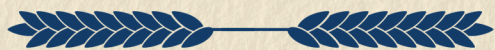


A decorative border of yellow laurel leaves surrounds the central text.

JENNIFER
DUKES LEE

GROWING SLOW



LESSONS ON UN-HURRYING
YOUR HEART FROM AN
ACCIDENTAL FARM GIRL

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

Growing Slow

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READY, SET, SLOW: AN INTRODUCTION

REMEMBER

The tiny seeds I am planting into
dark, unseen places will grow
into something meaningful.

REFLECT

As we begin, take a few moments to reflect on the things
you are growing. List them here.

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In what ways do you feel pressure to do more, be more in
a “grow fast” culture?

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Do you think it’s practically possible to “grow slow” with
the demands upon you?

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At the end of each chapter, we will return to the soil, where our stories began in the very first farm on earth—the Garden of Eden. Here, we will recall how God cupped humanity in his hands and breathed life into us all. God cups *you* in his hands. He breathes new life into you.

REMEMBER

It's okay to grow slow, because when
you grow slow, you grow deep.

REFLECT

On this freeway of life, in what areas do you worry you'll
lose your edge or "miss out" if you take the exit ramp and
head for the back roads of life?

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Where in your life do you feel the most pressure to be
spectacular?

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Can you recall a time in your life when you wondered if
what you were doing truly mattered?

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Which of the symptoms in this chapter do you most
relate to? Why?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Deep roots mattered on the farms around Colossae
and in the heart of those first-generation believers. In
what way do you desire deep roots in any/all of these
categories?

Family

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Home

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Career

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Faith

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Recreation

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Legacy

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Other

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REMEMBER

Hurry wounds a hope-filled heart.
Christ, in turn, will heal it.

REFLECT

How have you felt the hopefulness of spring, only to see those hopes dashed?

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Where have you seen life spring forth, or are you still in a season of waiting?

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Do you ever feel like you're running out of time, like you need to create some kind of legacy? If so, how?

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How does comparison make it especially difficult to "grow slow"?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Perhaps you are in a season where you feel like the growth in your soil is especially slow. Name your frustration. What is God saying to you in this season?

REMEMBER

He refuses to see you as anything less than a field worth tending, and he is willing to grow slow with us.

REFLECT

As you consider growth in your life, has your focus been on external growth or internal growth?

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How can a Growing Slow mindset help you keep your eyes fixed on internal growth and personal transformation?

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As you consider your own spiritual growth, does it seem that God has grown you quickly or slowly?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Have you always been good soil? Or has your life also been marked by moments of impenetrability, shallowness, and thorniness? Use the timeline below, representing your life, to mark periods of soil quality. Indicate years or seasons at the hashmarks. Below the timeline, in the space provided, name the “soil” of your heart at that point in your life history. Perhaps you could take note of the circumstances or events that affected the quality of the soil in your heart.

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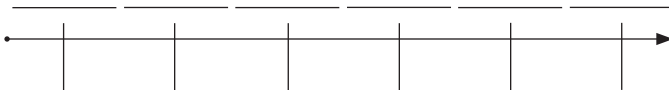
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Write year or
season here.



Soil type and
life circum-
stances here.

REMEMBER

Sometimes the fruit of Growing Slow comes in the harvest of your public fields, but sometimes it is grown in the privacy of your own heart.

REFLECT

Think about the verses from Ecclesiastes 3 in this chapter, about what I call the Ancient Way. What part of the Ancient Way scares you most?

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As the Ancient Way unfolds in your life, where has shame been a companion?

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Which part of the Ancient Way are you living in right now—the planting, healing, and embracing parts, or the weeping, mourning, and tearing parts? Perhaps you have one foot in two seasons.

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

What's inside your "bad thing that happened" box? How does it change things to know that there might be soil at the bottom of the box? Write a prayer to God, telling him your desires for the things you've tucked away in that box.

REMEMBER

An unexpected life is not
the same as a bad life.

REFLECT

What's your favorite season of the year?

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Think about the literal and metaphorical spring seasons
of your life. Does spring feel like a do-over or a season of
dashed hopes?

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In what ways do expectations get in the way of your
relationship with God?

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Are you standing at the crossroads of your will and
God's will? Imagine yourself opening up your hands, your
heart, and your will to the Lord.

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Even in the last months of his life, my father-in-law had a desire to keep planting and keep sowing. He wanted to work the fields with his son for that last harvest of his life.

