

Fertilizing the Seed

Luke 13:1-22 This passage in Luke has special meaning to me because the plea of the vine dresser became a prayer my husband and I prayed for a church we were attending. In this church the pastor was open to the things of the Spirit, but most of his congregation were not. They did not want any changes. We were in this church for three years when we attended a Sunday school retreat. The retreat was in Calloway Gardens in South Georgia, and we were in charge of getting the speaker.

The first night of the retreat the speaker delivered a powerful message about his work in Indonesia. He shared many of the miracles he had seen with his own eyes in this land. Many of those present were not able to receive what the speaker shared, and some even packed their things and left to return to Atlanta. The Bible speaks of people who have a form of religion, but who deny the power thereof. Whenever a person denies the power of the Holy Spirit to work in the church today, he usually is bound by religion and tradition. Needless to say, my husband and I were discouraged and even wondered if anyone would be present to hear the speaker the following morning.

That night we prayed with a preacher friend of ours whom we had invited to come to the retreat. He was the pastor of another church. We asked him if he felt the time was right for us to move on to another church since the one we were in seemed to not want to move in the things of the Holy Spirit. He drew aside and prayed alone about our situation and then read us Luke 13 and shared a word to us from the Lord. As we read this passage together we were struck with the fact that the vine dresser had worked with this fig tree for three years, and we had been in this church for three years. The Lord of the vineyard wanted to cut it down, but the vine dresser asked permission to dig the tree for one more year and

then if it did not bear fruit, he would cut it down. We were led by this word to stay one more year at this church and see what happened.

We knew our assignment was to attempt to plow up the hard ground around the hearts of the people in this church. The only way to do this was to keep teaching God's uncompromising Word no matter what people thought. Our hope was that the hearts would be softened and would receive the seed of God's Word and that seed would then germinate, grow roots and then spring up and eventually produce fruit. We fulfilled our assignment, and sadly at the end of one year all those who seemed to begin to grow in their faith because of the Word left the church; those who remained stayed closed to the Spirit of God. They even dismissed the pastor who was open to the things of the Holy Spirit. We also felt led to leave just before this pastor was dismissed because we knew our assignment in this church was over. I still pray this church will begin to grow in God's Word and Spirit. Be sure this morning you have a soft heart to receive God's Word.

**READ: Deuteronomy 33:1-29; Luke 13:1-22; Psalm 78:59-72;
Proverbs 12:25**