

PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

A Lesson From Nature by Jim Buller

John 15:1-8 is a most amazing scripture passage. Three of the most profound truths God has revealed to me have come out of these verses. Let me share one of them with you. As we read through it, notice the symbolism Jesus is using:

“I am the vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bears fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

According to the symbolism Jesus uses here: Who is “the vine?” —Jesus is. Who are the “branches?” —we are. What will be the result of our connection with Him? —we will “bear much fruit.” But, what is represented by “bearing fruit?”

To answer this, let’s consider the different parts that plants have, and what each of these parts do for the plant. For the sake of simplicity, we will generalize plant parts into four categories: roots, stems and branches, leaves, and flowers which grow into fruit. Roots provide stability, soak up water and soil nutrients. Without roots, the plant would literally fall over and die. Roots are essential to the survival of the plant. Stems and branches transport the water and nutrients to the rest of the plant, and provide a framework for the leaves. Stems and branches are also essential for the survival of the plant, for even if just a strip of bark is taken off all the way around a tree, (a process called “girding”), the tree will die. In the leaves, the process called photosynthesis turns sunlight energy, carbon dioxide, and water into sugar. We don’t think of plants

“breathing” in the usual sense, but plants do need to have a gas exchange, and on the underside of leaves are little openings where that happens. If a plant had no leaves, it would suffocate and starve to death. So leaves are also essential for the survival of the plant. This brings us to “fruit.” What does it do for the plant? —nothing!

So, why did Jesus choose “bearing fruit,” which does nothing for the plant it is growing on, to represent the result of our connection with Him? He chose “fruit,” because it is something the plant does, not for itself, but *for others!* In fact as we study different plants, we realize that most plants put their *whole life energy* into “bearing” some kind of “fruit.” *The purpose of their existence is to benefit others!* This puts a whole new light on scriptures like Luke 13:6-9, The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, and Matthew 21:19, the fig tree along the road, that had only leaves and no fruit, which Jesus caused to wither away. Both of these fig trees were not “bearing fruit,” and thus not fulfilling their purpose.

If we look for this principle in the rest of nature, we find that everything in the universe, both living and non-living, was created, and therefore exists, *for the purpose of benefitting others.* Everything, that is, except for demons, and selfish humans who have chosen not to follow the Creators plan. God intended the universe to be a vast interconnected network of benefit sharing. As each thing received blessings in one form, it would pass some benefit on to something else. And the needs of all would be met by the abundant sharing of everything around it.

However, it is only as we are connected to *the Source* of all blessing that we will have something to share. Thus Jesus said, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, *unless it abides in the vine*, neither can you, *unless you abide in Me.* ... for without Me you can do nothing.”

Although the focus of this writing has been on nature, I can’t help but close with a “modern illustration” of the same principle: A Christian is like a garden hose. A hose is made to be a channel, to pass on the blessing of water. To fulfill its purpose, it must be connected to the faucet, and the faucet must be turned on —this represents our connection to God. On the opposite end of the hose is a squeeze valve, which can close off the water, or allows it to flow. Thus, we can choose to selfishly keep the blessings to ourselves, or share them with others. But, by selfishly holding on to what we have, there is no room for fresh blessings, and as a result the water gets stagnant, especially in the hot summer sun. The only way we can be constantly filled with fresh clear water is by letting it flow.

We need to maintain a good connection with *the Source*, and have an unselfish willingness to share with others. Just as it’s safe for the hose to spray water on all within reach, because there is *plenty more where that came from*, if we stay connected with Jesus, it is safe for us to abundantly share and “bear *much* fruit.” “Freely you have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:8. Let’s choose to keep our connection to Jesus solid and abiding, and be willing to let God’s blessings flow to all within our reach.

If you need to do a “Nature Nugget,” pick an object from nature and describe the “fruit” that it bears. Some things are easy, like wild edible and useful plants, others may have to be studied for a while. But, all things in nature bear some “fruit,” or provide some benefit. Even though it may not be a direct benefit to mankind, it does benefit something.

Selected Ellen White Quotations on the Teaching of Nature

[see also *Preparing to Stand #6*]

The Desire of Ages, pages 20-21

In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Ps. 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love.

Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud.

Education, pages 99-101

Upon all created things is seen the impress of the Deity. Nature testifies of God. The susceptible mind, brought in contact with the miracle and mystery of the universe, cannot but recognize the working of infinite power. Not by its own inherent energy does the earth produce its bounties, and year by year continue its motion around the sun. An unseen hand guides the planets in their circuit of the heavens. A mysterious life pervades all nature--a life that sustains the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, that lives in the insect atom which floats in the summer breeze, that wings the flight of the swallow and feeds the young ravens which cry, that brings the bud to blossom and the flower to fruit.

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin.

To him who learns thus to interpret its teachings, all nature becomes illuminated; the world is a lesson book, life a school. The unity of man with nature and with God, the universal dominion of law, the results of transgression, cannot fail of impressing the mind and molding the character.

