

The Vineyard & The Husbandman

Part 5

The Husbandman

The Husbandman

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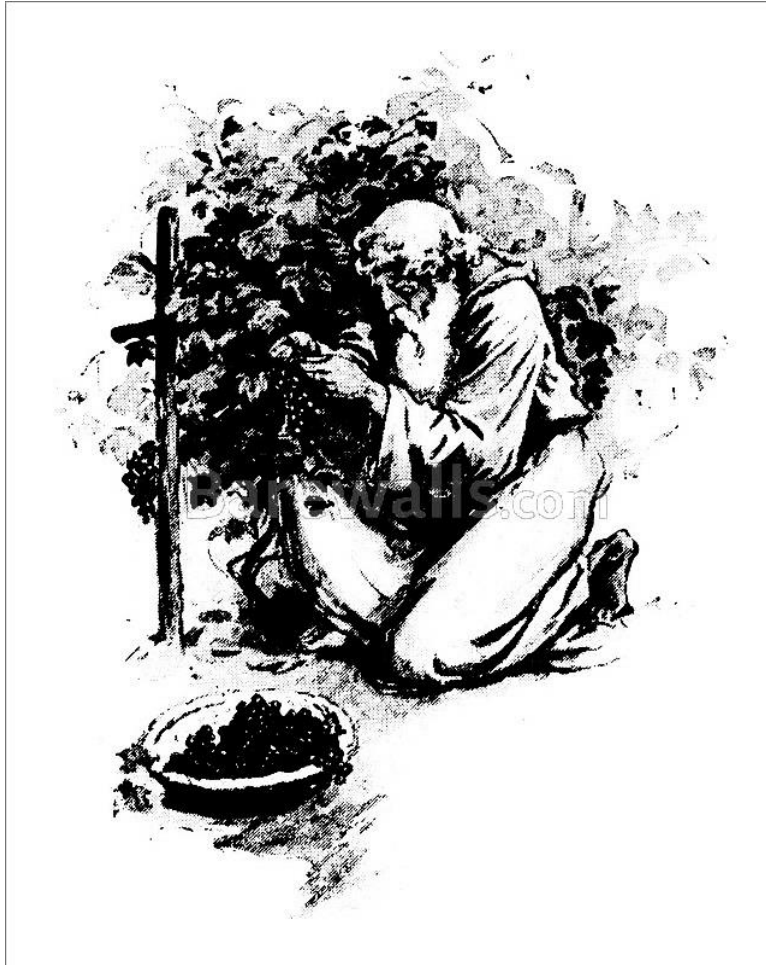
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The Husbandman¹

“...My Father is the HUSBANDMAN.”²

¹ The following material on “The Husbandman” originated in South Africa in 1996. It has been edited and restructured for this essay.

² John 15:1 *KJV*

The Etymology³ of the Word “Husbandman”

The connection between the words “husband” and “husbandman” is found in the original meaning of the English words as well as in the meanings of the Greek words. These are definitions from Webster’s New World Dictionary:

“HUSBANDMAN”: in its archaic or poetic usage, is a person whose occupation is HUSBANDRY - that is, a farmer.

“HUSBANDRY”: in its original usage, referred to the management of domestic affairs, and resources.

These are definitions from *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*:

“HUSBANDMAN”: (Greek) *georgos*, Strong’s # 1092: *ge*: “ground” + *ergos*: “to work”: i.e. A CULTIVATOR

“HUSBANDRY”: (Greek) *georgion*, Strong’s # 1091: a “cultivable field”.

