

Russell Kelfer

The Miracle of Multiplication

991-B

Series: Let God Be God

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

The Miracle of Multiplication

There is no greater miracle than this: A farmer tills the soil. Tiny, tiny seeds fall into the ground. They are buried beneath the dirt, lost to the eye, presumed to be dead. Weeks pass. Suddenly, a tiny shoot forces its way through the crusty land. And then another. And then another. The stems begin to grow. Stronger they grow. Greener they grow. Taller they grow. A few more weeks pass. An entire field becomes a wonderland of life. As far as the eye can see, from that seemingly insignificant handful of seeds, the whole countryside comes alive with grain.

Thousands of miles away, months later, a family of five on the brink of starvation sits down to eat their first meal in days. It came from that seed. It came from that field. A miracle? Beyond a doubt. It is the miracle of multiplication. It is the realization of a principle Jesus so clearly explained in John, chapter 12 where He said this:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:24)

It is the phenomenon of the seed. The miracle of multiplication. And it is, to say the least, an awesome thing to see a tiny seed turn into an ocean of strength. But as miraculous as that is, God designed that seed for a far deeper purpose than that. God designed seed to teach spiritual truth. For the seed is a picture of the Word of God, and the harvest is a picture of the miracle of multiplication that takes place when the seed of the Word falls into the soil of the human heart.

We have been examining in some detail, the Master's amazing word-picture of the process of multiplication. Some call it the parable of the soil. We chose to call it the parable of the seed, for the common denominator throughout the whole story is the seed of the Word. It is the seed that possesses the life. It is the seed that possesses the growth. It is the seed that holds the key to the harvest. There are, however, some things that can keep the seed

The Miracle of Multiplication

from accomplishing its intended goal. And that is the crux of this most unusual tale our God shared with His bewildered followers. It was more than a story. It was a window which man could peer through to observe spiritual truth. And it was even more than that. It was a pattern through which the disciples, and we as well, could come to understand *all the parables*.

You may remember how it happened: The Master gathered the disciples around and told them a story, a quite simple story, actually. In the story a farmer planted some seed. There was no indication that he was a particularly careless farmer; but as is always the case, some of the seed fell by the side of the road, where immediately, the birds of the air came and snatched it away. Still more of the seed fell on soil that proved to be somewhat shallow, and though it began to grow, as soon as the heat of the sun beat down upon it, that seed withered and died, because it had never been able to develop roots. Still a third part of the seed fell on reasonably good soil, but as it grew up, weeds were allowed to grow up alongside, and before long the weeds choked the seed, and it, too, died. There was, fortunately, still more seed. It fell on healthy soil, so it grew...and grew...and grew...and grew.

Then Jesus paused, and with great authority, He tenderly etched the words of that parable into a portrait of Truth. He made the “spiritual switch” and lovingly turned a simple story into a powerhouse of wisdom. He explained the parable this way:

...He said the seed was a picture of the Word of God.

...He said we, as sowers, are to sow the Word.

...He said some of the seed will fall, as it did in the story, on the roadside of life; it will fall into hearts that have no understanding, and the birds will come and snatch it up. Then He added: the seed-snatcher, in the realm of the spirit, is none other than Satan himself.

...He said some of the seed we sow will fall on shallow soil, and *because the hearer has no roots*, when the heat of persecution or adversity beats down upon them, they, too, will lose heart and give up.

...He said some of the seed will fall on thorny soil; soil that is likened to the lives of those who start out strong, but don't tend the gardens of their lives. They let the distractions of the world, the futility of a temporal value system, or the lust of besetting

The Miracle of Multiplication

sins, crowd into their lives and *choke the Word*, until it becomes unfruitful.

