

Harder than we thought

**Sometimes a journey turns out
to be harder than we thought it would be**

Examples of journeys that might surprise us in the challenge?

Life can be harder than expected

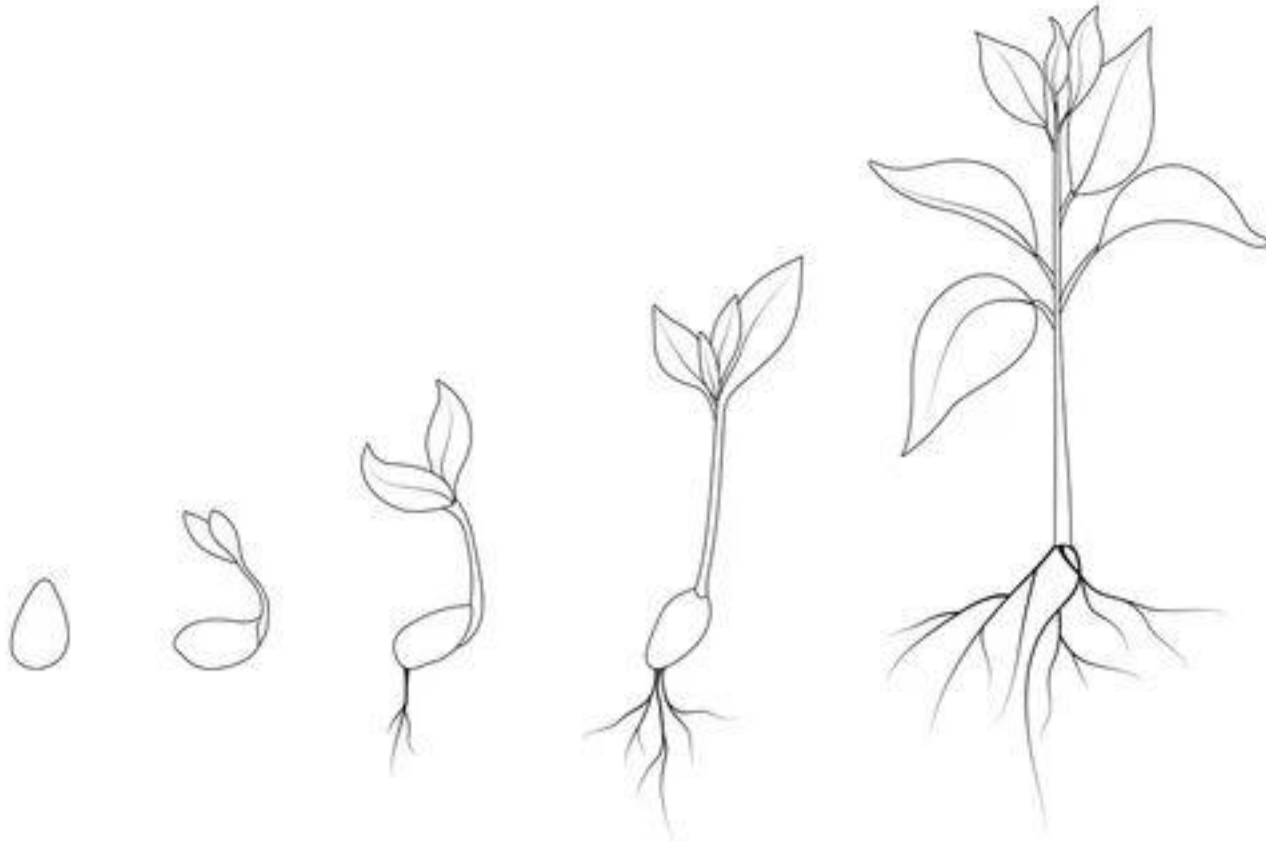
Following Jesus can be harder than expected

Pray: strengthen us for the journey, and give us deep hope

Deep Hope

Zechariah 9:9-17

tiny.cc/cmchandouts
bib.ly/Zech9.NIV



Matthew 21

Jesus entered Jerusalem with joy!

- Humbly, on a donkey
- The people shouted with joy, praising God
- Matthew quoted Zechariah 9:9
 - “Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”
- Then something went terribly wrong
and Jesus died a horrible death 5 days later
→ looking into Zechariah

Zechariah: After a joyous beginning, the journey turned out to be harder than expected

- God's people had been conquered because of their sin
 - Temple was destroyed
- Joy when they were allowed to return to their land
- Joy when the temple's foundation was completed
 - *But also weeping by those who knew what the temple had been*
- But then, year after year went by with little progress
 - Almost 20 years later, God sent Zechariah to them...