³ The history of a linguistic form (such as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found, by tracing its transmission from one language to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other languages, or by tracing it and its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language. (Merriam Webster)

A Spiritual Cultivator

In August of 1996, I was traveling by car through the regions of the Karoo and the Kwazulu-Natal Province in South Africa. I was on a month-long ministry trip and traveling alone. As I drove, I would fellowship with the Holy Spirit. I was missing my wife and talking to the Lord about my desire to be a more godly “husband”. As I prayed, I began to consider a possible connection between the word, “husband”, and the more archaic word, “husbandman”. And as I thought about the scriptural contexts, it was clear that a “husbandman” was a farmer, and therefore the idea of a “husband” must have some connection with being a farmer. But, the particular word I have come to choose since then is the word “CULTIVATOR”. As I drove the long open roads enjoying the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, many things were imparted to me regarding our Father God being a CULTIVATOR of our lives.

A husband is called to be a CULTIVATOR of his wife, who is like “a garden locked is my sister, my bride, a rock garden locked, a spring sealed up”, and is to be nurtured and released to blossom

and grow.⁴

A CULTIVATOR, as a father is called to be a CULTIVATOR of his children who, along with his wife “being like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table”, also to be nurtured to grow and bear fruit.⁵

I also understood that an elder and a mentor is also one called to be a CULTIVATOR of those who are younger – spiritual children who are growing and developing in their lives and ministries as disciples of Jesus Christ.⁶ Obviously, so much could be said about *husbands* and *fathers*, but in this essay it is specifically **mentors** that I have in mind – those whom the Holy Spirit has raised up as SPIRITUAL PARENTS whom the Lord has called to function as CULTIVATORS of the lives and ministries of others. As God the Father is the Great CULTIVATOR of our lives - physical, psychological and spiritual – so also MENTORS or

⁴ Song of Solomon 4:12-16; Cf. Genesis 3:16, I Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19

⁵ Psalm 128:3; Cf. Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:2-4, Colossians 3:20-21

⁶ I Timothy 5:1, Titus 2:2 & 6, I Peter 5:5; Cf. Acts 20:28, Romans 12:8, Hebrews 13:17, I Peter 5:1-4

SPIRITUAL PARENTS are godly CULTIVATORS of the lives of others.

Some Responsibilities of Spiritual Cultivators

According to an etymology dictionary,⁷ the origins of the word, “HUSBAND” were: “hus”, meaning *house* and “bondi”, meaning *freeholder*. The verb tense, in the obsolete usage of “husband” meant TO CULTIVATE. The noun, “husband”, in its archaic use, is a manager, as of a household.

Concerning the “household” and the “freeholder” of the household: There was a significant distinction between those who are *members of the household* and *the manager of the household*. This has spiritual implications for SPIRITUAL PARENTS or CULTIVATORS of others: The members of the household have an accountability *for their functions*. But the manager of the household has responsibilities *with regard to the household members*.

Just as in natural parenting, if we intend to be good CULTIVATORS, we need to take the responsibility of SPIRITUAL PARENTING seriously - not glibly - and not indiscriminately.

⁷ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/husband>

SPIRITUAL PARENTS should only take responsibility for *“those whom the Lord has given”*,⁸ because they will have to “watch out for (their) souls, as those who must give account”.⁹

We are speaking here of *a God-given relationship*. We cannot have *self-appointed* SPIRITUAL PARENTS. If someone says he is a SPIRITUAL PARENT or CULTIVATOR, others will rightly expect him to live up to the responsibilities. This is *a God-given relationship* with *“those whom the Lord has given”*. Neither can we of ourselves *appoint* someone to be our SPIRITUAL PARENT or CULTIVATOR. This is *a God-given relationship* with *“those whom the Lord has given”*.

What are some of those responsibilities of SPIRITUAL PARENTING IN GOD’S HOUSEHOLD and CULTIVATING IN THE LIVES OF SPIRITUAL CHILDREN? Although the apostle Paul was not a natural husband or father, I believe that what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:14-21 concerning his ministry to the Corinthians illustrates a godly example of some of **the responsibilities** of SPIRITUAL PARENTING and CULTIVATING:

⁸ Isaiah 8:18

⁹ Hebrews 13:17

14 “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”

CULTIVATING involves “pulling weeds” as well as nourishing. In this passage, Paul is making reference to some of the more unpleasant responsibilities of SPIRITUAL PARENTING. But this emphasis can help explain why we consider “making babies” fun,

but often try to avoid the follow-up of accepting and carrying the responsibility of SPIRITUAL PARENTING.