As you think about what you're planting now, what harvest is most important to you? Perhaps you're considering the fruit of your daily work or the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the year. Perhaps you are pondering seeds you've planted into the people around you. Knowing the answer to this question will help you on your own Growing Slow journey, because it will inform your priorities and how you spend your days on earth, where time goes much faster than we ever imagined it would. Make a list of those priorities here.

REMEMBER

If you saw your progress the way that
God does, you'd never doubt for a
moment that you're making a difference.

REFLECT

Do you feel behind in this season of your life? If so, in
what ways?

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What cultural expectations make you feel like you're
falling behind? For example, when you should be
engaged, married, have kids, earn a certain salary, master
a certain skill.

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As you pursue your dreams, where has God's timing
seemed off? What comfort, if any, does the story from
Acts 1:1-12 bring you?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Take a moment to call out the small growth you see emerging in the fields you've planted, perhaps from seeds you planted long ago. Start a running list. Here are a few of mine:

My daughters, now teens, are daily praying Scripture over themselves.

Trust with a friend, built over the years, means she is willing to share her heart with me as she bears the burden of cancer.

I have successfully developed the habit of exercising on a regular basis and feel stronger than ever.

Add yours below.

REMEMBER

Let's stop glorifying the end results,
and start embracing the day-by-
day process of building something
beautiful with our lives.

REFLECT

How have you seen "planned obsolescence" at work in
our culture or in your life?

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How does our culture make it hard for us to accept
the kind of foundational growth that keeps a place like
Hatchards standing for more than two centuries?

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When you reflect on your life, do you sense that what
you are building is more like Hatchards, more like a
sandcastle, or some of both?

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What precious benefits come from building slowly?
Consider the question as it relates to your relationships,
your work, and your legacy.

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter, we
return to the soil. Today, though,
let's return to the sand.

Imagine yourself working alongside your Father, building something beautiful. Imagine his hand brushing up against yours. Imagine what it would be like to value these precious moments of building alongside your Father, not to build castles or kingdoms, but simply to experience his love. He's building something *in you*. Can you sense it? Write down one area of your life where you need God to transform you.

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REMEMBER

The little things are the big things.
And the little things are the things
that will change the world.

REFLECT

Where in your life do you feel unseen or unvalidated?

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How does comparison tend to minimize the little things
we are growing?

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Think of a time in your life when you invested in a “little
thing” and can now, in hindsight, see its significance.
To get your thoughts flowing, consider your prayers,
kindnesses that seemed insignificant at the time, and
acts of service.

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At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

REMEMBER

Let Jesus meet the child in you.

REFLECT

Have you ever leaned on substitutes for God's love?

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Imagine you are sixteen again—or five, or twelve, or twenty-three, or thirty-eight or whenever it was that you stopped believing God's love was enough for you. Can you find Jesus in the room? What would he say to you?

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What are you defined by? Write the word or words below.

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

I want you to remember: for every hurt you're feeling today, for every moment you feel obscure, for every second you've felt overlooked, for every time you have felt like the fields you're planting are weedy and unproductive, here stands Jesus, with his arms open wide. Write a prayer to Jesus, acknowledging that he is standing with you in your fields.

REMEMBER

Fences communicate your belief that your land holds life worthy of safeguarding.

REFLECT

How well-defined are your boundaries?

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In what area of your life are your fences in need of mending?

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Have you ever had a “No Mentor”? Do you think you could use one? Why or why not?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

The pig in my yard had found a weak spot in a fence, which resulted in the pig digging holes in my yard. Has a weak boundary in your life ever resulted in damage to you or someone you love? What can you do today to mend a fence or erect a new one? That might look like saying no to an opportunity, lengthening the distance between you and a toxic person, or refusing to yield to the pressure to move to the next level.

REMEMBER

You can't connect and hurry
at the same time.

REFLECT

How does a hurried heart make connection difficult for people?

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Think of a time when someone's brusque nature, even if it was unintentional, made you feel bad. How can you make sure you don't give off the same brusque vibe?

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How has an awkward beginning turned into true connection in your life?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

After Wayne died, hundreds of friends showed up and plopped their lawn chairs right down on the earth, in front of a big house named Gracie. In the blanks provided, make a list of people who have been a “Wayne” or “Kim” to you. Make a second list of the names of people to whom you would like to extend an invitation to connect.

REMEMBER

Most things must be grown slow,
including seeds of sorrow.

REFLECT

Consider the harvest seasons of your life. What is the
most beautiful harvest you've ever experienced?