So God has hand-painted on the canvas of the Word, a lifesize portrait of seed that does not grow. Up until now, we've learned a lot about seed and soil and fruitless farming. And if the parable stopped there, it would seem to have a negative message indeed. But the unproductive seed is not the heart of the parable; it is rather the *preface* to the parable. The heart of the parable comes in the last phrase. And lest we get caught up in what *doesn't grow*, we'd best take a good, hard look at those final words. There, Jesus said this:

²“But some fell into the good soil; and growing up and increasing, it brought forth results, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.” ³And when He had said these things, He exclaimed ²to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (1¹Matthew 13, 2²Mark 4, 3³Luke 8, TLOCIS)¹

Now listen as God on earth explains in detail what He means:

⁴“But he who received seed upon the good soil is he who, ³hearing the Word in an honest and good heart, ²welcomes ¹and understands it and ³holds it fast, and with patience ¹bears fruit indeed and brings forth, ²some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.”

(1¹Matthew 13, 2²Mark 4, 3³Luke 8, TLOCIS)

I- THE MESSAGE OF MULTIPLICATION

We will, at a later time, examine this portion of the parable from the perspective of the Christian's need to tend the soil of his life. In this lesson, however, we will examine instead, the miracle of multiplication. We will look through the eyes of the sower at the seed that grows. Jesus said if you have ears to hear, listen. The miracle isn't that some seed didn't make it to the harvest. That's to be expected. The miracle is that *some of the seed falls on soil that will accept it*, and once it does, the divine law of multiplication goes into effect, and from nothing comes everything. From tiny seeds of spiritual Truth there blossom an incredible crop that grows and grows and grows. The miracle of miracles is the message of multiplication. It is God taking soil, the likes of my heart and the likes of your heart, and using *that*, He takes the Seed of His Word and pours it into our lives, producing fruit adequate to feed the world, spiritually. That's the miracle.

¹ The Life of Christ in Stereo: The Four Gospels Speak in Harmony; by Johnston M. Cheney; © 1969 Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon

The Miracle of Multiplication

You and I are the miracle. And that's the message of the parable of the seed. Let's explore what the Master meant by the miracle of multiplication. And let's stop before we're through and bow in awe and adoration before the God who makes the seed to grow.

Our title is: "The Miracle of Multiplication", and our outline:

- I- The Message of Multiplication
- II- The Miracle of Multiplication
- III- The Methods of Multiplication
- IV- The Mentality of Multiplication

II- THE MIRACLE OF MULTIPLICATION

The whole parable leads up to this climactic conclusion. The unproductive soil is painted in detail, much like a dark background on a painting, which, if seen by itself, seems ominous; but when seen as a backdrop, it simply gives added brilliance to the lighter colors which make up the foreground. The three kinds of soil that do not produce lasting fruit are given to us as reminders of what we'll be missing if we don't give the seed its rightful chance. But they are not the highlight. Like a haunting prelude, they simply prepare the heart for the melody itself. The melody is the melody of multiplication. It is the song of fruitfulness, penned by the Spirit of God on the canvas of the Word, to give to each of us a breath of encouragement, a sense of purpose, a humility coupled with power, that we are the chosen vessels of a sovereign God to take the seed of His Word and broadcast into the soil of searching lives, and then to witness the sheer miracle of transformation, followed by the miracle of multiplication, until a single seed reproduces a harvest of spiritual fruit. It's a miracle! What a gracious God we have!

What this means is this:

1- You are a miracle. You are a miracle of transforming multiplication. The fact that God reached down from Heaven and, using the imperfect vessels around you, somehow communicated to you the Living Word of God is a miracle. Your heart opened. The miracle multiplied. You asked Christ to come into your life. At that instant, all of eternity entered time, so that for all of your time you could experience eternity. God entered your life, personally. A tiny seed it was at the moment. And yet, day by day, if you have been faithful to His Word, your life has been changing. Little by little, your bitterness has been dissolving in an ocean of love.

The Miracle of Multiplication

Little by little, your anger has been disappearing, being replaced with patience and kindness. Little by little, those habits that held you captive are becoming captive themselves to the Spirit of God. Your language is changing. Your appetites are changing. Your reason for living is changing.