In verse 15, Paul uses the word “fathers”: “For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many *fathers*, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” W.E. Vine describes a “father” as “one who imparts spiritual life”. With the Corinthians, Paul had “begotten (them) through the gospel”, but he also PARENTED them through his ongoing ministry to them. The imparting of spiritual life is an ongoing process which begins with the preaching of the gospel and continues with the ministry of discipleship for “the obedience to the faith”.¹⁰ With regards to SPIRITUAL PARENTING, the “bringing up” aspect is much more significance than the “birthing” aspect: Most of us can easily make a baby, but not as many of us do a really excellent job of bringing one up. It is important to note that the apostle Paul also “parented” others whom he had not “begotten” through the gospel.¹¹

¹⁰ Romans 1:5

¹¹ Paul gave guidance to the Christians in Rome, Ephesus and Colossae, but probably did not initiate their birthing through the gospel. The gospel was probably first preached in Rome by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 2:9-11; 18:1-2). The gospel was probably first preached in Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla, along with Apollos. (Acts 18:18-21; 19:1). The gospel was probably first preached in Colossae by Epaphras (Ephesians 1:7-8; 4:12-13).

In verse 14, Paul uses the word “**admonish**”: “I do not write these things to shame you, but to *admonish* you as my beloved children.” SPIRITUAL PARENTING and CULTIVATING involve **admonishing**: (Greek) *noutheteo*, Strong’s # 3560: to give instructional warning.

In verse 16, Paul used the word “**exhort**”: “Therefore I *exhort* you, be imitators of me.” SPIRITUAL PARENTING and CULTIVATING involve **exhorting**: (Greek): *parakaleo*, Strong’s # 3870: to call on, to entreat, **to urge** someone to pursue some course of conduct. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit and His ministry as the *Parakletos*, Strong’s # 3875: One called alongside to help. Therefore, if we are to CULTIVATE in the Spirit, we must be attuned to and sensitive to the Holy Spirit and be “urging” that which He is “urging” in someone’s life.

Again, in verse 16, Paul uses the word “**imitators**”: “Therefore I exhort you, *be imitators of me.*” (Greek): *mimetes*, Strong’s # 3401: a follower, an imitator. W.E. Vine says that this word is always used in a good sense in the New Testament. SPIRITUAL

PARENTING and CULTIVATING involve being an example or a model - especially in the formative years, while always allowing the other to begin realizing and living out his own identity in the Lord.

Let's look at verse 17: "For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will *remind you of my ways* which are in Christ, just as I *teach* everywhere in every church." SPIRITUAL PARENTING and CULTIVATING involve "handing down" or "handing over" to others the things which you have received from the Lord. The Greek word translated "my ways" is *hodos*, Strong's # 3598: Literally, it means a path, a road or a way. Metaphorically, it means a course of conduct, or way of thinking. Paul said he "taught" his "ways"; and Timothy, having learned Paul's "ways", would be able to "remind" others of these "ways". Paul did not bring Timothy to new birth in Christ,¹² but disciplined him in Christ.¹³ As Paul's "beloved and faithful child in the Lord", Timothy was not "parroting" Paul, but was "being like-minded, having the same

¹² Acts 16:1-3

¹³ 2 Timothy 2:1-2

love, being of one accord, of one mind” with Paul.¹⁴ In 1 Corinthians 11:2, Paul wrote: “Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to *the traditions*, just as I *delivered* them to you.” Paul had “**delivered**” these traditions - Greek: *paradidomi*, Strong’s # 3860: “handed over” - “**the traditions**” – Greek: *paradosis*, Strong’s # 3862: that which is “handed down” or “handed over”. Literally, he “handed over” “the things handed down”. Paul **instructed others in “the traditions” he himself had received from the Lord.** In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Paul wrote: “ So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to *the traditions* which you were *taught*, whether *by word of mouth* or *by letter* from us.” Paul **“taught” and “handed over” these “things handed down” by “word of mouth” and by “letter” (epistles).**

