

Daily Devotional, May 12, 2020 Growing God's Garden

I'm not a professional gardener, but I do love planting vegetable gardens each spring. To me, there's nothing like turning over the earth, planting seeds, watering them, watching them grow and then enjoying the results. I've learned over the years that there are a lot of variables that make the abundance of the crop different. The soil is one of the greatest factors in how well the plants will do. They need the right amount of nutrients, of water and of sunlight. The more I adjust these three things, the more I can empower them to grow and produce.

As Christians, we're not so different. Christianity is not just a one-time event where the Holy Spirit takes up room in us and we coast the rest of our way through life. It's a lifetime of growth that comes after His seed is planted in our heart. In Matthew 13, Jesus told the parable where a sower scattered seeds among 4 different soils. Three out of four seeds sprouted, but only the ones in the seeds that were in good soil produced the crop he was looking for.

The environment we're in has a lot to do with our growth. Another thing we can do to empower our own growth is to stay watered in the Word of God. We can't just live on the water we receive on Sundays. We need daily care. Filling ourselves with God's Word each day, living in the purified waters of our baptism, and basking in the glow of God's SON, as we spend time with Him in prayer and walk through life with Him, causes us to be healthy and to grow. When these three things are consistent in our lives, we will not only grow, but produce fruit which will empower other believers to grow.

Romans 15:2 says, "Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up". Every one of us needs to have the goal of not just maturing ourselves, but to empower others to grow and produce as well. You have the power to create the atmosphere around you.

In the end, though we are called to be strong influences and support to others, there is only so much we can do. The garden grows at night. We can fertilize it and water it and work to eliminate the weeds that invade it. We can do much helpful work during daylight hours. We understand the biology of growth. We also know how to harm and inhibit growth. In the end, much growth happens without our assistance. Seeds can germinate and mature without our helping hands and watchful eyes.

As the apostle Paul reminds us in his letter to the Christians at Corinth, we can plant and water, but in the end, it is God who gives the growth. There is only so much we can do: the garden continues to grow at night, and much is produced when our hand is off the plow. This truth can serve as a call to humility. God is in charge, we are not. God gives growth, we do not. God is at work, even when we are not . . . in fact, God may work best when we are off the clock! So, perhaps, our most faithful response at times is to rest and rejoice at all that God can do. Be the best nurturer you can be, and then rest in the knowledge that God is at work.

Can you rest and trust, or do you prefer to work and produce?

Lord, I am a worker. I take pride in my productivity. Yet, though I toil, all that I receive is dependent on your grace. Keep me diligent yet humble as I work in your gardens: the gardens of nutrition that feed my body and my spirit. Lead me along your righteous path and may my life bring richness to others. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.