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What was the hardest harvest, one wherein a dream
died?

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Of the three categories of grief, do you tend to lean
toward doing, thinking, or feeling?

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What do you think the difference is between wallowing
in grief and Growing Slow in grief?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

In the Lee fields, harvest brought blessing next to heartache—harvestable crops next to a gigantic wound where we couldn't plant anything in the spring. Joy and sorrow can coexist in one field, and they can coexist in one heart. How has your heart held conflicting emotions?

REMEMBER

Change is how we grow.

REFLECT

Are you change-averse, or does change excite you?
Why?

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Have you felt the sting of disapproval when you chose a
new path? If so, how?

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What change in your life has been most impactful?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

In Genesis, God gave Abram simple instructions: “Go.” Simple to say, harder to do. Do you feel God calling you to “go”? If so, write a prayer here asking for the strength to have the faith of Abram.

REMEMBER

God grows us through broken things.

REFLECT

Think of a time when the harvest seemed within reach, but all your hopes were dashed. Consider the questions in this chapter. Did you ask any of those kinds of questions when your hopes for a bountiful harvest were dashed?

In her book *The Broken Way*, Ann Voskamp writes, “All of us in a heartbreaking world, we are the fellowship of the broken . . . Over all of us is the image of the wounded God, the God who breaks open and bleeds with us. *How do you live with your one broken heart?* All I can think is—only the wounds of God can heal our wounds.” How does this communion with God—where suffering is healed by suffering—intersect with your brokenness today?

RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Our God, who does not lie, tells us that “at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Write a prayer here thanking God in advance for the harvest to come.

REMEMBER

Not everyone will understand what you're growing, but that doesn't mean what you're growing isn't important.

REFLECT

Take a moment to think about the people who sit in your bleachers. How have your Bleacher People encouraged you?

How have they belittled you?

How can seeking the approval of Bleacher People cause us to have hurried hearts?

Name an area where you most need to remember that you live for an audience of One.

RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

There's an old hymn that tells us what type of ground to set our feet upon.

On Christ, the solid, Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Rock isn't a great place to grow a seed. But it's a great place to put your feet when you clear the bleachers. If there's someone who's been sitting in your bleachers for far too long, now would be a great time to pray for God's voice to drown out the voice of the unhelpful spectator.

REMEMBER

Winter is not just a doorway;
it is a room all its own.

REFLECT

Few people describe themselves as a “winter person.”
Would you? Why or why not?

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What lessons have you learned in the winter seasons of
your life?

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What gifts come with winter?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

How do you suppose “poor man’s fertilizer” is preparing your own soil?

REMEMBER

Perhaps winter isn't the punishment you thought it was. Perhaps it is your gift.

REFLECT

Think of a time when it was clear it wasn't your turn, but someone else's. How did that sit with you?

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Pierre Teilhard de Chardin contends that we like to skip intermediate stages and get to the end without delay. How have you found that to be true in your own life?

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Trees need dormant seasons in order to survive and thrive. Name a time in your life when winter dormancy brought a better and brighter bloom, come spring.

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

In this chapter I shared about some of the stones, long-buried, in the soil of my heart. What are the stones in your field? Let winter do its work by unearthing those stones. Let's "pick rock." Write down your "stones" here.

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REMEMBER

Un-hurrying our hearts requires the breaking down of old habits and the building up of new and sustainable ones.

REFLECT

How did COVID-19 change your life?

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With everything that changed that year, what were the unchangeable things you held onto?

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Amid uncertainty, what got you through?

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What destructive practices did you let go of?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Times of suffering tend to reveal two things: what we treasure and what we fear. What do you treasure? What do you fear? What did you learn that season that you don't want to forget? Our answers to these questions will inform what we choose to plant in our fields every single day. Take a moment to pray for your priority seeds today.

REMEMBER

Hurry wounds the happy
heart of celebration.

REFLECT

Does it feel possible to celebrate anything when you are
in a winter season of the heart?

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How does a hurried heart keep us from practicing
celebration and gratitude?

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What's one thing you can do today to keep from falling
into the "occupational hazard of devout folk (becoming)
stuffy bores"?

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RETURN

At the end of each chapter,
we return to the soil.

Put your bare feet on the ground beneath that giant table. Whose feet are next to yours? The most important seeds we plant while we are on earth are the seeds we plant in other people, helping them grow into the knowledge of an eternity with Christ. Let's invite more people to the table. Make a list of people you'd like to include.