

“Weed/Weeding” Lessons

(I realize that I've written about *spiritual* “weeds” in the past. In this article I've tried to not *plow too much of the same ground* as before, but the applications seem almost as prolific as the weeds themselves!)

As you may or may not know, last summer we were able to buy a house east of Bossier City, Louisiana to make our home. We purchased it from a widow who had created huge raised beds of flowers everywhere, and thus was “the flower lady” of the neighborhood. So, in tribute to her legacy, and since my precious wife loves flowers, I've pretty much quit fishing and have spent countless hours and gallons of sweat battling “weeds.” A couple things have resulted: 1) I now have a greater appreciation of the *curse* placed upon *the ground* in Gen.3:17ff; and, 2) all that time spent heaving, hacking, hoeing, and hauling have allowed ample opportunity to consider the spiritual implications and applications of “weeds”! Coincidentally, I've also pondered the possibility that “*the enemy*” has previously sown and is surreptitiously continuing to sow “*tares*” here every night, cf. Matt.13:25! (In case you don't know, a “*tare*” was a particularly undesirable weed that looked a lot like “*wheat*,” but produced a seed-head that was poisonous; it was also know as “darnel.”)

In a spiritual context, a “weed” is any *plant* not coming from the pure *seed* of the desired plant, Luke 8:11ff. Although some botanical “weeds” may have some desirable qualities, such as medicinal applications or pretty foliage or flowers, spiritual “weeds” will not and cannot produce the desired and proper spiritual *fruit*, cf. Matt.7:17.

Furthermore, *spiritual* “weeds,” much like their *botanical* counterparts, are **invasive**. In these regards, they're much like roaches- there's seldom just one! To further mix metaphors, Paul warned Timothy of the “weeds” of “*worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness and their talk will spread like gangrene,*” 2Tim.2:16-17. So, such “weeds” don't need “nipping in the bud” but “pulling up by the roots”! And speaking of roots...

Spiritual “weeds” are often **deep-rooted**. I've pulled or dug up some dandelions that literally had roots that were longer than the above ground part of the plant. Spiritual “weeds” frequently have rhizomes that rival their physical representatives.

Spiritual “weeds” are **detrimental** to the desired *plants* and *fruit-production*. They *choke-out* and *deprive* the desirables of proper *light, water, and nutrients*, Matt.13:22; 2Tim.2:18.

Simply put, spiritual “weeds” are *doctrines, decisions, and practices* that are contrary and counterproductive to the “*seed, which is the word of God*” (Luke 8:11) and its intended product, *FRUIT*- “*for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth,*” Eph.5:9.

What to do? Again, botanical weeds teach us what to do with *spiritual* “weeds”...

- **Know the difference(s) between the good plants and the weeds.** Jesus gave us the key, Matt.7:15-20. But sometimes, especially in the *juvenile* “plant,” the *weeds* may look a lot like the *true fruit-bearing* variety (*tares* look very much like *wheat* until the *grain* is formed). Be patient until you're sure which is which, lest in zeal we “*cause one of the little ones who believe in Me to stumble,*” Matt.18:6.

- **Dig out the root.** If you just break off the top, it will grow back stronger and more virulent. Topical solutions may knock it back and even make it appear “dead,” but once it rains a few times, it will sprout up again. *Truth* from the word of God is your *spade*; use it *diligently* and *deeply*, 2Tim.2:15 → vv.16-26.
- **Pull up the *biggest* and most harmful “weeds” first.** This will provide immediate benefit to the desirable *plants*. It will also make the other smaller “weeds” easier to see, and will probably even *loosen the soil* around them making them much easier to remove. These smaller “weeds” may even be removed in the process of pulling up the big one(s). Though “*the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy*,” Paul went straight to Peter and dealt with him first, surely understanding the effect this would have on the other smaller “weeds,” cf. Gal.2:11-14. The big “weeds” are the toughest with which to deal, but tackling them first is the best course for the above reasons.
- **Vigilant *diligence* is required.** Spiritual “weeding” is not a *once and you’re done process*. Either from roots that were simply broken off rather than removed, or from weed *seeds* dropped before removal of the plant, they will eventually return, or other new “weeds” will seek to take their place. The “*diligence*” Paul recommends “*to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed*” in “*handling accurately the word of truth*” is defined as “**to make haste**” and “**to exert oneself**.” Spiritual “weeding” is a continual commitment requiring both vigilance and diligence, just like its botanical counterpart.
- **Dispose of properly.** I’ve had to pull up the same weeds I had previously pulled up because I simply left them in the flowerbed... and they took root and resurrected themselves! If you have a “spiritual weed” growing in the garden of your life, pull it up by the roots, and **remove it completely** so that it doesn’t re-root itself, or so that it doesn’t drop additional “weed seeds” despite being dead itself. If necessary, burn it after you dig it up. Don’t make it easy for spiritual “weeds” to *reproduce*, Rom.13:14.

If you’ve read this far, thank-you, and I hope these “weeding tips” are helpful in your *tilling, sowing/planting, watering, and harvesting* spiritual “*fruit*”- both in your life personally, and for the Lord in His *field/vineyard*. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)