poor little seed felt. He was now completely soaked. Down under the ground the seed remained, constantly shivering in his cold, damp, dark home. I did not hear him complain, however, but instead I heard him say: "What is this cold, dark, and dampness compared to the love my Master has shown me today."



After a time the sun came out. Gradually it began to warm up the little bed. The warmth comforted the little seed, but he also began to feel very uncomfortable, for the sun not only warmed and comforted him but it began to stir up his inner parts. Things began to move inside him, and he was gradually changing.

This process of rain and sun continued for several weeks. It was after a week or so that I really began to see the little seed change. The bitter cold, the dampness and darkness had certainly been a tremendous struggle for the

seed, but not anything compared to what he began to experience now. As I have already said, the rain and the sun worked together so that the little seed began to be transformed. He was transforming so much on the inside that his outer shell began to stretch? You can imagine what agony he faced, for he was literally being ripped apart. The bitter cold, darkness and dampness continued throughout these days and only seemed to add to his already unbearable misery. I cringed in agony for him. My stomach was upset. My head spun, for in all my life I had never seen such suffering. Why did he not give up? What kept him going? What drove him on? What was the source of his strength? In the midst of all his struggles I heard him continually say: "What is all of this compared to the love my Master has shown me?" My heart broke, and I wept to see such love and devotion.

Several days passed and I began to notice definite signs of growth. The seed, no longer, just a tiny seed was growing taller, and as he did, he stretched out his roots to drink the moisture left in the ground from the river. Day and night this moisture was his constant delight.

In a few weeks he began to poke his head above the surface of the ground. He was pale and very weak from having been under the ground for such a long time. What an encouragement he received, when he first poked up his head. There before him, he saw the Master, who had never once left his side. The Master beamed with delight to see the little seed. As for the seed, he could hardly restrain the tears of joy. "Just to think that you have never left my side," he said to the Master.

The struggles did not end here. His adjustment to the new atmosphere was a welcome change, but not without its difficulty as well. The sun was all that much hotter now that the earth did not shelter him from its rays. The burning heat struck his body and caused him to ache all over. After several days, however, his body began to adjust and he found the rays more pleasant. In fact, he began to enjoy the sun, and would stretch out his arms to catch as many rays as possible. "Oh the grace of the Master," he said, for that is what he called the sun, "how it warms the heart and brings growth and vitality to my being."

As the months passed, I noticed a tremendous change in him. Now several inches tall, he began to experience a new struggle. The wind, which he simply called "trials," would often blow through the pasture and I noticed how at times it would strike the poor little seed or seedling I should say, for he was indeed now much more than a seed. He would often battle these "trials" for many hours. They would blow in his face as they sought to knock him down, or if possible, break him in two. He would often fight to save his life. The worst part about it was that he never knew when these trials would come or how strong they would be. A few times my heart almost failed me for I felt he would surely be broken in two, yet for some unknown reason, he survived.



In the midst of all these struggles, I would often see the seedling look up to the Master, who was always beside him. How encouraged he was to know that his Master was still there. Just the thought of how much the Master loved him drove him to limits I never thought possible. I must mention something else about these winds, or "trials." They somehow served to strengthen his trunk and each day he was becoming stronger and more able to face them.

As years went by, he continued to mature and I heard him one day speaking to the Master. "Master," he said, "It's not that I'm not content

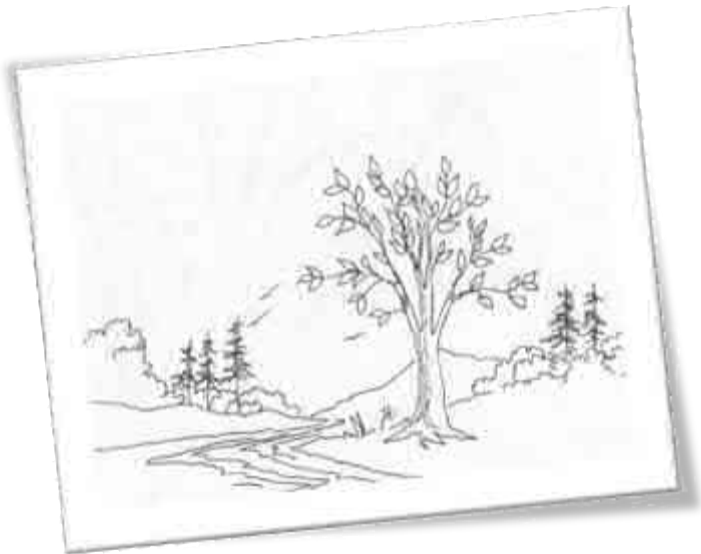
and happy with what you have given me, for you took that small, insignificant seed that I was and made me into a beautiful young tree. For what you have done I must thank you. Your love and faithfulness to me I cannot understand, but I am so grateful and eternally indebted to You. One thing, however, puzzles me. If you would be so kind as to answer I would be ever so happy."

