

“Tending Our Gardens”

For the last few weeks I have been working to get my garden in. Because this gave me a great deal of time to think, I was able to notice many things about tending gardens and—as a parallel—raising children.

First, I noticed that the most physically draining part of the job is in the beginning. Turning over soil, raking out clumps of grass, and turning in compost can be back-breaking. Similarly, I remember that, when my children were babies, there were days in which I wondered if I’d make it to bedtime. However, on a certain level, it’s probably the simplest time of the process. Except for the physical difficulties, there is nothing at all working against you.

Planting one’s crops is a little less physically demanding, as is raising small children. They have learned to use the toilet, they have learned to feed themselves, and they can walk on their own, no longer needing to be carried everywhere. However, at this point we must be diligent to feed the garden and water it, or it won’t thrive. We feed our children and quench their thirst, not only with physical food and drink, but also with the very Word of God. Just as their physical meals are smaller and simpler, the portions of the Word we give them are easier to digest as well.

As the garden season gets under way, the weeds begin to encroach in our work area. Similarly, as our children develop, the world’s influence begins to encroach upon their spiritual lives. Now is the time when we have to be alert to those weeds, and not allow them to take hold, or they will choke out all we have done. As the season progresses, the weeds appear to multiply in number faster than we can pull them out, and by the time our children are adolescents, we find our task is almost as never-ending as a firefighter’s with a wild brush fire.

Our gardens, as parents, and on many more levels, as homeschooling parents, are our children. As Adam was placed in the garden with the job of tending it, we were given the responsibility of tending the gardens of our children.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

While this may seem daunting, the good news is that we are only the tenders of the garden. The real miracles that take place in that garden are God’s work alone. Also, a certain amount of what grows is dependent upon the content of the soil itself.

Luke 8:4-15 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed,

some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

While the soil content may seem much more under our control in a garden, it is not as much as we may think. And it is even far less under our control with our children. This garden is God's garden, and it is only a little more under our control than any other person to whom we might minister God's good news is. In a very real sense, our children are our first mission field, and the work we do in raising them is very similar to any other type of evangelization. The only difference is that we are around them from the time of their birth. Perhaps this fact of our having a greater influence on them is the reason that God holds us to somewhat of a higher responsibility with their outcome than that of evangelization outside our homes.

Still, while we continue to tend our gardens—and we do so out of obedience to God—we will remember to give glory to Whom glory is due—our Lord and our God—for He alone brings all the work of the garden into fruition.

1 Corinthians 3:5-7 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Enjoy your summer, enjoy your gardens, thanks be to God for His increase, and may all glory be only His.