

# Life: Living in Holiness

April 5, 2013

• *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for April 21 focuses on *Leviticus 18:1-5, 20-26; 20:6-8*.

In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster provides an analogy for living a holy life. As believers, we live our lives in pursuit of producing fruit. Scripture is clear: Our lives should be different and fruitful as a result of our relationship with God. We can work very hard at producing fruit, but ultimately, God is the only one who can make a plant grow and produce. John records Jesus' words: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

A farmer's job is to produce a crop. He is responsible for making sure all the conditions are right for his crops to grow. The soil must have the right chemical makeup for plants to flourish. The crops must be fertilized and watered and monitored throughout their growth. They must be protected from bugs, disease and harsh weather. No matter how hard the farmer tries and no matter how great he is at his job, the farmer cannot make seeds grow. God controls the growth of each and every seed. Even though the farmer is powerless make the seed grow, he is responsible for making sure the conditions are right in order for God to do his great work.

## **Empowered for holiness**

When it comes to living a life of holiness, we are much like the farmer. We cannot produce holiness in and of ourselves. We can try to make right choices, and we can make every effort to avoid sin, but when it all comes down to it, we are powerless. As humans, we continually fall into sin, and we cannot produce holy growth in our lives. God is the only one who can

reform our hearts and minds and empower us to be holy as he is holy.

Leviticus 20:7-8 reads: “Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.” We must consecrate ourselves, which means to dedicate, to purify or to keep clean.

Although we cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit, we are called to be farmers of our hearts and lives. We are responsible to set the conditions right for God to do his great work of growth in us. There are a number of ways we cultivate the soil and climate around our lives to prepare for fruit.

### **Spiritual disciplines**

Practicing spiritual disciplines is a great place to start. We can practice the inward disciplines like meditation, prayer, fasting and study. The outward disciplines are simplicity, solitude, submission and service. There also are disciplines we practice within community, like confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

As we carve out time in our lives to be intentional in these spiritual disciplines, we discover our soil becomes rich, the air becomes clear and our faith deepens. We are able to see how God makes us more and more like him.

The psalmist says: “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).

### **Set right conditions**

God has called us to be holy, to be set apart. However, holiness is not something we can produce in ourselves. We must be like farmers and make every effort to set the conditions right in our lives for growth. We must fill our minds and our hearts with his truth, so that truth comes out when we are under pressure. We must spend time in silence and solitude so we can hear his voice over the noise of our lives. We must spend time confessing our sins to one another and praying for one another so God can heal our lives (James 5:16).

As we draw near to him through spiritual disciplines, he does a great work in us. The seeds of his word begin to sprout and grow. As we water and feed the seeds with more of his word, they grow into beautiful plants that produce fruit. God desires to produce fruit in us that feeds others and ultimately leads them to the Living Water who will produce fruit in their lives and continue the cycle.