Zechariah: After a joyous beginning, the journey turned out to be harder than expected

- Countries around threatened and troubled them
- Financial hardship
- Conflicts and injustice among people in Judah
- Slow progress on rebuilding the temple
 - Trying seemed pointless
- **“It was a time of disappointment, disillusionment, despondency, and guilt.”**
- Then God sent Zechariah to the people with a message...

Zechariah: a call to spiritual revival

Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: **‘Return to me,’** declares the Lord Almighty, **‘and I will return to you,’** says the Lord Almighty.

Zechariah 1:3

‘Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,’ declares the Lord, **‘and I will be its glory within.’** *Zechariah 2:4-5*

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the warhorses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;

even now I announce that I will restore
twice as much to you.

I will bend Judah as I bend my bow
and fill it with Ephraim.

I will rouse your sons, Zion,
against your sons, Greece,
and make you like a warrior's sword.

Then the Lord will appear over them;
his arrow will flash like lightning.

The Sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet;
he will march in the storms of the south,
and the Lord Almighty will shield them.

They will destroy
and overcome with slingstones.

They will drink and roar as with wine;
they will be full like a bowl
used for sprinkling the corners of the altar.

The Lord their God will save his people on that day
as a shepherd saves his flock.

They will sparkle in his land
like jewels in a crown.

How attractive and beautiful they will be!
Grain will make the young men thrive,
and new wine the young women.

But also...

“They will look on me, **the one they have pierced**, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and **grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son**. On that day the **weeping in Jerusalem** will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”

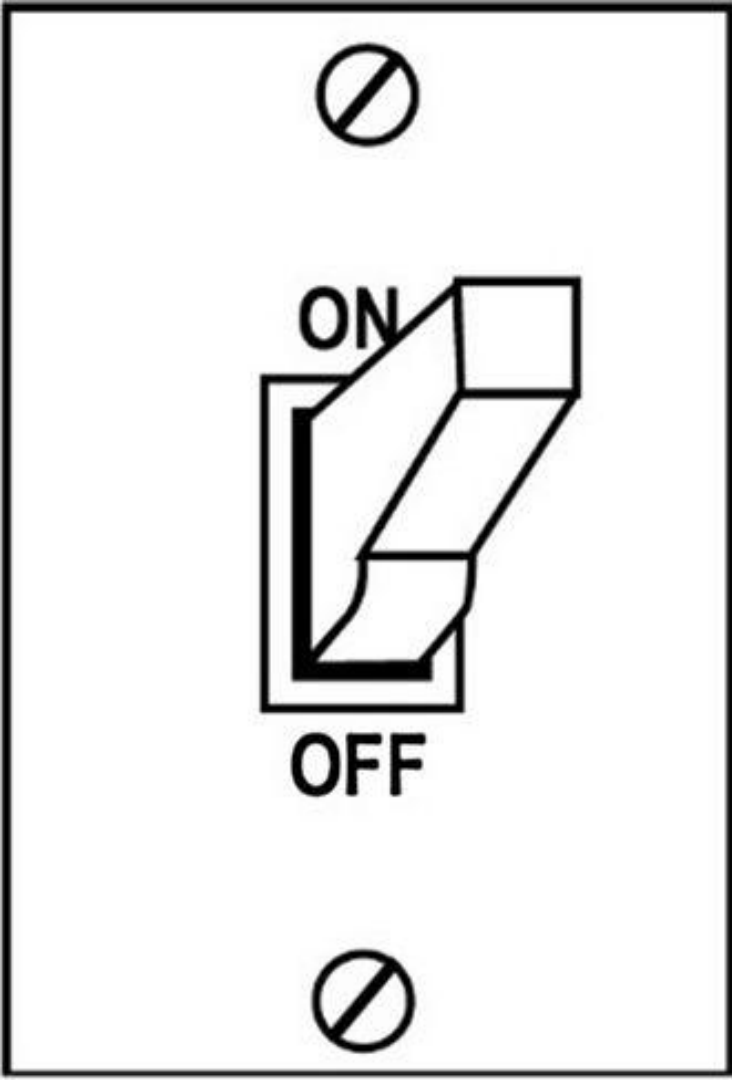
“Strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered,
and I will turn my hand against the little ones.

