

Introduction

Rooted in Him

By Nancy J. Collins

God uses many examples and comparisons throughout the Bible to help us, His children, understand what He is doing in us as we remain in vital union with Him. In John 15 our union with Him is described as that of a vine and a branch; in 1 John 1:7 He speaks of us walking in the light; and Colossians 2:6-7 describes our relationship with Him as living with, being rooted in, and being built up in Him. Psalms 1:1-3 tells us that the person who walks with the Lord, delighting in His Word, is like a tree planted by streams of water:

*Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
 or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)*

Living in this world is not easy! Jesus Himself said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). Knowing and truly walking with the Lord makes all the difference.

Imagine yourself taking a walk with someone you love. You walk side-by-side, spending time just being together and talking to each other. As you walk, you may discuss things around you or what is going on in your lives. Sometimes you may share your joys, sorrows, or struggles, or you may share words of love for each other. Still other times you may just enjoy each other’s presence. The idea of this walk is being together and sharing yourselves *with each other*. One person doesn’t do all the talking; it is give and take—listening and responding to each other.

Now, think about your walk with the Lord. Are you the one who does all the talking, or do you listen to Him, too? He has spoken to us in His Word, the Bible. How often do you listen to Him by reading what He has said in His Word? So often in my personal walk with the Lord, He will bring to my mind what He has said in His Word that will give me the answers I am seeking and the comfort I need, or He will give me new insights into what He is teaching me or is about to teach me.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 says:

*But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.*

Because this tree is rooted by the water, the heat from the beating sun is not a problem; in fact, that sun is needed just as the water is needed in order for the tree to flourish and bear fruit. When we are rooted in Him, the trials and the difficulties of life are not a problem. The trials we go through help us bear fruit. Even when there is drought, that tree still bears fruit. When we are rooted in Him, we will continue to bear fruit even when we go through long periods of difficulty.

You may be wondering, "What fruit?" Galatians 5:22-23a says:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

As we walk with Him and are rooted in Him, we can go through all the difficulties this life brings and still be filled with and touch others with His love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. Along with that, our lives can exhibit self-control and forbearance, which is the capacity to endure what is difficult or disagreeable without complaining.¹

What a difference this would make in our own lives and in the lives of those we touch if we would bear this fruit! Now, fruit does not pop up on a tree or a plant instantly; it is produced gradually. The fruit of the Spirit is no different; it is produced gradually in us by the Holy Spirit.

This devotional, *Rooted in Him*, contains 30 daily readings that we hope will encourage you as you walk with Jesus Christ, rooted and grounded in Him.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

(Ephesians 3:17b-21)

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/forbearance>

Day 1

Weiners and Beans, or Pride!

Adapted from You Can Do It, Too! Opening Your Heart and Home to Share God's Love, by Doris W. Greig

I had been washing and ironing clothes and bedding for our family all day long. As I worked, I prayed for myself, my husband Bill,¹ and our four children, giving Him thanksgiving and praise for each one.

I talked to God about my dreams for our family and for each child in it. I prayed that our family would be so filled with the love of Christ that it would “ooze” out of the doors of our house to fill our neighborhood, school, community, and world with the sweet fragrance of Christ.

Soon, the children arrived home from school. My 10-year-old daughter Kathy was caring for her two brothers, Billy and Gary, ages 6 and 5, and our active 2-year-old Jane, who had followed me about the house all that day while I worked. It was a welcome breather that I had looked forward to all day.

I was thankful because there seemed to be a greater spirit of peace and cooperation than usual, and I thought I would manage to get the laundry completed in time to cook the wieners and beans for dinner. It was not a fancy dinner, but I knew the children would enjoy the hot dogs. My husband was always appreciative of any meal I served him.

The phone rang at about 4:30. It seemed an uncalled for interruption in my hectic schedule. Kathy answered the phone and told me her daddy wanted to speak to me. As I walked to the phone, I wondered what on earth he could want at this hour. After Bill told me the reason he had called, I felt like a bomb had exploded in the kitchen and hit me!

Bill, in an excited voice, told me he was sitting in his office with a woman from South Africa. “Will it be all right if I bring her home for dinner?” he asked. “She has not been in an American home yet, and would really enjoy seeing our home. She wants to get acquainted with you and the children,” he said.

My first reaction was to scream or cry! How could he do this to me, I wanted to shout. As calmly as possible, I tried to explain to Bill that this was my laundry day, and I had wieners and beans planned for dinner. I told him I didn’t have the time or energy to go to the store for anything else, nor did I have any other food to supplement or make any change in this slapped-together meal.

