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Nurturing Growth

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I've recently gotten into gardening and taking care of indoor plants.

It was sort of something that happened by accident — as I'm sure every person who develops this hobby can relate — where my wife and I were given plants by friends and

family or casually shopped for new ones every time we went to a nursery, and pretty soon, we had 10, 20, 30 plants in the span of only a few months.

What were we going to do with all of these new responsibilities and living things to take care of? Were we placing them in the right spot for optimal sunlight? Was the temperature okay? Were we watering them too much? Too little? Or sometimes, if we were really busy with other things, not at all?

Make no mistake, we have successfully killed many plants over the past year. Some plants require very precise care; you do one thing wrong and the beautiful leafy green plant you picked up at the nursery quickly finds a new home in the compost bin. Others seem to be doing well for a while with minimal care, and then one day you wake up and find it browned and decayed, with no explanation for what happened to it.

Nurturing plants is a lot like nurturing your faith. It takes time and effort to maintain a strong faith and a good relationship with God.

It's often difficult to make time for the many ways we grow our faith: studying scripture, praying, fellowshiping with our church family, serving our community. I'm not ashamed to admit I struggle with these things.

But as with nurturing a plant, nurturing your faith will often lead to a fuller and healthier life.

Making time for prayer each day, even for just a few minutes before you start your day, can bring peace and comfort to your life.

Studying scripture — again, just a few minutes each day or a few times a week — is key to growing closer to your faith.

It's not just praying and reading that nurtures faith, it's also doing. James, the brother of Jesus, lays out pretty clearly that faith without works is dead in James 2:14 – 26.

In the same way, you can't just believe your plants will grow tall and healthy without watering, giving them nutrient-rich soil, and placing them in sunlight. You have to work to produce good results.

I've learned a lot about taking care of plants from the mistakes I've made in the past. I'm now happy to say that I have many strong, thriving plants in my garden. But it wasn't by accident that they grew strong; it was because I made a point to make sure they were nurtured.

The Christian faith is not an easy one. It takes work. But that work is necessary to produce a fruitful, healthy, and strong faith.