

October 13, 2024: Planted: Patience in dry seasons

Scripture Reading: James 5:7-11

(See also Luke 8:15; Psalm 63; Psalm 23)

1. Can you recall a time when patience paid off in your life?
2. Can you recall a time when lack of patience made your life harder?
3. Think of a time when you needed to live with great patience. What encouraged you the most? Was advice *not* helpful to you during that time?
4. The book of James ends with a call to patient endurance, similar to the patience of a farmer. What reason is given for why we should be patient?
5. James 5:9 warns about grumbling against others during times we need to be patient. Why do people often choose grumbling over patience?
6. In Luke's version of the Parable of the Sower, Jesus says that those who produce good fruit do so "with patient endurance" (Luke 8:15). Do you think Christians today are properly trained to *endure*? Why or why not?
7. How does God's presence help us endure?
8. Psalm 63 speaks of longing for God "as in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (v1). How does this Psalm offer encouragement for dry seasons of life?
9. Psalm 23 is a cherished piece of biblical poetry that has given comfort for centuries. How does Psalm 23 help us to endure with patience?
10. Where do you need prayer today?

October 6, 2024: Planted: Producing

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5: 16-26

1. What does it mean for the fruit of the Spirit to be “singular” rather than plural?
2. How do the different aspects of the fruit (love, joy, peace, etc.,) work together?
3. How does Paul’s contrast between the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) and the fruit of the Spirit challenge your understanding of Christian living?
4. Which of the nine attributes of the fruit of the Spirit do you find most evident in your life? Which ones are more difficult in your life?
5. How do you think the process of “abiding in Christ” assists in the development of the fruit of the Spirit? What practical steps can you take to deepen your relationship with Christ?
6. In what ways have trials or challenges in your life helped you grow in one or more aspects of the fruit of the Spirit?
7. How does walking by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) empower you to resist the desires of the flesh? Can you share a time when you experienced victory over a fleshly desire because of the Spirit’s work in you?
8. What impact does the fruit of the Spirit have on our relationships, both within the church and in the world?
9. How does living out these qualities make us effective witnesses for Christ?

September 29, 2024: Planted: Progress

Scripture Reading: Psalm 1 (See also: Ephesians 4:11-16)

1. Describe a time when you were at a crossroads in your life. What were the two options? What did you do?
2. Have you ever sensed that you were on the wrong path? How did you know?
3. What are the “two paths” mentioned in Psalm 1?
4. Notice the imagery in Psalm 1:3. What qualities of someone’s life would correspond to the image of a tree near a stream?
5. How do you identify spiritual growth? What signs do you look for? How do you know you are making progress?
6. Ephesians 4:11-16 reveals the need to grow toward *maturity* in Christ. When the church is at its best, how is maturity in Christ fostered?
7. Can you describe a time when someone told you the “truth in love”? What was the result?
8. How have you grown in Christ during the last decade?
9. Where would you like to see more growth in your life?

September 22, 2024: Planted: Pruning

Scripture Reading: John 15: 1-8

1. How skilled are you in recognizing when a plant needs to be pruned?
2. Why is it important to prune plants and branches?
3. What does it mean for Jesus to be the “true vine” and for us to be the branches?
4. What are some practical ways to ensure you stay connected to the vine?
5. In John 15:2, Jesus says that God prunes the branches that bear fruit. Why is pruning necessary, even for branches that are already producing fruit?
6. What has God pruned in your life to help you grow spiritually? What was the outcome? How did it feel?
7. Are there areas in your life where you sense God might be pruning you right now?
8. Jesus repeatedly uses the word “abide” in this passage. Another translation uses the word remain. What do you think it means to truly abide or remain in Christ?
9. How can you make abiding in Christ a daily priority in your life?

September 15, 2024: Planted: Planting

Scripture Readings: 1 Corinthians 3:1-8; Galatians 6:6-10

1. What is your first memory of *planting* something?
2. Do you like working outside, doing yard work, or tending a garden? Why or why not?
3. Those who start churches are often called “church *planters*.” The Apostle Paul is the main scriptural example of a church planter, as he was responsible for forming Christian communities in the ancient Mediterranean world. What do you know about the “planters” of your local congregation?
4. After reading 1 Corinthians 3:3-8, how would you summarize this passage? What is Paul’s main point?
5. The Corinthian church may have been divided over which leader people preferred to align with (Paul or Apollos). Paul was the founder. Apollos was a learned man and eloquent speaker (Acts 18:24). In today’s church, do you think people are tempted to align with their favorite leaders, even above their focus on God?
6. What does it look like to plant something and entrust the result to God? Can you think of an example from your life?
7. Galatians is another letter in which a frustrated Paul tries to correct certain errors in a local church. In Galatians 6 we find a memorable sentence: *You will reap what you sow*. What is the purpose of Paul making this statement? What is his larger concern?
8. Paul contrasts the “Spirit” with the “flesh.” An earlier passage, Galatians 5:16-26, helps us understand this contrast. What are signs we are “sowing to the Spirit” in our lives?
9. What are you planting in your life right now?

September 8, 2024: Planted: Preparing

Scripture often uses agricultural imagery to describe spiritual truths. The idea of being “planted” is one such image, symbolizing stability, growth, and fruitfulness. This week we reflect upon the Parable of the Sower.

Scripture: Matthew 13: 1-9, Mark 4: 1-9, Luke 8:4-15

1. Have you ever worked on a farm? What job did you do?
2. Jesus told parables to communicate spiritual truth. How does Jesus’ parable on the sower and the seed speak to you?
3. How do you understand the symbolism of the seed and the different types of soil?
4. In what ways might someone today have a heart like the pathway soil, where the Word of God is quickly snatched away?
5. How can we guard against this taking place?
6. Have you ever experienced a time when your faith was shallow and you struggled to remain steadfast during trials and difficulties?
7. What steps can we take to deepen our spiritual roots so that we can endure trials?
8. What are some of the “thorns” (worries, riches, and pleasures) that can choke out the Word of God in our lives?
9. What does it look like to have a heart that is “good soil?”
10. How can we cultivate a receptive and fruitful heart?
11. What type of soil do you most relate to in your life right now?

September 15, 2024: Planted: Part 2

Scripture Readings: 1 Corinthians 3:1-8; Galatians 6:6-10

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3. Those who start churches are often called “church *planters*.” The Apostle Paul is the main scriptural example of a church planter, as he was responsible for forming Christian communities in the ancient Mediterranean world. What do you know about the “planters” of your local congregation?
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9. What are you planting in your life right now?

September 8, 2024: Planted (New series)

Scripture often uses agricultural imagery to describe spiritual truths. The idea of being “planted” is one such image, symbolizing stability, growth, and fruitfulness. This week we reflect upon the Parable of the Sower.

Scripture: Matthew 13: 1-9, Mark 4: 1-9, Luke 8:4-15

1. Have you ever worked on a farm? What job did you do?
2. Jesus told parables to communicate spiritual truth. How does Jesus’ parable on the sower and the seed speak to you?
3. How do you understand the symbolism of the seed and the different types of soil?
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