



Pappy's Garden

I met my dad when I was fifteen years old yet he wasn't my biological father. He was the father of the pretty girl down the street. The same pretty girl I've been married to for twenty years now. I called him "Pappy" and he was the closest thing to a dad I ever knew.

Pappy was called home in May of 1991 and I can still see him in my mind's eye. Pappy had many memorable traits and skills. He was a gifted musician, a fisherman, the father of five girls (that's a story of its own) a great sense of humor, and a love of gardening.

If you've never walked between rows of tomato plants that stood over 6 feet in height and bore fruit that was wider than the slice of bread you intended to make your sandwich with ~ you must have missed seeing Pappy's garden.

It wasn't like that every year but his efforts bore fruit season after season. Like most gardeners worth their salt Pappy had a few secrets for raising such an abundant harvest. He picked a breed he had faith in, started the plants from seed, planted them at just the right time in soil he had tilled for hours, and nurtured and cared for the plants every day without fail.

But the real secret, Pappy said, was getting the "suckers" off the vine. "Suckers" as he called them are the little nodes of new growth that appear between the main trunk and the already flourishing branches of the plant. It was this new growth that Pappy said, "sucks the life right out of the rest of the plant Davey."

You see the plant already possessed the girth and foliage it needed to bear good fruit ~ and Pappy knew that this new growth would divert the plant's time and energy and keep it from thriving.

So Pappy would walk the rows of plants and pinch off the "suckers" and withering branches that could harm the plants ~ thus maintaining that delicate and healthy balance they needed to thrive.

The good Lord convicted me, and a recent message from Joel Osteen reminded me, to look at the "suckers" in my life. Those forms of excess that drain my strength and keep me from thriving and bearing good fruit.

God's first spoken command to man was to, *"Be fruitful and multiply..." (Gen 1:28)*

Later Jesus told His disciples, *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."* (John 15:1,2) and, *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."* (John 15:8)

What kinds of "suckers" are keeping us from bearing much fruit? What activities and forms of excess are keeping us from God's plan in our lives?

Have you ever come home at the end of the day and felt exhausted because you were so busy yet you don't feel like you accomplished anything? That statement seems to be somewhat of a paradox I know but we've all had days where we were extremely busy yet not very productive.

Have you ever heard yourself say, "If there were only more hours in the day."? Ever wished you had more quality time with your children? A bit more time to spend with a friend? A little more time in the day so you could have time to yourself ~ with God?

Busy: Engaged in activity, overly occupied.

Fruitful: Conducive to productivity; To produce in abundance that which is profitable.

It seems to me that many of the folks I know, including myself, are extremely busy... yet we're not always fruitful.

For most of us it is simply a matter of finding that balance in our lives. The first key to time management is to understand where your time is spent. I pray that we can all make an effort to actively track our time, especially when we're "busy" and learn where the "suckers" are in our lives and prune them from the vine so we can thrive and be fruitful.

God Bless You All!