Preparing the Soil

Those of us who are farmers or gardeners know that soil preparation is required before we can expect to plant a seed and see it grow into a healthy, productive plant. It can take years to get soil to the preferred quality depending on what you start out with. Let's look at the parable of soils found in Matthew 13. The first example given is seed that is received by the way side. It describes one who hears the word but doesn't understand it so the wicked one comes and steals what has been sown. The second description is that of the stony place. When seed is sown on stony ground, the seed will sprout quickly due to elements of warmth that is held in the stone and light that reaches the exposed seed. Since there is little or no earth for the roots to anchor themselves to, or for water holding capacity, the sprout will soon shrivel and die. We are told that when seed fell on stony ground it was immediately received with joy by the hearer, but because there was no depth to his faith he fell away when tribulation came. No preparation was made to nurture growth. Next, the seed that fell among the thorns was soon choked out by the cares of the world and became unfruitful. Finally, the description of what happens when seed falls on good ground is that the hearer understands what is heard and bears fruit to various degrees.

As I sometimes drive around in the country, I see old fields grown over with brush and weeds. I visualize a new land owner walking around observing the lay of the land and making a plan to set up his farm or homestead. Long hours were spent cutting down the huge trees that once stood there and then digging out the roots to prepare that land for pasture or field crops. Things were often done by hand back then, because tractors and other power equipment weren't widely available. They worked diligently knowing that they were going to be dependent on this land for their future well being. The results of their eventual harvest depended on the effort they made during preparation time. Weeds seeds can lie dormant in soil for many years. It is a natural survival mechanism for some type of plant life to establish itself on the bare ground. When a farmer stops working the fields it is only a matter of time before wild plants begin to grow. If we were to sow seed into that old overgrown field without any preparation it would be a lost cause. I appreciate their pioneer spirit even though I wasn't around at that time to experience it.

During those times, children learned essential homestead skills along with spiritual truths from their parents and grand parents from the time they were small. I'm reminded of the verse which says, teach a child the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. The Bible was used as a teaching tool in schools back in the old days. It was often the only printed material that a family owned. That in itself shows the importance that people placed on faith in God. Families in communities once worked together, worshiped together, helped and depended upon one another. That sense of community has faded, now we each walk our own path. The path to Godliness is slowly disappearing due to lack of traffic, but the need to understand the necessity of right living remains.

Teaching and learning the ways of God is like preparing soil. First, obstacles to our progress must be identified and removed. Then the hard ground must be plowed and worked. Next the soil must be enriched with ingredients that will support healthy growth and repel harmful organisms. Healthy soil produces healthy plants. When these steps have been completed seed can be sown. Loose soil allows plants to send roots deep so that they become established. Because they draw water from a deeper source, plants can survive during dry seasons. Feeding the soil of our heart and preparing it to receive good seed is absolutely necessary for building a Godly character. Maintaining healthy soil is an ongoing process that requires diligence. We never stop growing or learning so nutrients are constantly being depleted. God's word is our spiritual feeding ground. What kind of soil are you? It's never too late to plow up the soil of your heart and start over.

Read your Bible and ask God to reveal Himself to you. May you have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Katie Hacker