1 Corinthians 4:18-20 reads: “Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their *power*. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in *power*.” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon refers to that “power” as “moral power and excellence of soul”. SPIRITUAL PARENTING and CULTIVATING involve **being primarily**

¹⁴ Philippians 2:2

concerned with heart attitudes and character formation, rather than “correct” external behavior. Yet, the goal of true discipleship is “teaching them to observe all things that (Christ) has commanded you”¹⁵ – that is, to “walk the talk”.

And in 1 Corinthians 4:21 Paul wrote: “What do you desire? Shall I come to you with *a rod*, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?” So, we see that SPIRITUAL PARENTING and CULTIVATING also involves **bringing correction when needed**.

¹⁵ Matthew 28:20

“I will not leave you as orphans.”¹⁶

In John’s gospel, chapter 14, Jesus is encouraging His disciples with the profound mystery of “Oneness”, speaking to them of the sending of the Holy Spirit, by and through Whom, both the Father and Jesus would live within them, making the disciples one with both the Father and Jesus. Thus, because of the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, *the disciples would not be left as orphans*. As disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, they would not be left without a father – namely, the Heavenly Father. We must always remember, and never obstruct the reality, that people are to be disciples of Christ – not ourselves. Likewise, disciples are first and foremost children belonging to the Heavenly Father. Yet, as we have seen in 1 Corinthians 4¹⁷, there is a place and a need for earthly spiritual fathers. God the Father is totally sufficient, yet He Himself has ordained earthly fathers and spiritual parents for His children. Too many of God’s children have had to grow up spiritually without SPIRITUAL PARENTS and CULTIVATORS. This can be likened to a Christian who has

¹⁶ John 14:18

¹⁷ Cf. 1 Timothy 1:2, and possibly Ephesians 6:1.

his Heavenly Father, but is growing up without a father in the home. This does not mean that God alone cannot meet his needs and see him through life. Obviously, God allows such situations. But, this is a result of the Fall, and was not meant to be the norm. It is not God's best, nor God's full blessing for His children. Although healing and wholeness can be provided later through faith in Christ, such a child would most likely grow up with unnecessary fears and insecurities, as well as, a paralyzing lack of confidence. And, in order to compensate for these things, he is likely to have a general posture of defensiveness and aggressiveness, along with compensating pride and arrogance, while vacillating between a low self-image and an overly exalted self-image. I think we all know people that fit this scenario. It is sad to see so many Christians like this. It is even more grievous to see church leaders who also fit this description, as it very negatively affects them in the work of ministry.

Word Pictures of the Husbandman

The Father in the Hosea's Lament

1a "When Israel was a child, I loved him,

1b and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 Israel called to the Egyptians even as Israel was leaving them.

They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

3 It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the hand, but they never knew that I healed them.

4a I led them with human cords, with ropes of love. To them I was like one who eases the yoke from their jaws;

4b I bent down to give them food."¹⁸

We can see these qualities of Husbandmen in this Old Testament description of God the Father:

1a "When Israel *was* a child, I loved him."

SPIRITUAL PARENTS and CULTIVATORS are *vesse/s* of the Heavenly Father's provision of "the love of God which is poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to

¹⁸ Hosea 11:1-4. I have chosen here the Christian Standard Bible translation. There is a problematic Hebrew construction in verse 2a, which seems grammatically illogical in other translations. The CSB translation seems to have the most appropriate translation of verse 2.

us”.¹⁹ The apostle Paul tells us that “... love edifies.”²⁰ The love of a SPIRITUAL PARENT or CULTIVATOR will help properly edify a disciple’s life as God intended. A SPIRITUAL PARENT or CULTIVATOR expresses love by giving others:

- support and encouragement
- affirmation and confirmation
- direction and release

1b “And out of Egypt I called My son.”