You find yourself loving people you never could have loved before. You find yourself helping people you never could have helped before. You find yourself caring in ways you never cared before. Prejudices are crumbling; vengeance is disappearing; insensitivity is being gradually destroyed by an every-increasing measure of compassion. You are not the same person you once were. You will never be that person again. Something miraculous is happening inside of you. It is the miracle of multiplication. What began as the seed of conversion is spreading into every facet of your life, until now you are becoming a walking, talking expression of Jesus Christ. And every day you live, the shock waves extend further into the recesses of your life. It is a miracle. *The miracle of multiplication.*

2- There is perhaps a still greater miracle unfolding, as well. It is the miracle of missionary multiplication. God did not transform you to put you into an eternal deep freeze and keep you from spoiling until He was ready for you. He saved you to use you. He saved you to send you. You are one of His ambassadors to a foreign land, commissioned and sent by the King to be His representative in a world that does not speak your language, does not understand your message, and does not know your King exists. It's not to be a hobby. It's to be your vocation. You are an ambassador for Christ. You are, therefore, to admonish all you meet, "I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

You are probably saying, "But I'm not an effective ambassador at all. I can't preach. I can't teach. I can't disciple effectively. I can't even witness without swallowing my words and forgetting my verses. I may be an ambassador, but I'm sure that I'm not on God's first string. I'm not even sure I'm in the lineup."

My friend, the purpose of this lesson is to, once and for all, put an end to that kind of reasoning. You are who you are because of Who lives inside of you, not because of what you do. You *are* multiplying. Maybe not as visibly as you'd like. Maybe not in a way that is as measurable in this performance-oriented Christian community we live in as you would like. That's probably good.

The Miracle of Multiplication

But chances are, you are multiplying in spite of yourself; and when you get to Heaven, you just may well be surprised at the army of saints who are there because of the seed of the Word that fell from your life.

You may be surrounded by those whose very testimonies stem from your life, and not even know it. You may be walking down the streets of Glory one day, only to come across someone who comes up to you and says, "Thank you for sowing the seed, Beloved; you are responsible for an ocean of converts." You will possibly recoil in disbelief, for you never considered yourself a soul-winner or a disciple-maker. You went to seminars, but nothing happened. You went door-to-door, and only got rebuffed. Then this one who is so grateful to you will explain. The explanation may go something like this: "You see, my friend, I am an evangelist; 35,000 people came to Christ in one year through my preaching. But I came to Christ through the witness of a Sunday School teacher in a little town 30 miles from where you live. The teacher of that class was a friend of your daughter's. Your daughter came to Christ through your faithful display of Christ, and your faithfulness in exposing her to Truth. In college, she witnessed to her roommate. Her roommate later married and began to teach a class of five very hard-to-manage seven-year olds in that little country church. I was one of those five. I am in the Kingdom because you cared enough to share Christ with your child. I am in the Kingdom because your child cared enough to share Christ with her roommate. I am in the Kingdom because that woman cared enough to lovingly but consistently teach the Truth to squirming, squealing children. You, Beloved, are my Great-Grandmother in Christ. And those thousands upon thousands you see gathered over there who came to Christ through my ministry are your offspring. It all happened through *the miracle of multiplication.*"

III- THE METHODS OF MULTIPLICATION

Now, I am aware that this portion of this lesson may be easily misunderstood. I pray not. But nonetheless, I believe it is essential, essential because there is an ocean of discouraged believers out there who have come to see themselves as second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God because they do not conform to the evangelical systems of our day. They have become victims of a new kind of legalism that is sweeping through the Body of Christ, a kind of legalism that, like all forms of legalism, denies and

The Miracle of Multiplication

defies all forms of existing legalism, and in so doing, establishes its own. It has developed from fruitfulness. It has progressed through visible victories. Therefore, it is hard to refute. The problem is not in its success. The problem is in its exclusiveness.

What we have done is this: We have taken whatever has visibly produced results in the Christian ministry and deified the systems, until *only those who do it that way, are considered truly spiritual*.