These are lessons that our children need to learn. To the little child, not yet capable of learning from the printed page or of being introduced to the routine of the

schoolroom, nature presents an unfailing source of instruction and delight. The heart not yet hardened by contact with evil is quick to recognize the Presence that pervades all created things. The ear as yet undulled by the world's clamor is attentive to the Voice that speaks through nature's utterances. And for those of older years, needing continually its silent reminders of the spiritual and eternal, nature's teaching will be no less a source of pleasure and of instruction. As the dwellers in Eden learned from nature's pages, as Moses discerned God's handwriting on the Arabian plains and mountains, and the child Jesus on the hillsides of Nazareth, so the children of today may learn of Him. The unseen is illustrated by the seen. On everything upon the earth, from the loftiest tree of the forest to the lichen that clings to the rock, from the boundless ocean to the tiniest shell on the shore, they may behold the image and superscription of God.

So far as possible, let the child from his earliest years be placed where this wonderful lesson book shall be open before him. Let him behold the glorious scenes painted by the great Master Artist upon the shifting canvas of the heavens, let him become acquainted with the wonders of earth and sea, let him watch the unfolding mysteries of the changing seasons, and, in all His works, learn of the Creator.

In no other way can the foundation of a true education be so firmly and surely laid. Yet even the child, as he comes in contact with nature, will see cause for perplexity. He cannot but recognize the working of antagonistic forces. It is here that nature needs an interpreter. Looking upon the evil manifest even in the natural world, all have the same sorrowful lesson to learn--"An enemy hath done this." Matthew 13:28.

Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature's teaching be read aright. Through the story of Bethlehem and the cross let it be shown how good is to conquer evil, and how every blessing that comes to us is a gift of redemption.

In brier and thorn, in thistle and tare, is represented the evil that blights and mars. In singing bird and opening blossom, in rain and sunshine, in summer breeze and gentle dew, in ten thousand objects in nature, from the oak of the forest to the violet that blossoms at its root, is seen the love that restores. And nature still speaks to us of God's goodness.

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Jeremiah 29:11. This is the message that, in the light from the cross, may be read upon all the face of nature. The heavens declare His glory, and the earth is full of His riches.

Steps to Christ, page 9

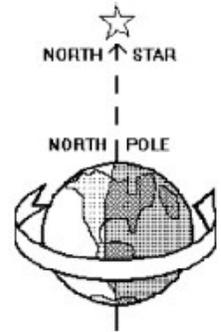
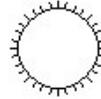
Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures. In the beautiful words of the psalmist—

"The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Psalm 145:15, 16.

Wilderness Trip Orientation

1. Usually it's best for the group to Stay Together —don't wander off
 - You can whistle back & forth to stay in touch, but remember three blasts is a recognized distress signal meaning, "I NEED HELP!!!"
2. Pay attention to where you're going
 - Most people get lost simply because they are *not* paying attention to where they're going
 - Directions are based on the rotation of the earth
 - If you think about what you will observe as the earth rotates, you can usually figure out which way is which
 - If you do get lost:
 - S**tay —where you are
 - T**hink —how did you get here? what are your options?
 - O**bserve —look for things that can help you
 - P**lan —make and follow a Plan based on the survival Priorities (this is what both your observations and plan are based on), and **P**ray —if you haven't already
3. Know the "Trail Hazards" for your area —poisonous plants, dangerous animals, local geographic and weather hazards, etc.
4. Keep an eye out for the weather —know a storm is coming *before* it starts raining
5. Be sure to drink 3 to 4 quarts of water daily —make sure it is pure/purified
6. Prevent both hypothermia, (too cold), and over-heating, (heat-stroke & sun-stroke)
 - "Ration your sweat—not your water"
7. When using a knife, always be thinking: Where will it go if it slips?
8. The two most common camp injuries are cuts & burns
9. Have an evacuation plan in case anyone gets seriously sick or injured
10. When getting ready to make a fire, clear an area down to mineral soil feet out from the center of the fire pit in all directions
 - Always have *Water* and a *Digging Tool* handy around the fire.
11. When you go to the bathroom, always dig a hole and cover it up! (see Deut 23:12-14)
12. NEVER wash dishes or use soap in the streams or lakes
 - bury food waste, & use soap where it can degrade in the soil
13. "Pack it in! Pack it out!" —be sure to pack out all your trash
14. Have the attitude of a caretaker (see Gen 2:15) rather than a "careless taker," conqueror or destroyer (see Rev 11:18)
15. Work *with* nature rather than against it —be humble, don't fight nature
16. "If you don't do it, It doesn't happen!" —take care of your own equipment and personal things:
 - Stay organized (see 1 Cor 14:40)
 - Keep your things neat (see Jn 20:7)



Survival Priorities

1. Shelter
2. Water
3. Health Concerns
4. Fire
5. Food