Husbandmen patiently seek to help the disciple find deliverance from physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bondages²¹.

2 “Israel called to the Egyptians²² even as Israel was leaving them. They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.”

¹⁹ Romans 5:5, Cf. Romans 14:19.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 8:1

²¹ Cf. Romans 6:12-13, 16; 8:5-7, 12-15

²² In scripture, Egypt represents the world and all of our associations within that system. As disciples of Christ, we are “called out” of that system to follow Christ in His kingdom. But, like Lot’s wife turned to look back at Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:26), young disciples vacillate between the righteousness of the kingdom and the way of the world.

In scripture, *Egypt* represents the world - a multi-faceted fallen system which is “in alienation from and opposition to God”.²³ We can understand *Egyptians* to represent all of our old associations within that fallen world system. As disciples of Christ, we are “called out”²⁴ of the world, as it were²⁵, to follow Christ in His kingdom. But, like Lot’s wife turned to look back at Sodom and Gomorrah,²⁶ young disciples can vacillate between the way of the world and the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven.

Husbandmen, while bringing instruction and correction, must often wait patiently, as the Holy Spirit enables the disciple to see truth and be set free.²⁷ This is a process.²⁸ And, I have found that process to be quite lengthy in some respects: Disciples may be both young in the experience of life and young in their experience of Christ. And while it is true that some young disciples may display impressive cognitive and experiential knowledge of Christ, at the same time and in many ways, they may still be relatively

²³ *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, “World”, Greek: *kosmos*, Strong’s # 2889.

²⁴ We are the *ekklesia*, “the called-out ones”.

²⁵ In this age, we are IN it, but not OF it.

²⁶ Genesis 19:26

²⁷ John 8:32

²⁸ Romans 12:2 The present participle, “to be conformed”, is in the continuous tense. The meaning is that we already have been conformed to the world, and continue to be conformed to the world. Paul is exhorting us to stop that process – i.e. to stop being “conformed to the world”, by “being transformed by the renewing of our mind”.

inexperienced in life. **Life experience and spiritual experience are intrinsically connected.** This is because the Holy Spirit desires the knowledge of Christ to be applied to real life experience. The two are inseparable. **The Spirit imparts and grows the life of Christ in us in the context of everyday life.**²⁹ So, I have often found that disciples, as spiritually astute as they may be, are just not yet at the place in their lives to see, embrace and apply certain things in the mind of Christ. Husbandmen must wait patiently for the work of the Spirit in their lives to mature them to the place of transformation in particular areas of their lives. Generally speaking, there are no short cuts to experience – it comes by living. The long and the short of it is: “Growing up” – maturing – takes time and patience.

3 “It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the hand, but they never knew that I healed them.”

While Husbandmen make a long-term investment teaching by word and deed, being an example of how to “walk” in *the Way*³⁰,

²⁹ I have dealt with this concept in more detail in *The Vineyard of the Lord*, “The Context of Discipleship – Life”, pp. 66-70, Cf. pp. 44-47 (Cf. Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

³⁰ John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

the disciple may learn much unconsciously – through “osmosis”, as it were – and may not always recognize the Husbandmen as being the source of the instruction.

4a “I led them with human cords, with ropes of love. To them I was like one who eases the yoke from their jaws.”

With “those whom the Lord has given”, there are God-given “ropes” or bonds of love. Husbandmen are also given the ability to communicate with, relate to, and draw along the disciple with “cords” which identify with their common humanity – on a human level. Often Christians – especially “serious” Christians – tend to play down, or even hide, our “natural humanness” in ministry. I get the point – being born of the Spirit, we are called to be *supernatural*. But, there are other important points to be made: It must be clear to the disciple that Husbandmen cannot stand in the place of God. Also: If Jesus found it significant “being made in the likeness of men”, why would we want to hide our humanness? Why wouldn’t we also want to “have this (same) attitude in ourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”?³¹

³¹ Philippians 2:5-8

4b I bent down to give them food.”

