

# Gathering

## GROWTH

*Heather Green, State Director of Human Services, NJ Division*

**W**hen we trust in Jesus, he enables us to dwell in him. His presence in our hearts makes us grow and be strong. Ephesians 3:17 (NLT)

Interestingly, Ephesians chapter 3 is referred to as revealing God's mystery. How many times in life, within a month, sometimes even daily, do we question God's mysterious plan He has for our lives.

In this chapter, Paul reiterates something we know all too well, that God's timing is rarely our timing. He says in Ephesians 3:5 that he did not reveal His plan to earlier generations. At this point, the Jews and Gentiles were not aware that the promises of God were for everyone. Paul, who had an incredible transformation story sprinkled with many trials, was the conduit that God chose to share this good news He had promised. It is easy to look back and note all of the times God was present during hard times and feel the assurance that God showed up as He promised. It is harder to take that same feeling of security and apply it to the future. Paul trusted that God's plan was good despite his trials.

Just as our mother's womb provides a safe dwelling place for us to grow physically, when we open our hearts to the Lord, his presence creates a safe place for us to grow spiritually. Paul looked at spiritual growth as growing away from the people we are and the ways of this world and growing towards the ways of Jesus. This world will use worry, anxiety, and overthinking to make us believe the trials we face are our fault, or that we are not strong enough to face them. But take heart, God's promises are for everyone. There is a plan for each of us. A mysterious, glorious, sometimes scary to trust plan. When our lives are chaotic, and things feel unsteady, He remains steadfast and provides solid ground.

After reading the scripture, consider these questions:

- Think about how you have handled life's issues over these past few months. In what ways have you grown?
- What do you feel is stunting your growth?  
What do you need to let go of today to make room for strong roots?
- What are some things you need to add into your life to help you grow?
- How did you see/experience God this week?

*Complete your monthly report and turn it in to the Corps Officer.*

**Ephesians 3:17 (NLT)**

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We need to do some spring cleaning to grow the deep roots needed to anchor us during life's storms. When we empty our hearts and minds of the worry, anxiety, mistrust, and what-ifs, and dwell on the goodness of

God, those roots begin to grow. When we water those roots by reading scripture, praying, focusing on strengths not deficits, and choosing to focus on God first instead of what the world wants you to focus on, those roots become deeper. A strong root system, even though unseen, will hold you firm in place as you continue to grow in God's truths and trust His promises.

#### READ ROMANS 12:2 NLT

How can you shift your mindset this week to look at trials from a growth perspective?

#### READ PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Write a prayer to the Lord reminding you of God's promises that you can read when you notice your roots becoming weak.

#### LISTEN TO THE SONG "IN JESUS NAME" BY KATY NICHOLE

Write down something you think is impossible and bring it before the God of the possible. Give this back to the Lord. Share this as a prayer request with the group if you feel led.



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