

Daily Devotional, August 3, 2021 Pursuing the Faith to Grow

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

Not long after Laura and I were married, we decided to see how green our thumbs were. We spent a little time in the flower beds. We pulled weeds, trimmed back bushes, and prepared the dirt for new bushes and flowers to be planted. Another thing we eventually wanted to try was growing our own vegetables. Neither of us claimed to be skilled gardeners, but each of us had helped our moms with gardening from time to time and it seemed like the natural progression, something fun to try on our own for the first time.

Laura and I went to the store and selected some seeds and plants. Laura made most of the selections, but I did my best to contribute. We brought them back home and planted them with great anticipation of the fruit that we would soon see. Weeks passed, then months, and the plants grew. We watered them with great love and care. The little tomato plants, the cucumbers, peppers and strawberries, were growing big and strong. There was only one problem. While there were many leaves and vines and stalks, there were not many vegetables!

The summer months progressed, and our plants continued to grow, but not much to pick. We sought advice from more experienced gardeners—advice of all kinds, much of which I tried on those poor plants. Some things seem to help the growth, while others made no difference.

Summer soon came to an end and fall was beginning to bring a change to the color of the trees and the grass. Finally, we were able to harvest some tomatoes, a small amount of peppers and cucumbers, and a few other stragglers, but a small bounty at best. While I was outside working one morning, I decided that it was time for those plants to go. They had all pretty much dried up, so I reached down, grabbed them by the base, and tore them from the ground. I had bagged them and was carrying them to the trash, when I began to lament the bounty we might have enjoyed if we had only a bit more experience. We might have enjoyed at least a fair fruit of our labor.

Often when we try new things in life, we begin by focusing on the end results. This is a great motivator to get things started, but it does not always paint an accurate picture of the work and time needed to produce our desired outcome. Whether it is growing vegetables, learning a new skill, trying to get in better shape, starting a new project at work, or even developing a new spiritual discipline, we need to understand that the fruit of our labor is not always an instant and satisfying result. Patience and dedication are often what is needed to achieve the success we desire. In the case of our first vegetable plants, the eventual fruit of our labor that was developed was patience.

God is patient with us as we grow and develop into the people that God created us to become. God’s grace and mercy are constantly at work in our lives, helping us to grow, mature, and become the creation that God intended from the beginning. We too must be patient so that our work and our efforts can produce good fruit. I hope that today you will keep up the work of growing in your faith. Remember, you are not alone. God is with you as you develop the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit that helps us to love as God has loved us.

Prayer: Thank you that even if I don’t have faith for something, you remain faithful. In those areas of my life where I struggle to grow, help me to trust that You love me and want to help me grow in my ability to believe Your word and have faith in you. Trusting in Your guidance, I pray, Amen.