



The Garden View

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Phases of Growth

By: Bonnie McClure



You may have heard the phrase, “growth does not happen overnight.” But that isn’t entirely true. Growth is an ongoing process that happens all the time, including overnight (in fact, during sleep our growth hormones are released), but it happens in small, incremental phases that may not look exactly like our “end goal.”

Before the acorn can become an oak tree, it must first go through many more vulnerable phases; taproot, shoot, seedling, and then an adult tree, sometimes for hundreds of

years. It endures season after season, at times not even producing its iconic acorns until at least twenty years of age. Still, all the while, it is maturing and growing bit by bit, often in unseen ways. Each phase is a necessary predecessor to what lies ahead.

God grows us this way, too. When we take our prayers to God, often we are seeking answers that are absolute – for the pain to be gone, for the problem to be solved, for the decision to be made once and for all. Sometimes God answers prayers in this way, but more often, He answers in measured affirmations to which we must attune ourselves, preparing us in phases that will deliver us to the end goal.

An answered prayer may come as a feeling of peace or an idea that we have, an intuition about how to handle a situation, or a scripture verse that holds valuable insight into our circumstances. His answer is to lead us in a set upon direction, knowing we cannot simply make the leap from acorn to oak tree in a blink of the eye. He takes us to the next step in time and the next phase in growth, eventually drawing us a path to full maturity.

His walk with us is for the long haul and He isn’t afraid of the time or demands of the growth process. He gives us guidance, patience when we wander, and embraces us when we return to the work.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”