

Where Did the Summer Go?

Last week, as my daughter Lindi was preparing to return to college for her senior year, she was watching old VHS tapes on the small TV in her bedroom. My wife, Bonnie, and I got caught up reliving memories of vacations past when our four children were elementary-school age. In one of the tapes, our boys were sliding down a slippery rock in the hills of North Carolina into a frigid pool at the base of a mountain stream . . . of course all the while vying for our attention. Those are good memories.

As we prepare for another school year, I ask myself, What advice would I offer to parents, teachers, and principals as together we prepare for the first day of school in 2010?

Consider Micah 6:8 (NKJV):

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

John MacArthur, in *The MacArthur Study Bible*, says that the one thing God wants from us is “a spiritual commitment of the heart from which right behavior would ensue” (1997, 1306). As parents and school leaders, we desire that the children entrusted to our care by God will place their faith in Jesus Christ, be thoroughly prepared for the future He has planned for them (Jeremiah 29:11), and choose to follow Him wholeheartedly. It is important for us to realize that our children are looking to us for an example of what a living, breathing follower of Jesus Christ looks like!

In *Secrets of the Vine*, Bruce Wilkinson describes God’s plan for the believer to experience abundance, the “beautiful overflow of true worth in a person’s life” (2001, preface). The apostle John says, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8).

So what is this pathway of abundance for the Christian, and how does God bring it about in the life of the believer? When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior, the new believer is grafted into the vine, which is Jesus Christ. In order for the new believer to bear fruit—the good works the believer does to the glory of the Husbandman, God the Father—the Husbandman lifts up the young branch. The picture here is one of our

Heavenly Father on His hands and knees lifting the new believer up out of the dirt, washing him off, and tenderly placing him high in the vine. Sin in the life of the believer makes fruit bearing difficult, if not impossible.

Once the branch begins to bear fruit, the Husbandman works through the trials of life to prune the young branch and stimulate the growth of fruit (John 15:2). Why is pruning necessary? Because the Husbandman knows that a choice must be made between an abundance of large leaves or plentiful fruit! Large leaves represent works of the flesh in the life of the believer that one day will be burned up (John 15:6). Often in the trials of life, God brings us close to His side. During times of trial, we rethink our priorities and God, again, receives our full attention. It has been said that growth takes place in the valleys of life as opposed to life’s mountaintop experiences.

Once the believer begins to bear fruit, the Father desires for the believer to abide in Christ. Note the number of times John uses the word *abide* in John 15:1–8 (NKJV). To *abide* is “to walk closely with God.” We do this as we talk to Him throughout the day, trust Him, and meditate on and obey His Word (Joshua 1:8). What an awesome reality—that we can enjoy a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ.

In 2006, my oldest daughter, Lindi, graduated from Heritage Christian School. In her high school valedictory address, she said, “In the midst of trials, Dad always stated that ‘everything is in God’s control and we just need to trust that He will lead us down the best path for our lives and that it will be better than any of us can imagine.’ Dad’s example has made me want to be an enthusiastic follower and tool of Christ.”

Today, as my “little girl” prepares for student teaching and a college commencement in December, my heart’s response is “to *God* be the glory, great things *He* hath done” (from “To God Be the Glory” by Fanny Crosby, 1875; italics added)!

References

MacArthur, John. 1997. *The MacArthur study Bible*. Nashville: Word Publishing.
Wilkinson, Bruce, with David Kopp. 2001. *Secrets of the vine: Breaking through to abundance*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers.



Brian S. Simmons, President
Association of Christian Schools International

As a benefit of your membership, you are permitted to download *Christian School Comment* for distribution to your school constituency, either in printed form or as an email attachment. You are also granted permission to place this publication on your school’s website. All other forms of distribution must receive prior approval from ACSI.