There is an interesting aspect about the biblical concept of “intercession”.³² Both the Greek noun, *enteuxis*³³, and the verb, *entunchano*³⁴, carry the meaning of “drawing near in order to meet with and speak with”. This “bending down”³⁵ is certainly what the Son of God did when He came down to earth so that we might know Him and learn to “eat and drink” of Him.³⁶ So too, Husbandmen “draw near to meet with and speak with” and impart something to the disciple – that is, to “give food to” the disciple. Whether the image is a mother “bending down” over a crib to pick up her baby at feeding time, or a waiter “drawing near” the one seated at the dining table in order to serve him food, Husbandmen so present themselves in a certain intimacy of relationship, thus making themselves available to nourish the disciple.

The Farmer in Isaiah’s Parable

³² This is just one aspect, not the entire meaning of “Intercession”. The Hebrew word, *naphal*, Strong’s # 5307, means to prostrate or throw oneself down or upon. I do not necessarily associate that image with the Husbandman.

³³ Strong’s # 1783

³⁴ Strong’s # 1793

³⁵ Again, Philippians 2:5-8

³⁶ Cf. John 6:26-58

In this parable we see “the work of God”³⁷ contrasted with human methods and techniques.

²³ Give ear and hear my voice, listen and hear my words.

²⁴ Does **the farmer** plow continually to plant seed?

Does he continually turn and harrow the ground?

²⁵ Does he not level its surface and sow dill and scatter cumin and plant wheat in rows, barley **in its place** and rye **within its area**?

²⁶ For his **God instructs and teaches him properly**.

²⁷ For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is the cartwheel driven over cumin; but dill is beaten out with a rod, and cumin with a club.

²⁸ Grain for bread is crushed, indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever. Because the wheel of his cart and his horses eventually damage it, he does not thresh it longer.

²⁹ This also comes from the Lord of hosts, who has made **His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great**.³⁸

This is a parable about CULTIVATING people, helping them sow themselves in their *God-appointed* places and areas, so that they may also reap their own unique harvests in the Lord. Regarding the farmer – or Husbandman: “God instructs and teaches him

³⁷ John 6:29

³⁸ Isaiah 28:23-29

properly.” Having received God’s “wonderful counsel and great wisdom”, Husbandmen have learned how to facilitate this same process.

²⁶ And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, **he himself does not know**. ²⁸ The soil **produces crops by itself**; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”³⁹

After the planting of the seeds, fruit obviously takes time to appear and grow. But, bearing spiritual fruit can be as certain as planting seeds and growing fruit in the biological world.

The fruit may look similar to, but not exactly what we would expect, because, as with in everything with the Lord, we base our expectations on our previous knowledge and experience. This may be useful but not complete, because “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things

³⁹ *The Parable of the Seed*, Mark 4:26-29.

which God has prepared for those who love Him”;⁴⁰ and He “is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams] according to His power that is at work within us.”⁴¹ But, when we don’t see what we expected to see, we mistakenly think there is nothing there; but what is there is the fruit that God desires.

God - not our efforts - causes the growth and brings the increase. The way of the work of God is this: Husbandmen must just be obedient and faithful to what God has given them to do, allowing God alone to be in total charge of the results (i.e. the fruit). It is God’s fruit, not the Husbandmen’s fruit. Therefore, it is totally up to God to determine what that fruit will be, when it will come forth, and what it will look like. Husbandmen are engaged in the work planting, nourishing and cultivating, but when it comes to producing fruit - we are just spectators.

Postscript

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:9

⁴¹ Ephesians 3:20

Lastly, a saying attributed to Mother Teresa:

**“You will teach them to fly,
but they will not fly your flight.
You will teach them to dream,
but they will not dream your dream.
You will teach them to live,
but they will not live your life.**

**Nevertheless, in every flight, in every life, in every dream,
the print of the way you taught will always remain.”**