

My Neglected Garden

I used to pride myself on having a green thumb. From an early age, my window sills were lined with potted houseplants and cuttings I was trying to root. Then, when we bought our first home, I was excited to plan what each part of the yard would look like and plant accordingly. I was a devoted gardener, working outside every chance I got – weeding, watering, fertilizing, pruning. A lot of effort, yes, but well worth the work because the result was beauty and satisfaction. Things grew and bloomed and produced fruit.

Over the years, though, my enthusiasm – or at least my energy – gradually waned. I got busy with other things, and I didn't spend as much time caring for the yard. My body developed aches and pains that made the work more uncomfortable too. I still *wanted* a beautiful garden, but I no longer felt like putting in the necessary effort, which meant the plants were pretty much on their own.

Unfortunately, not many living things thrive on neglect – not gardens, not relationships, and certainly not our spiritual lives. They all need to be nurtured to remain healthy and growing.

Perhaps seeds of faith were planted in your heart when you were young, and by the grace of God, they sprouted and grew. You cultivated that early faith – reading your Bible, praying, and gathering regularly with other believers for worship and fellowship. But then, somewhere along the way, you drifted. You got distracted, busy with and captivated by other things. You became lax about Bible study, prayer, and attending church. Or perhaps you stopped altogether. In other words, your relationship with God fell neglected. You were no longer giving it the time and attention necessary to keep it strong, healthy, and growing. It should be no surprise, then, if your faith languished. Jesus said:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine... 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." (John 15:1, 4-5)

Have you, deliberately or inadvertently, cut yourself off from the source of all life? Have you neglected your relationship with the Lord? Since a branch cut off from the vine quickly withers and will eventually die, don't wait! Get reconnected through scripture and prayer. Find a Bible-believing church for solid teaching and support (God never intended us to go it alone). Jesus is waiting to welcome you back. Accept his invitation to abide in him always.

S. Johnson