He on the other hand was so enthusiastic when he heard that we were having wieners and beans, I couldn’t believe it! He’s got to be kidding, I thought. He told me Yvonne would be thrilled to have wieners and beans because they were typically American, and she

¹ Doris’ husband, William T. Greig II, was a partner in the family business, Gospel Light.

probably had never tasted them. He was a super salesman—he guaranteed she would love my dinner! I had my doubts.

I frantically fished for another excuse to get out of this dinner visit. I told Bill that the house was a mess, that I wasn't exactly neatly dressed, and that the kids were dirty from playing in the backyard. Again, he tried to encourage me. He told me that families around the world, even in South Africa, are like this, and Yvonne would feel right at home with us. He said, "Not to worry, Doris."

Well, as you may have gathered by now, I have a husband with a God-given gift for extending hospitality to anyone, anytime. He personifies the members of the Body of Christ who are given special ability to provide a warm welcome and an open house for those in need of food or lodging.² I was a new Christian, and wasn't so sure God had called me to this ministry. Yet, if my husband had the gift, wasn't I, his partner, to support him in exercising it? I began to send up "arrow prayers" to God after agreeing to have this stranger from South Africa come to my home for an "exotic American dinner" of wieners and beans.

The children all pitched in before dinner to help pick up the house. I was too tired to even think of setting the dining room table. We set the kitchen table with our prettiest plastic mats, plastic dishes and our everyday stainless flatware. The children picked a few flowers from the yard and arranged them in a small vase for a centerpiece.

I refused to allow myself to dwell on the fact that the kitchen floor should be swept, and that all of the furniture in the house needed dusting. There wasn't time! I decided, "Why spoil the whole evening by getting grumpy over details that really won't count through time and eternity anyway?" God was letting me know that this evening was in His hands. I didn't have to fret that I did not have a model home, model children, or a model meal for this guest.

As I look back on this experience, I can see the hand of God on my life—shaping and forming me into His image. He worked in my life through this growing experience of trusting Him in the circumstances of that day.

Just as God does not make His spiritual children all alike physically, He formed us differently for various uses in the Kingdom of God. Your call may not be to allow your furniture to get worn and your dishes broken by hosting a lot of people for dinner. Instead, you may be called to weep with a friend or a neighbor, or to stay up late to listen to the story of the pain in someone's life, to watch the neighbor's children when their mother is ill, or take food to the home of a new neighbor. We need to pray, "God, please make me willing to see, and then grasp, the opportunities You send my way. I trust Your Holy Spirit to give me the wisdom and strength I need."

Would you like to hear the outcome of the laundry day opportunity the Lord gave me? Yvonne came! She was young and full of fun, and the children liked her immediately. As I

² See Romans 12:13 and 1 Peter 4:8-10.

dished up the beans and stuffed the hot dogs into their buns, put the applesauce and carrot sticks into serving bowls, Yvonne showed the children pictures of Johannesburg, South Africa. She told them about the climate, people, plants, animals, and churches there. What a blessing it was for my children to be exposed to another country and culture through her sharing that evening!

I called to them in the living room, "Dinner is served!" The children joyously led Yvonne to the kitchen, and we all sat down to the table. It looked quite pretty with the flowers the children had arranged, and the soft glow of the candles I had added at the last moment. The hot dogs on a platter and the beans in the casserole actually looked and smelled pretty good.

Yvonne was so excited about her "American dinner." Imagine she had never had hot dogs and baked beans before! "These are so wonderful," she said. "I love your American food!"

Whenever I have seen Yvonne in years since, she has always reminded me of that "delightful evening" when she was introduced to our family. Yvonne never fails to mention how good the wieners and beans tasted, and what fun it was to be counted as worthy to be treated "just like family."

As she reminds me of this, I realize that my pride almost kept me from this "choice experience," as she defines it. It was a growing experience for my children as their world view was enlarged. And for me, it was a growing experience in letting go of non-essentials and trusting God to meet me where I was.

I almost missed the joy of getting to know Yvonne, sharing my family with her, and giving her a little glimpse of our American home and culture. It was either wieners and beans or pride. I am so glad that with God's guidance, I was able to set aside my pride and instead chose to serve wieners and beans!

Earlier that day I had prayed for my children. I had asked God to mold them into His image. What I now realized was that He not only molded them that evening, but He also was in the process of molding me into a usable vessel for His glory. To think I almost missed the Potter's touch on my life that day because of foolish pride!

Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8)

- ☞ How has God been molding you into His image through your recent experiences? Has it been difficult to submit to His hand?

