

THE ENCOURAGER

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“He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.” 2 Corinthians 1:4 (THE MESSAGE)



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ABOUT ME: *I am a Landscaper, Writer, and Christian Brother living in Orlando, FL.; reaching out to encourage the body of Christ. This monthly e-newsletter is intended to challenge and strengthen your faith. Please feel free to email your comments and suggestions to me at: TonyGulledge1@aol.com. Thanks for reading this issue.*

“What made Jesus Curse?” *By Tony Gulledge*

In Matthew 21:18, the disciple tells us that early in the morning Jesus was on his way back to the city. He spotted a fig tree along side of the road. When Jesus found that the tree had no leaves, he cursed it and said it will never bear fruit again. The disciples were amazed to see the tree wither before their eyes. When the disciples asked why the fig tree died so fast Jesus explained it in verses 21 and 22: "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer (NIV.)" Here Jesus not only uses this as an opportunity to teach on faith, but also to curse the tree was because it did not bear fruit. As a Christian, do you bear fruit?

Later in Matthew 21:43, Jesus goes on to say that “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.(NIV.)” Here we presume Jesus is talking about taking salvation away from the Pharisees and giving it to true Christians who bear fruit. John the Baptist foreshadows this in his discussion with the Pharisees in Matthew 3:8-10. He tells them, “Produce fruit



Healthcare Headaches.

- ARE you frustrated over the rising cost of healthcare and the shrinking benefits and services offered?
- DO you understand what the New Health Care Initiative will mean for you and your family in 2014?
- IF you have a small business can tax credits help with affordable insurance?
- WHAT compensation can insurance exchanges offer to seniors or young adults?

If your tired of guessing about the new health care program, check out www.healthcare.gov. This is an excellent website set up by the government to answer all these questions and hundreds more. Why not table the media spin on this subject and get the facts. I know this website will help you become better informed and prepared for the upcoming changes in our healthcare delivery system.

Self Propelled



Once every couple of weeks I have to use my little self propelled mower to cut the back yard of an office building I maintain (because their gate is too narrow for my big mower.).

After I've engaged the self propelled system, this mower will pull itself until I have to make a turn; but at a much slower pace than I'm accustomed to. If I would just slow down and let the mower pull itself I could have that section cut in about twenty minutes. However, because I'm always in a hurry, I usually wind up pushing it faster myself and working up a good sweat. It's too bad I only shave off about five minutes by pushing the dumb mower myself

Isn't it the same with God. Instead of letting Holy Spirit pull us along at His pace we try to push ahead on our own. Too often we finish our tasks exhausted with little more to show for our efforts than a couple of extra minutes. Walking with God should be a no sweat job!



DID YOU KNOW?

Some fig trees are as much as 300 feet tall, and 200 feet wide. Just think how shocked the disciples must have been when Jesus cursed the fig tree and it dried up from the roots!



...He became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Matthew 14:30-31 - eternalpath.com

" What Made Jesus Curse, continued from page 1 "

in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. (NIV)" We find that in 25:41, Matthew goes on to tell us that "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, (NIV)"

Two other gospel writers pick up on this same theme of fruit bearing. Dr. Luke recounts Jesus' words in Luke 6:43-44, "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes or grapes from briars, (NIV)". As any landscaper can tell you, once an orange tree starts producing oranges; if its fruit is sweet then the tree will continue producing sweet oranges until it dies. Likewise if a tree starts out with a bitter fruit there is nothing you can do to make the fruit turn sweet, (assuming normal weather conditions prevail.)

Over in Luke 13:6-9 the disciple picks up the fruit tree subject matter when Jesus tells this parable. "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.(NIV)' "

Perhaps this is the balance. Even with fruit trees it takes a few years for them to bear fruit. However if the tree refuses to bear fruit it should be cut down and thrown into the fire. If we characterize people as trees one must remember that God is the Master Gardener, not us. In Matthew 13:30 Jesus has been talking about wheat and weeds. He says, "Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.(NIV) "

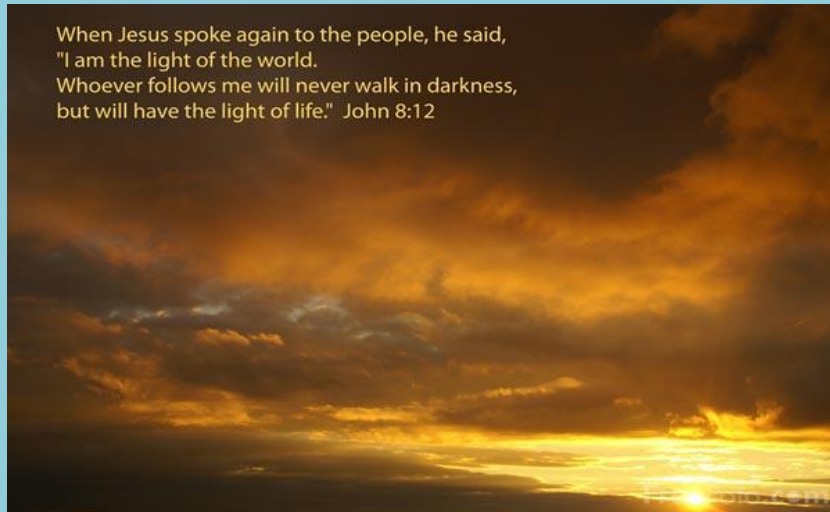
Another gospel writer, John, (the disciple that Jesus loved,) continued this fruit-bearing topic in John 15: 1-8: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples, (NIV)"

Bearing fruit brings Glory to the Father. In Galatians 5:22, 23(NIV), we find that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Bring glory to God our Father and bear sweet juicy luscious fruit!

Light:

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶**In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.** -Matthew 5:14

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12



“In Matthew, GOD says when you shine, He places you in dark places. Do not be afraid. The LORD is your shepherd. In essence, He installs lights around the world to light it up!” James L. Chen

