

Pulling Weeds

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Oh, the joys of those who . . . delight in doing everything the Lord wants. . . . They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season without fail. Their leaves never wither, and in all they do, they prosper (Psalm 1:2-3 NLT).

It's spring time in the northern hemisphere. If you are like me, you are always eager for spring. The beauty of new growth invites a more prolonged stay outside. Some of my friends say that I am a little crazy because I love doing yard work. Although it is a lot like housework (never completely finished), there is a great deal of satisfaction in walking away from a flower bed after having rid it of weeds and letting the plants that we really want to see show through. Of course, if it is not done on a consistent basis, the weeds really do gain the upper hand. Then, instead of loving yard work, I find myself wishing for an easy way to produce the result I yearn for. As of yet, I have not discovered a weed killer that will discriminate between what I want and what I don't want, so I am the one who needs to make the judgment and pull out the unwanted growth one by one.

As I work in my flower beds, I often reflect on the fact that Jesus gave many illustrations using seeds, trees, fruit, plants, sowing, pruning and reaping. As a result of the fall, the ground was cursed and work became an effort instead of a joy (Genesis 3:17-19). There remains, however, the beauty of God's creation all around us. If we are privileged enough to have the stewardship of a plot of earth in which we can sow and reap, then we partner with God in His garden enterprise.

In my garden, I have encountered a variety of weeds. Some of them have a single root. If that weed is pulled out by the root, wonderful! If not, it will come back. Others have complex root systems that make them next to impossible to pull out. They must be dug out. In those cases, I remember that the Lord said that He was going to leave the tares and the wheat to grow together, and do the weeding at the end of time (Matthew 13). Sometimes I make a similar decision. I will deal with those weeds again and again in order to save the good plants that are growing close to them.

The task of weeding reminds me of sin. Maybe you, like me, have discovered that weeding, like ridding your life of sin, involves the following.

- Weeding is backbreaking work. If I don't stay alert and "prayed up," sin keeps coming back. If I don't keep up with the weeding, the weeds overtake the garden. Vigilance is the key! Bill Gaither says that there is a plaque on the wall of his home in Alexandria, Indiana that summed up his parents' attitude about faith, "Pray for rain, but keep hoeing."

- It helps if the weeds can be pulled up by the roots. If possible, it is best to stop sin at its source. For instance, my nature is to panic and be fearful of unknown situations. That is the opposite of faith. When fear raises its ugly head in my life, I have to go back to the basics: trusting God! As my husband says, “Fear and faith cannot occupy the same space.”
- Sometimes I need help. The task of weeding is a bit overwhelming sometimes, especially since my husband and I travel much of the year. Occasionally my husband, a friend or a neighbor will sit with me and help me pull out weeds. Likewise, an accountability partner can often notice an area that is displeasing to God that I have overlooked.
- Weeding is easier if the soil is soft or wet. If you ever tried to pull weeds in hard, dry soil, you know how hard it can be. Likewise, it is easier to dispose of sin when it is fresh and recognizable as sin. The longer sin is left to harden in our lives, the harder it is to remove.

I started this reflection by commenting on how much I love to see new growth and flowers in my garden. That is how I want to end it as well. Weeding, both in my garden and in my life, is well worth it.

As I observe the flowers in my garden, I am reminded that a garden is not just one flower. It is many flowers. You and I are part of a big garden that God has planted.

Flowers need attention. But don't we love the attention our Heavenly Gardener showers on us? We are linked to His Living Vine. We need each other. Together we can “bloom where we are planted” so that others can see Jesus in us.

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