It is unconscionable in its condemnation. But it is deadly, nonetheless, because it leaves in its wake, two classes of people: those who are discouraged because they don't measure up and those who become arrogant or spiritual supermen because they do. I believe neither pleases God.

In the parable, the sower was virtually unable to tell which seed would produce fruit. There were, however, things that we, as sowers, were to do to be certain the Word was not lost as we sowed. We were to watch for the seed-snatcher. We were to build roots, and we were to tend the garden, lest the weeds of subtilty, greed, or besetting sins grow up and choke the Word. Then we were to sow and leave the rest up to the Hands of a Sovereign God, who alone makes the seed to grow.

I do not believe that Jesus was patenting a system for sowing seeds. I believe He was outlining principles for a healthy crop. And I believe we must be careful to realize the diversity of the Body of Christ, the creativity of our God, and the deceptiveness of our enemy, lest we try to turn the power of God into a formula, and the plan of God into a straightjacket.

There are, in essence, from a Scriptural perspective, a variety of ways God uses us to multiply the seed. We will only have time to list a few of them, but perhaps that will give us at least a glimpse of the diversity of God's plan.

1- First there are the Kingdom's "movers and shakers". These are the guys and gals who occupy the limelight of the Christian community. Their names become household words. They are the mass multipliers of God's world. They may be media evangelists or just well-known pastors of large congregations. They may be leaders of Christian organizations or well-known authors or highly visible seminary professors who affect multitudes every time they preach or teach. They may be teachers that travel and teach seminars. Their ministry may be right on, or way off,

The Miracle of Multiplication

doctrinally speaking, but nonetheless, their very visibility makes them multipliers. Whatever they say, thousands respond to. Whatever they do, thousands react to. And most of the rest of us envy them to a large degree. We imagine that, in Heaven, they are going to have crowns so large they will need assistants to put them on, and a following so huge God will have to build a patio on their mansion to house their admirers. We may be surprised.

2- The second category of multipliers are the eye-ballers. These are the men and women who see the primary method of multiplication as a one-on-one discipleship relationship, where one guy meets another guy at Jim's Coffee Shop or Sam's Diner at 6:30 in the morning once a week to review their verses and talk about their progress. It has proved to be one of the most effective techniques known to produce apparently lasting fruit and accomplish apparently instant, visible growth. If God has gifted you or enabled you to multiply your life this way, praise Him. You are privileged, indeed, for you will be able to virtually measure your fruitfulness in changed lives. But please be careful. Because this technique is the most effective, it is also one of the most dangerous. The dangers are three-fold. 1) Be careful you do not produce tunnel-visioned Christians, who see the whole Body of Christ through the lens of your life. 2) Be sure to expose them to other parts of the Body of Christ, lest you produce your weaknesses as well as your strengths in their lives. There is the danger of producing "clone-your-own" Christians, because often our personalities, as well as our concepts of the Gospel become a part of the lives we reproduce. 3) If we are not careful, spiritual pride can become one of the products of this kind of relationship. It is easy to assume, when you are being discipled one-on-one, that you are a hand-picked Candidate For Officer's Training School in the Kingdom, and thus have a corner on multiplication. One-on-one discipling is still the most visibly effective method, but unless you keep your perspective of the Body as a whole as you do so, you may well experience a short-range spurt of growth, followed by a season of spiritual arrogance and self-centeredness. As always, that which can be most profitable, Satan sees as most vulnerable.

3- Another kind of multiplier might be called the flashlight Christian. This is the guy or gal who may have a difficult time expressing his or her faith, but who has so allowed Christ to infuse their life, that the demonstrable difference in their character

The Miracle of Multiplication

quietly draws others to Jesus. It is an interesting experience to sit in a room of newcomers and have them share how they came to Christ. Some heard the Gospel in an evangelistic meeting. Some were confronted where they worked. Many heard the Word at church. Some were simply touched through reading the Scriptures. But, oh, how often, someone will say: "I just couldn't explain away the difference in so-and so's life. They had something I had to have." The words may vary, but the reality is consistent. Few things multiply the Gospel more readily than a changed life. And, Beloved, some of you here, who are so down on yourselves because you're not "movers and shakers" or "clone your own-ers", are missing the mark. God may have enabled you, *just through the Christ-likeness of your character*, to touch a life which in turn will touch a life which in turn will change the world. Don't be taken in by those who inadvertently would rubber stamp the Gospel. It is possible to be a multiplier and never be known in the Christian community by the visible results of your ministry. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may *see your good works*, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." They see your life and the Glory goes to God. Flashlight Christians...an effective tool in the hands of God to multiply the seed.

