

New Beginnings, Part 2

What new things would you like to see in your life? This is what I had to do for new growth in my garden:

First, I had to pull up some weeds that were smothering my flowers and bushes. Isn't it strange that these just spring up uninvited, with no effort on our part? Likewise, spiritual "weeds" creep into our lives and need to be pulled out. A lot of the weeds this year were vine-like--they had deep roots that sent out creepers everywhere. If you just pull the creepers without getting the root, then shortly they will just come again to suffocate your beautiful blooms - so check your attitudes!

Roger and I recently read a book entitled *Respectable Sins!* That seems like an odd title! Are there certain sins that we consider respectable? We rightly stand against murder and abortion. But I wonder if my "secret sins" offend God just as much as the big political sins. No, I'm not into pornography and I'm faithful to my husband, and I don't cheat on my income tax! But how about pride, selfishness, worry, covetousness, anger, and bitterness? It is shocking to realize that these sins of the heart, often invisible to others, grieve the Holy Spirit?

Because we have had more rain this summer than is typical, my grass is greener and my roses are thriving! But so are the weeds! The ones I pulled up last week have been replaced by twice as many this week! So I'm asking God to help me deal with my "respectable sins" which sprout like weeds! By His grace, I'm pulling up the roots of pride and worry and impatience and laziness and ingratitude.

Is there a root of bitterness creeping into your life that affects other areas of life--your friendships, your marriage, your church fellowship, or relationships at work? Maybe there needs to be some confession of harsh words, and reconciliation made. Maybe it is the weed of laziness that makes you procrastinate and put off things until you "get around to it." Call it what it is--confess it, pull it up by the root, and take action today.

Let's pray with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23,24).

Second, we had to enrich the soil by spreading plant food to nourish new growth. Are you enriching your life by getting some fresh food from your Bible reading, from reading a good book, from listening to Christian radio or music? All soil has to be refreshed or it loses the nutrients necessary for growth. "As newborn babies, desire the milk of the word so that you may grow by it" (I Peter 2:2). Ask God to give you a craving for His Word, just like a little baby eagerly seeks for mommy's milk.

Next, we had to get rid of the insects that were chewing the leaves and flowers. I wonder if these bugs and beetles could be compared to the little irritations of life that distract us from pursuing God and achieving new goals. Are you letting the small "cares of life" rob you of spiritual growth and fruitfulness?

Finally, we have to remember that real growth comes as we allow the Holy Spirit freedom to work in our lives, opening our hands to Him in surrender, trusting Him to do what we can't do. Don't make God have to pry your fingers loose from earthly treasures which may be idols. Begin every morning by holding up empty hands to the Lord and see how He completes the work which He has begun in you.

Printed from www.joyfulchristianministries.org



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