"Simply ask," said the Master, "and it will be given unto you." "Master," said the little tree, "in the past several years your grace (the sun) and your food (the river) have caused me to grow so that today I am not at all what I used to be. All this time I have been very grateful, but I have also been remembering how when You picked me up as a little seed you told me You had a use for me. Each day I ask myself, "is this the day that I will be useful for the Master?" When will You give to me this great privilege of being your servant, that I might do something for you in return for all You have done for me?"

"Little tree," said the Master, "the time is coming when you will serve Me. I have all this time

been preparing you for a special purpose. It is for you but to wait and remain faithful."

With this the little tree was happy, and with an even greater dedication, (for now his faith had been stirred), he continued to soak up the food from the river and the rays from the sun, ever growing and maturing, confident that the Master had everything under control.



A few more years passed and by now the tree was tall and beautiful. It was at this point in his life that he began to see something of the ful-

fillment of the Master's promise to him. He often had the privilege of providing the weary birds a resting place as they travelled to and fro throughout the pasture. He was thankful for this ministry of hospitality that the Master had given him.

As I looked about the pasture in my dream, I was struck by how strategically the Master had placed the little tree. For he was one of the few such trees in the garden who could so provide a resting place for the weary travelers. He also had the opportunity to provide a home for several bird families, and protected them from their predators by hiding their nests with his branches and leaves. How excited he was to watch those eggs hatch and see the little birds breaking forth into life and eventually learn to fly. The birds were thankful to the tree, and year after year would return to the home that he had safely guarded for them while they were away? Over the years, many benefited from his hospitality.



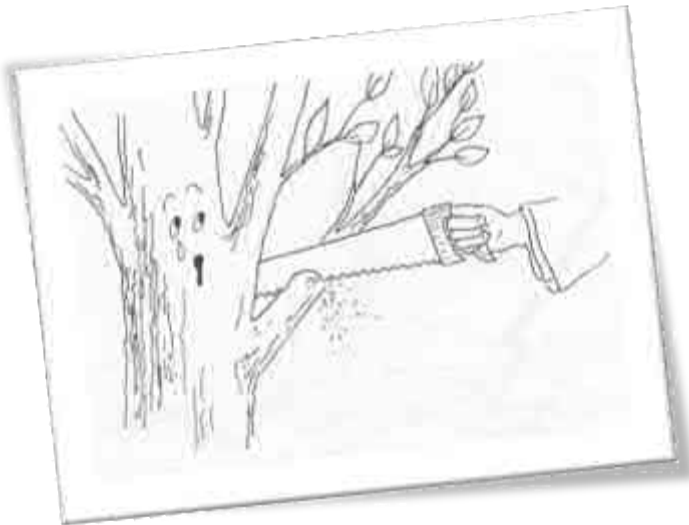
By now the tree was producing a new crop of apples each year. These he freely gave to all who had need. I noticed that he never once thought of keeping any for himself (I doubt he even knew what they tasted like). These were the finest apples in the pasture. His friends, the birds, would come by and eat freely from his abundant supply. The passerby felt at liberty to pick the fruit from his branches. For those who could not reach, the tree would throw down some apples to the ground so that the smaller animals of the pasture could benefit from his fruit as well.

What nobody really knew, however, was how much pain he experienced in giving of his fruit. He would allow the birds to peck for hours at the apples? With each peck, he felt deep pain, for indeed they were piercing his very body. When his fruit was picked, he groaned to himself, for his very body was being pulled apart. He never complained, however, for the simple joy of being able to serve the Master was far greater than the temporary discomfort he felt.

I saw the Master approach him one day. With a concern in His eye He spoke: "My dear tree," He said, "I have noticed that you have some branches that seem only to hinder your productivity for Me. The time has come for us to deal with these branches. These branches are a cumbrance to you and merely sap you of your strength, but produce no good fruit."

"My desire," said the tree, "is to be the best I can be for You. Do what you must that I might be entirely what I should be." With that, to my horror, I saw the Master pull out a great saw. He placed the saw on one of the branches close to the trunk and began to saw. What pain shot through the entire tree as the teeth of the Master's saw dug deeper and deeper

into his limbs. The sap oozed out where the Master cut. For a whole hour, which seemed to endure an eternity, I saw the Master cutting one branch after another. The tree screamed out in anguish, for it is never easy to lose part of oneself, even though these things may be a hindrance to one's productivity and growth. He endured with great confidence in his Master, however, and finally the last branch fell.



The Master then proceeded to place a balm on each of these wounds. How it soothed the pain. So soothing was the balm that when the final wound had been covered, the tree felt joy

and peace as he had never before experienced. He found a new vigour for service, and was immediately aware of new growth. If only he had known before of these branches that had hindered him, he would have asked the Master to rid him of them sooner.