4- There are "Closet Christians." Don't misunderstand the phrase. By "Closet Christians", I mean those who don't feel comfortable on the platforms of life, but who often feel drawn to the prayer closets of life to agonize and intercede for others. And once again, Beloved, we will not know until we get to Heaven how many of us are in the Kingdom because someone *prayed and prayed and prayed*. But I'll tell you one thing, the number will astonish us. Oh, the stories abound of the really visible success stories in the limelight of Christendom who, when the truth is known, are there because there have been and are in the waking hours of every day someone or someones who simply will not rest until the courts of Heaven have been bombarded with prayers on their behalf. Billy Graham is a great man, but he will be the first to tell you that his power comes from the prayers of the thousands who intercede for him daily. And how many of us are saved or are growing because a godly grandmother or a caring mother or a faithful teacher prayed and prayed and prayed until the wall around our hearts broke down, and God was able to get through. Dear Closet Christian: Keep it up. Don't stop. When I get a letter saying someone is praying for me, I cannot help but bow before a sovereign God and worship. What a privilege! What

The Miracle of Multiplication

a ministry...a ministry of multiplication.

IV- THE MENTALITY OF MULTIPLICATION

So the miracle is not that some of the seed fails to grow. The miracle is that an omnipotent God takes the seed that *does fall on fertile soil*, and using every conceivable method, every conceivable kind of Christian, in every conceivable walk of life, takes it and multiplies it, until it produces thirty, sixty, even a hundred times its weight. You may be saying, "But I'm not experiencing the harvest like Joe is!" Beware! Remember three things.

1- The Scripture calls some to sow and some to water and some to reap. It doesn't matter which job God's given you. He gives the increase, and no one else deserves the Glory.

2- The harvest isn't here; it's there. And you can't possibly tell how fruitful your life has been until you get to Heaven. You have no way of knowing about the evangelist who was saved by the Sunday School teacher your daughter led to Christ. And it's just as well. That way, you can't steal God's glory. But trust Him. His Word in your life will not return void.

3- Remember, you can't be rewarded in both places. And some of those who see such fruitfulness here, and revel in it, will have nothing to show for all their ministering when they get to Glory. For when they saw and gloried here, *they had their reward*. Quietly go about doing the work of the ministry where God has placed you as God has equipped you. Beloved, He has made no mistakes. If you are a "mover and shaker" in the Christian world, just humble yourself that God can use the likes of you and remain faithful. If God has called you to an "eye-ball to eye-ball" ministry, praise God and be faithful. But don't fall into the trap of cloning God's methods or limiting God's power. If God has transformed you and is using your life to shine in the darkness, keep the lens clean; and remember He is the light, not you. If God has called you to the role of an intercessor, though the nights be long and the accolades be few, don't lose heart. God has prepared for you a crown the rest of us couldn't wear if we had it. You, too, are involved in the ministry of multiplication.

Tend the soil of your life, Beloved, as the parable has warned us to do. Then let God be Himself in you. I promise you one thing, if you'll let Him, He will multiply Himself through your life in ways you could never have imagined...some thirty...some sixty...some

The Miracle of Multiplication

a hundred fold. And one day, even what has been done in secret will be rewarded openly. You will be amazed on that day. You will be humbled on that day. But you will worship on that day... at the incredible power of the seed...and the incredible faithfulness of the one who gives the increase.

“To Him be Glory and Honor and Praise Forever.”

Amen.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(03.11.15)