The Big Idea

**God's final and joyous victory for His people
comes after an often challenging path of faith
just as it did for Jesus
and that was always God's plan**

Consider...a light switch



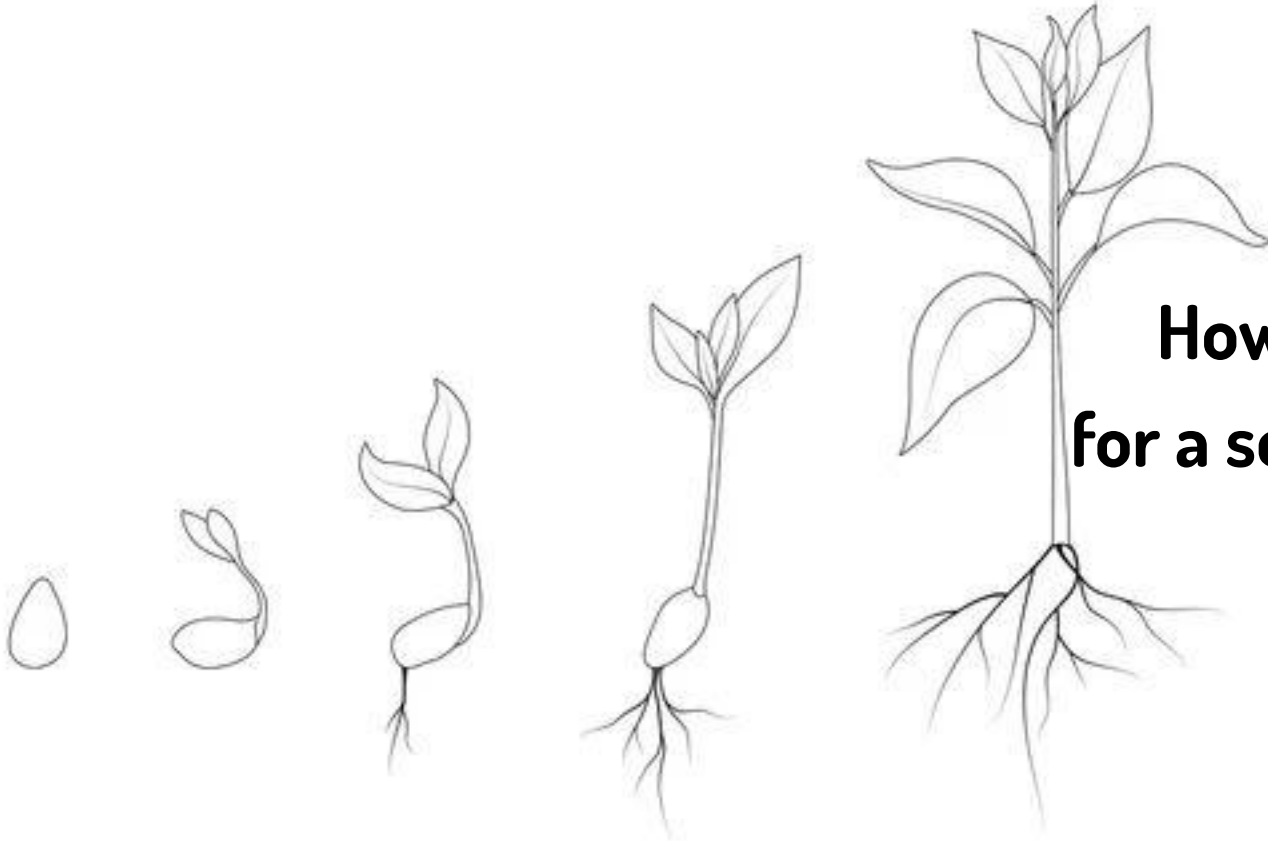


Consider...a light switch

**How long does it take
for darkness to be gone?**

**Instantly, darkness
is replaced with light**

Consider...planting a seed

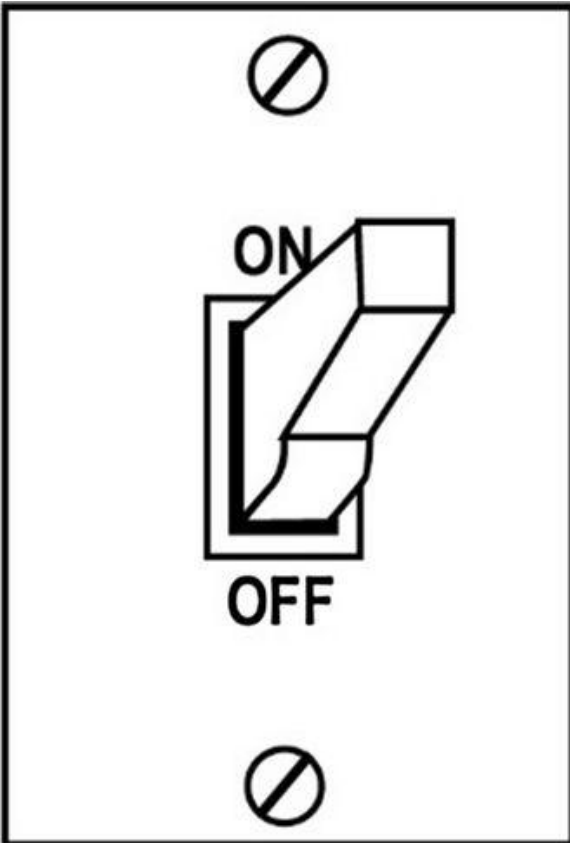


**How long does it take
for a seed to bring fruit?
It can seem to go
so slowly!**

When the Light of the World entered the world...

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is

like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, **his enemy came and sowed weeds** among the wheat, and went away.”



When the Light of the World entered the world...

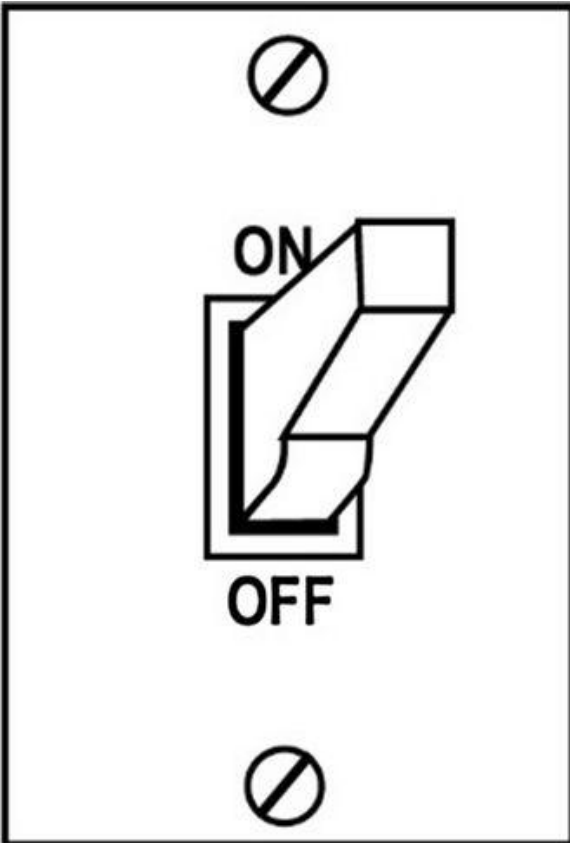
He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."



When the Light of the World entered the world...

“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

After entering Jerusalem to shouts of praise, Jesus was crucified just days later!



The Son of God's life led up to:

- being crucified as a criminal in shame
- being abandoned (or worse) by his followers
- so only 120 people remained with him

Yet when John saw Jesus in His glory, John fell at Jesus' feet as though dead because of Jesus' overwhelming glory!

And now, "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord"

The Big Idea

**God's final and joyous victory for His people
comes after an often challenging path of faith
just as it did for Jesus
and that was always God's plan**

Application

- **Keep a deep hope in God**
 - The Bible doesn't teach a simplistic optimism
 - Jesus said: In this life, we'll have trouble
 - And the hardest times might still be in front of us!
 - But...

Application

- **Keep a deep hope in God**

- “I consider that our present sufferings are **not worth comparing** with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

Romans 8:18

- “In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you **may have had to suffer grief** in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—**may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.**” *1 Peter 1:6-7*

Application

- **Keep a deep hope in God**

- “Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, **set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed** at his coming.” *1 Peter 1:13*
- “We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as **we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship**, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, **we wait for it patiently.**” *Romans 8:23-25*

Application

- **Keep a deep hope in God**
- **Do the work God calls us to do, a work that fits the hope**
 - Keep seeking first His Kingdom
 - Love God with all we are
 - Love our neighbors as ourselves
 - Be a witness to the Gospel/Good News of Jesus Christ!
 - Because...
 - It is the path to "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade... kept in heaven for you...shielded by God's power" *1 Peter 1*
 - **Jesus is with us on that road, the Good Shepherd, the Redeemer, who will come back so we will live with Him forever**

The Big Idea

God's final and joyous victory for His people comes after an often challenging path of faith just as it did for Jesus, and that was always God's plan

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. **For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will **not grow weary and lose heart.**

Hebrews 12:1b-3