

DOWN HOME: A lesson learned while pulling weeds

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Every once in awhile, I stare face-to-face into the reality I have become someone very different than the little boy I used to be.

Of course, I'm still me. Yet the line of continuity between the boy I was and the man I am somehow unraveled along the way. I think it happened out in the yard.

When I was a kid, if you'd given me the option between pulling weeds or getting spanked by Daddy every day for a week, I would've bent over and grabbed my ankles.

Back then, Baptists believed in spanking. Unfortunately, I got my share, probably because I was the oldest child. Oh, yeah, and probably because I had 'em coming. (However, I developed a theory that corporal punishment related proportionally to birth order. Maybe parents became more permissive with each new child. Or maybe their arms just wore out.)

Anyway, I would've preferred a paddling to pulling weeds. I remember once, when Mother commissioned me to the back yard to pull weeds, I imagined I'd been unjustly sentenced to "a fate worsen death." So, there I crouched, in the middle of a lawn full of dandelions, singing my made-up

version of an old-time hymn: “When we do the best we can, and they do not understand/They will understand it better bye and bye.”

Ironically, I was as surprised as a Judean shepherd a couple of weekends ago, when I found myself crouching in the middle of a flower bed on the east side of our garage, pulling weeds like nobody’s business. And having fun.

“This can’t be right,” I thought. “I should feel sorry for myself.”

But I just kept pulling away, happy as the spiders, doodlebugs, earthworms and slugs that shared their little patch of heaven with me.

I haven’t figured out exactly why I enjoy pulling weeds. Maybe because I spend nearly all day every day making decisions, and in the yard, all the decisions are pre-made: Keep on weeding, pruning and trimming until nothing is left to weed, prune and trim. Or maybe because progress in the “real world” develops slowly, but in the yard, you can tell exactly what you’ve done for the past three hours. And, to quote the Lord’s response to creation, “It is good.”

The other possibility—and I’d guess this was at least one of Mother and Daddy’s motives for dispatching me to the yard—is that I’ve learned many disciplines of ordinary life are both good and good for you. Like pulling weeds.

This thought occurred to me one morning after a weed-pulling session, as I sat down to read my Bible and pray. When I was a kid, life seemed too short to take time for daily devotions. Now, life seems too long not to take that time.

And on really good mornings, when I am silent before God, I realize the weeding, pruning, trimming hands of my Maker turn my life far more than my hands ever turn my garden.

-Marv Knox

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