For many more years the tree remained in the centre of the pasture. He proved to be faithful and consistent? He continued to bear fruit and provide for those who passed by. His branches were a comfort for the weary and a home for the homeless. He faced many storms, and the "trials" (the wind) often came to perplex him. There were also many times when he had to call on the Master to prune the branches that were non-productive. In all, he was content and happy. He had grown to love the home the Master had given him and was constantly filled with joy as he continued to serve.

One day I saw the Master leave the pasture. This perplexed me, for I wondered what He was doing. After a time, I saw Him return, and in His hand He carried another tiny seed. This tiny seed He placed beside the tree and walked away. The apple tree, looking down,

saw the tiny seed and was overcome with compassion and joy, for he remembered the time when he, himself, was the same size as that little seed. He remembered his sorrow and how the Master had cared for him in his need. "Little seed," he cried out, "where have you come from, and what are you doing here?"

Somewhat startled, the tiny seed looked up and said, "Sir, I remember very little about my past and for the most part choose to forget it, for there is nothing I would desire to boast in. Let me simply say that in my despair and misery, the Master showed His abundant love to me. This is all I now choose to remember about my past. He has promised to use me, and I am so grateful for His decision though I know not how He could ever use a simple insignificant seed like me."



As I watched in my dream, I was again reminded of the Master's great overall plan, for He had strategically placed that tiny seed at the trunk of the dear old tree so that he could be ministered to in his hour of need. I heard the tree, with great joy and excitement, recount the tale of how the Master had found him and planted him in the ground. He shared some of the struggles he had experienced and how the love of the Master had been his constant driving force. "What sacrifices you made" said the tiny seed to the tree. "What pain you endured."

"I have made no sacrifice for which the Master has not greatly repaid me," said the tree. "What is a little seed, doomed to perish, compared to what the Master has made me today. As for the pain, it is indeed true that I have had to endure much, but oh what is all this compared to the love the Master has shown me and the joy I have in His service."

At this point in my dream, I saw the Master return. "Are you ready to endure what this dear faithful tree has endured to become the best you can be for Me?" he said to the tiny seed.

"Yes, Master," he answered, "I am confident that while the path is full of difficulties, Your will is best." "Very well," said the Master, "but there is something I must show you first." With that the Master turned to His dear old tree. "Friend," He said, "you have served me for many years. The time has come, however, that you must go. I have another plan for you, even greater than this. Are you willing to obey and move on to greater things?"

"You have never failed me all these years," said the tree. "All you have done has been for my growth and productivity. I see no reason

now to doubt Your word. Here I am. Do with me what you will."

With that the Master took out an axe. With mighty blows, he struck the trunk of the tree. The tiny seed was stunned and perplexed, but noticed the glow the tree gave with each of the Master's blows. While the pain was obvious, somehow the promise of something better strengthened him. He was so wrapped up in the promise that he hardly noticed the pain.



At last the old tree fell. His branches were lopped off and his roots, which were so deeply established, pulled up. The Master gently picked him up and carried him away. After

some time I noticed the Master return to care for the soil that had been uprooted, leveling it off and loosening it up. When all this was done, He picked up the tiny seed and after several encouraging words, dug a little hole and placed that tiny seed exactly where the dear old tree had previously been.

I awoke from my sleep with tears in my eyes. What happened to that dear old tree? I am not sure. I am absolutely confident, however, of the Master's design.

I considered for a moment what I had dreamed. I recognized that God was not searching for great people with all kinds of potential and natural ability to be His servants. He desires those who know full well their weakness and are, as a result, driven to Him for daily strength. What great love He has for even the smallest of His creatures. If only I would yield my life fully to Him, He would use me beyond my greatest expectations.

Thus ends the parable of the tiny seed, mightily used of God, not because of great natural ability and power, but because of a spirit submissive to his Master. The sad tragedy, however, is that many a person with even greater

potential perishes, for they fail to so commit themselves to the Master, and do not accept the lot that is theirs from Him. Could it be that I am one of those people, so bursting with potential, yet because of my hard outer shell of pride and sin, I remain stifled without ever knowing the joy of growth and victory in the Lord? If God so uses a tiny seed, can I not trust Him with my life? How much more can He use a man or woman (however devoid of natural strength and ability) who commits their life to Him? May God so help me to be such a person.

Light To My Path Book Distribution

Light To My Path (LTMP) is a book writing and distribution ministry reaching out to needy Christian workers in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Many Christian workers in developing countries do not have the resources necessary to obtain Bible training or purchase Bible study materials for their ministries and personal encouragement. F. Wayne MacLeod is a member of Action International Ministries and has been writing these books with a goal to distribute them freely or at cost price to needy pastors and Christian workers around the world.

To date tens of thousands of are being used in preaching, teaching, evangelism and encouragement of local believers in over sixty countries. Books in these series have now been translated into a number of languages. The goal is to make them available to as many believers as possible.

The ministry of LTMP is a faith based ministry and we trust the Lord for the resources nec-

essary to distribute the books for the encouragement and strengthening of believers around the world. Would you pray that the Lord would open doors for the translation and further distribution of these books?

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