

StewardLife LESSON 18



STORY:

Two zinnias once grew in a garden. The first zinnia wanted to be the best in the garden. It made up its mind to grow taller than any other flower.

Another zinnia, growing right beside the first, said, "If I were you, I wouldn't try to grow too tall."

"What do you know about growth?" snapped zinnia number one. "You're so short and bushy. I will tower over every other plant in the garden. The gardener will be proud. I might even get to the annual flower show!"

Days of warm sun and gentle rain passed. Both zinnias grew—one taller and taller, and one bushier and bushier. Buds formed. Finally, it was the day for blossoming.

The tall, stately zinnia burst forth in one beautiful lavender flower—a crown of glory.

But the short, bushy zinnia looked like a whole bouquet! Ten gorgeous blooms, bright red, against the dark green bushy foliage. The gardener came by and scooped out the bushy zinnia and gently set it in a flower pot. "This is my entry in the flower show for this year!" he exclaimed.

As the gardener walked away, the tall zinnia heard him still talking: "The winning flower is the one that has the most blooms."

STORY:

In a Chinese restaurant there was a sign at the entrance to the buffet line: "Take as much as you want, but please eat all you take." Since each customer was choosing an appropriate size serving the owners expected that there would be no uneaten food to pick up from the tables. If so, the customer showed lack of control, bad judgement and insulted the owners.

It's a similar story about hoarding manna, and it's all there in Exodus 16.

When God gave the Israelites manna for food in the desert, it was like a buffet. He promised to provide all the manna each person needed. But some doubted. They saw the delicate nature of the manna and how it appeared like frost. They looked with eyes connected to their heads and not their hearts, and came to the logical conclusion that such light nourishment would not be enough. So some gathered more than they could eat. Whoever tried to store excess manna found that in just a few hours it spoiled, became bug infested and smelled horrible.

God promises to give "all that I need to support this body and life" (Luther in his explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed). If you trust His Word, you can be satisfied in having what you need. When you become greedy and want more than your share or more than you need in any area of life, you can become spoiled and, as life becomes increasingly competitive, you might even claim that "life stinks."

If your attitude toward life gets spoiled, perhaps you should begin to evaluate your use of God's blessings. Maybe you're not trusting that God has never-ending blessings, and will fill your plate each time you come to Him.

"Take all you want," says God, "but use all you take in service to my world."

EXERCISES:

Examine yourself and determine which of the flowers in the opening story more closely represents your personal Christian growth and service. How could "blooming more" (extending your service in one area) be better than "vertical growth"? On the other hand, what danger is there in not desiring to grow developmentally—in new areas of service—to God and others?

The way you look at the world to find a source of Christian opportunity is similar to the way the Federal Communications Commission finds bootleg radio stations. Both must look for the source from at least two different views to find it.

S

A

B

Here's how the FCC does it: Bootleg station S is transmitting illegally. A reading is taken of the transmitter from point A and shows the bearing as 32 degrees Northeast. The scanning crew moves and takes a second reading from point B which shows the transmitter at 14 degrees Northwest. Where the lines cross is the station location.

Very often you must do the same thing to see with your heart the opportunities to share what is on your table with others whose tables are empty. Look at the opportunity from more than one point of view to be sure to see the depth of the opportunity and the point of greatest need.

How can you get a "different view" of an opportunity? Where can you stand to see things differently?

This site is maintained through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation, Stewardship Ministry Services. Contact Rev. Ronald E. Nelson, Associate for Stewardship Ministry, at ronald.nelson@lcms.org

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