



Start the
Conversation:
Provoke One
Another in Love

PROVOKING QUESTION:

This week, you are encouraged to ask a church member the following:

What are you doing to prepare yourself to receive the Fruit of the Spirit that God wants to bring into your life?

Christ on the throne of our heart and begin to love the world as Christ loves it, then things begin to happen. As we become more and more eager to be like Christ, then God rewards that eagerness on our part by producing fruit—i.e. the Fruit of the Spirit— in our lives.

God doesn't typically dump the whole orchard on us all at once. I tend to think that God begins to produce a crop one fruit at a time. He might help us first with patience or faith. Maybe he will produce more love in us and then help us with meekness. I don't know the order. I don't know the process. I do know, that the master gardener is at work in us. I also know, that the more we prepare the soil (read the Bible, engage in prayer, attend worship, receive the sacraments) the more quickly God will be able to produce that Fruit that we all desire.

So. What are you doing in your life to get the soil of our spirit ready for the Fruit that God is seeking to produce in your life? If you aren't trying to get things ready, then you shouldn't expect God to bless you with a bountiful crop.



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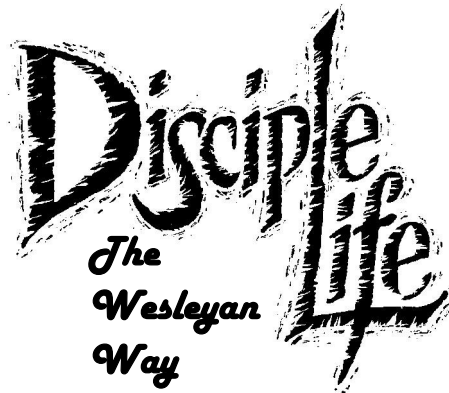
Have you ever marveled at the way a garden grows? It is not a haphazard process. Sure, some plants will come up again year after year without your intervention. However, when I think garden, I tend to think of something orderly and intentional.

You have to first till and prepare the soil. Then you have to decide where you are going to plant the various seeds or young plants. Then, once they are planted, you have to tend them. Then you sit outside every night and all day long and you say to the seeds and plants: Grow. I Command you to GROW.

Is that the way you grow a garden? Not really. Once you get everything planted, other than a little weeding, you sort of sit back and let it happen. It doesn't happen, though, on its own. You see God has created the seeds and plants and God programmed them to grow and blossom and bear fruit under the right conditions. We can assist the process, but we are not ultimately responsible for the process. Nor can we force the process.

Our spiritual growth is sort of the same way. We have to cultivate the soil and get things ready. We have to plant seeds. We have to water and weed, but ultimately, the growth will come from God. The Fruit will occur in God's time. Specifically, the Fruit of the Spirit will blossom in our lives as we do the things we can to prepare our spirit, but we have to rely on God to bring them to full fruit. They are God's gift to us, not something we can demand or make happen on our own.

In the Wesleyan Way of Discipleship chart (I hope you have one of those by now-they are available online and in the office) you will note that once we begin to see the world as Christ sees it and once we put



Week # 4

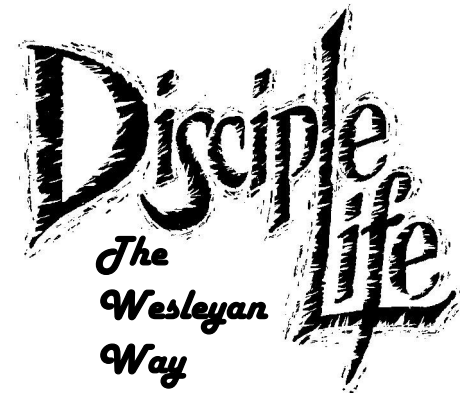
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