

Together Everyone Achieves More
Deuteronomy 30:15-20; 1 Corinthians 3: 1-9
February 13, 2011

Many of us are familiar with the myriad of motivational posters that are out there. You enter banks, law offices, schools, and even some hospitals and you see them hanging. **“Individually we are one drop, but together we are an ocean.”** “There is no ‘I’ in team.” “Individuals play the games, but teams win championships.” Or perhaps you are familiar with the acronym TEAM meaning, “Together Everyone Achieves More.”

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians today, he says to us, ⁶ “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth...⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters **have a common purpose,...⁹ For we are God's servants**, working together; you are God's field, God's building.” We are God’s servants, we are God’s diverse field, and we are God’s temple.

My grandfather was a minister and a farmer. I remember going out into the fields with him along with other members of my family and kids from my neighborhood. We would work together planting the seeds and plants. We worked together casting out the fertilizer. We worked together to pull out the weeds or to hoe the rows. We worked together carrying the bushel hampers back to the truck. We were a TEAM. **But all of our planting, casting fertilizer, and weeding were in vain** during seasons of drought or the year that the locusts came through and ate the crops. There were also those years of excessive rain which either carried the seeds away or flooded the fields. It was during both the good times and the bad, that my grandfather and other farmers always acknowledged their dependence upon God for the growth of their fields. We had to work together, we had to do our part, but we were dependent upon God for the **right amount of sunlight, warmth, and rain**. Without God we were laboring in vain. Even today on large farms with sophisticated watering systems and all sorts of research and modern technologies at their disposal,

the growth remains with God. In our human wisdom we have the ability to manipulate our environment, but God frequently reminds us that God is in control.

Now in order for seeds and plants to grow they must take root. They must be planted in the right season, be **nurtured and cared for along the way and in due time**, the fields will produce crops. If the seeds remain on the shelf they have no hope of growing anything. If plants are left in their starter pots they will die because the soil can only sustain them for so long. The seeds must be planted if they are to grow and the plants must be placed in the proper soil to mature and bear fruit. As God's field we must nurture the seed planted within us, if we are going to mature spiritually and bear fruit.

What is that seed? What is the seed that God would have to grow? We have but to look to Luke 8 for an answer: "¹¹The seed is the word of God." While the Word of God remains the **same, we each receive it differently. Some of us heard the** Genesis story first; others of us heard the gospel narratives first. Yet still others may not have heard a Bible story, but rather saw the gospel message lived out in the care and concern others showed you. Even in our reading, studying, hearing, and our experiences, the seed planted in us tends to grow a little bit differently. In order for the seed to mature and bear fruit, it must be cared for, tended to, and nurtured.

Further reading of Luke 8 reveals that: "¹²The [seeds that fall] on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³The [seeds that begin to grow] on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. ¹⁴As for [those seed that grow] among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance." Where is your **seed planted today, along the path, on a rock**, amidst

the thorns, or in the good soil? **How have you nurtured and cared for God's Word** in your life and in the lives of others?

God calls us to serve, to plant, and to water together. Together Everyone Achieves More. You see you can have a field with corn, potatoes, greens and tomatoes growing at the same time, but even then the crops must share the nutrients from the soil, the bees go from plant to plant helping with pollination, they must each share the water, and each receive the appropriate amount of sunlight. While each plant may produce something different, they all still share the same field together. They each mature in their own time and their own way if they have been properly cared for. **So, how do we help the seed planted within us mature?** We must be intentional about reading the word of God during designated times of meditation. We must be present in worship to hear the word of God. We must be in community with one another to share the richness of what God's word has spoken to, and contributed to, our own lives. We must live our **lives in service for God so that our seed takes** root in the world around us.

You've heard the saying, "Grow where you are planted." Well let us not forget that we move our plants around... at least those that we want to keep alive. We know that if the plant stays in the same soil it will eventually drain the soil of its nutrients and must be moved or at least fertilized. We know that if we do not take in **certain plants during the harshness of winter** they will die, so we move them to the proper shelter or cover them to protect them. Some of you have perhaps noticed the Christmas cactus in the window ledge downstairs in the Fellowship Hall. What you may not know is that that plant was gifted to us by Patty Karl. It is an offspring of a Christmas cactus she has growing **in her basement that is almost 50 years old, she** said. A lot of human beings don't live that long. That plant has grown and matured because Patty was intentional in her care of it. And now we have been given the responsibility to care for it.

If we are going to have spiritually mature lives, we must be intentional about caring for our faith journey. We cannot spend hours in front of the television, hours

reading a good novel, hours playing video games, and then minutes reading our Bible, praying only in times of need, and reading the Word of God without seeking to live it out in our daily lives, and expect to mature in our faith. It just doesn't work that way. We are then like the seed cast along the path, amidst the rocks, and amidst the thorns. If we are going to have fertile, moist rich soil in which to grow, we must spend quality time with **God and not give God what is left over or only cursory** attention in our daily going and coming. As we sit to read God's word we must also be in prayer. Praying that the ever present Holy Spirit dwell with us helping us to understand, reflect, and remember what it is that we are reading. Praying that the Holy Spirit give us direction as we read as to how we can share God's word with the world around us. Praying that through the gift of the Holy Spirit we can live out God's word in the world around us. It is in our reading of scripture, our ongoing prayers, being in community with one another, and seeking to live out God's word in the world through feeding the poor, clothing the naked, seeking justice for all, and **freeing the oppressed that we mature spiritually**. It is in looking beyond ourselves and at times our own comforts to the will of God in which growth takes place. We have seen the power of togetherness, of looking beyond self, these past 18 days in Egypt in which people of all faiths came together to demand justice, fair treatment, and claim their liberty. In looking beyond their individual needs and comforts, they won what will prayerfully be a **better life for them all. In standing together they** have grown together and the world has grown with them as we have watched and prayed.

As people of faith we must stand together. "Together Everyone Achieves More." The Word of **God has been planted within us like a seed**. We must do our part and be about the business of nurturing our relationship with God, trusting God to honor our efforts so that we mature spiritually, firmly rooted in good, rich moist soil. **When we spend time with God, and in service for God**, God helps us to grow and helps us to bear fruit not only for our own lives, but so that we may help others do the same. **Thanks be to God. Amen**