

Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc.

1789 Iglehart Ave

St. Paul, MN 55104-5215

Ph. (651) 283-0568

FRUITFULNESS: PLANTING THE SEED

by Dan Trygg

It is important to remember that in the daily walk with God, as in the area of conversion, there is a partnership between the believer and the Holy Spirit in bringing about an effective use of truth in our lives. It is the Spirit's ministry to teach us all things and to stimulate our recall of what we have learned or heard in the past (Jn. 14:26). He is the One who reveals Jesus, the True Vine, to us who are His so that we can abide in Him (Jn. 16:13-15). Remember, too, that the Word of God is His instrument. Not only is it His sword in battle, used almost as a scalpel in exposing the inner thoughts of our hearts (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12), but it is also a mirror which the Spirit uses to display and reveal the likeness of God to our hearts. This reflection of God's glory is used by the Holy Spirit in His work of transforming us into Christ's image, as we gaze upon Him (II Cor. 3:17,18). He is, furthermore, the One who gives life. He not only quickens us to new birth, He also conveys to us the life of the Vine so that we might grow and bear fruit (II Cor. 3:6; Rom. 7:4-6; Jn. 16:14; Jn. 6:63). Note that in Jn. 6:63 the reception of Jesus' words is equated with the reception of spirit and life, the ministry of the life-making Holy Spirit.

So then, if this is a partnership, **what are our responsibilities to be in this growth process?** Basically, they fall into three areas: **(1.) the preparation of the soil; (2.) the sowing of the seed; and, (3.) the nurturing of growth.** We discussed the need for cultivating our hearts in a previous chapter. That study was a general application of the principles of gardening which are illustrative of spiritual principles, as we have observed them in the Scriptures. Now let us attempt to apply those same principles to this single area. This has Biblical precedence, since Paul referred to the Corinthian Christians as God's field, and saw the growth process as that of sowing and watering seeds of truth (I Cor. 3:6-9).

By way of review, **the primary task involved in preparation of the soil has to do with the attitude of our hearts toward truth.** There must be a repentance from arrogance, a turning over and burying of a self-sufficient, know-it-all attitude, a crying out to God to be searched, sifted, and raked in order to be teachable. The prejudices of our established network of knowledge are like a fortress which must be thrown open to be examined and scrutinized by new truth from above (II Cor. 10:3-6). We must cleanse our heart completely from any remaining loyalty to our favorite thought patterns. We must repent from any attitude of "infallibility", as it relates to our understanding or perceptions of things. Everything must be open to examination. Nothing can be permitted room in our thinking when confronted by that which is confirmed as truth in actuality. We must want every deception to be rooted out. This is true humility, an attitude of teachableness before the Lord, a true bowing of our minds and hearts to Him who is Truth (Jn. 14:6). **The following three ingredients seem critical to a complete preparation of the soil of our hearts to receive the seeds of God's Word:**

(a.) a repentance, a change of mind from a self-centered world to a God and truth centered world; thus creating both

(b.) an attitude of openness to new ideas, and the challenging of the old; and,

(c.) a true seeking and hunger for truth. A deep yearning for truth will result in a crying out to God for instruction, and an appreciation for rebuke and correction, in spite of any accompanying hurt or pain (Prov. 2:1-4; 6:23).

After soil preparation, the next responsibility we have is to be sowing the seed. This means that **we must make a determined effort to expose ourselves to the Word of truth far more than what would just occur by chance.** If we do have a true desire to see the fruit of God produced in us, we must sow the seed. Furthermore, just as planting is more effective than a mere casting of the seed upon the ground, so **there are different ways to expose ourselves to truth, some which will be more productive than others.** The more well planted the truth becomes in our life, the more

opportunity it can have for fruitfulness. In addition, since we do not know when a seed will be productive, we must sow often.

There are three concepts for sowing which provide guidelines for us:

(a.) More seed, more crop. (Provided other conditions are right and we are not guilty of overseeding, ...*not* a very common problem with most people.)

(b.) Better planting, better harvest. It is not just the quantity of seed exposure that is the goal, it is the production of growth. It is a fact that some methods of planting will be more effective than others (e.g., study over mere hearing).

(c.) Timely sowing, successful growing. The principle of Ecc. 11:6 is that since we do not know when the seed will "take", or successfully germinate and grow, we must in wisdom sow seed over again, under different conditions, until we obtain the desired results. In the same way, we do not understand all of the Scriptures at one reading, nor do we automatically conform our behavior to all we do understand on our first exposure. It may take many exposures before some truths will finally take root in our lives.

Father, help us to take seriously Jesus' words that there is freedom to be found for those who will continue in Your Word. It was for freedom that He set us free. Open our eyes to see our need for liberty. Keep us from the small perspective that allows for apathy. Show us that You are, indeed, able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, so that we might be willing to invest the effort required to discover the hope of our calling as children of God.

FOR MEDITATION: Ecclesiastes 11:6; James 1:21

"Sow your seed in the morning, and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good."

"Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

Yokefellows With Jesus

"One of the most tangible fruits of [Elton] Trueblood's emphasis on all Christians being ministers was the Yokefellows movement. Trueblood was convinced that if Christians were to live out their callings, they needed the help that comes through small group experiences. He envisioned small gatherings of men and women meeting weekly all across the nation and around the world to support and encourage one another. Without telling anybody what he was really doing, he created thousands of small 'Quaker Meetings' where Christians could be priests to one another, building them up for ministry. In these informal gatherings, Trueblood believed that Christians could find spiritual renewal and guidance for living out their calling for service in the world.

"Talking of such 'small-group ministry' now seems common enough, but in the late forties, when Trueblood began sowing the seeds for its later blossoming..., the concept was revolutionary.

"The idea came serendipitously. In 1949, reading the passage in Matthew where Jesus promises that following him would not be a burdensome yoke, Trueblood hit upon the name yokefellow. 'Yokefellows' would agree to base their Christian life on four 'pillars': commitment to Christ, fellowship with others, ministry to the world, and discipline in daily living. ...The Yokefellow Institute continues to promote the proposition, 'If you are a Christian, you are a minister.' "

Regarding theology, "'When someone asks me what I am,' he reflects, 'I often say four words, the beginning letters of which spell care: catholic because I 'm not sectarian, apostolic because I try to go back to the roots, reformed because I want to improve myself any time I can, and evangelical because I'm Christ-centered. ' ...'Christian fellowships that rightly understand their identity know Scripture thoroughly *and* follow the Spirit where He leads. They are evangelistic *and* socially involved. They pray *and* serve. One of the most important words that Jesus ever used was the word *and*.'" Quotations selected from "The Quiet Revolutionary" by Tony Campolo in *Christianity Today* (2/11/92), Pg. 24.