



SHELLEY CRAMM,  
general editor

NIV GOD'S WORD FOR  
**gardeners**  
BIBLE

new international version

[ grow your faith while growing your garden ]

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

NIV GOD'S WORD FOR  
*gardeners*  
BIBLE

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# introduction: reading God's word like a gardener

Welcome to *God's Word for Gardeners*. We will be puttering together for 52 weeks, gathering information and insight from the Bible's plants, landscapes, and common cultivating practices into gentle, prayerful daily musings on God's Word. A hybrid of study Bible and devotional Bible, with an understory planting of quotations from garden writing classics, *God's Word for Gardeners* will connect you to all that God intended in our working the land and taking care of it.

Because a garden is a **place** we go to, to rest and reconnect, to find our way, to breathe the earth; many of our weeks will be spent seeing the landscape places of the Bible, a **Garden Tour**, so to speak, inspiring us with ideas to try at home...

and a garden is a **work** we do, growing ourselves as we grow our plants — a work in progress, a work of the heart; there is always work to do! God teaches us his ways through the weeks of **Garden Work**...

and a garden is a **story**. Beginning-middle-end parallels the seed to sprout to flower and fruit — walk with a gardener in his garden and you will hear stories and histories of plants, storms, survival, and surprise, all very personal and endearing. God has so much to impart in his **Garden Stories**.

Like a cucumber crisp from the vine or dewdrops on needle-tips catching the light, you have not tasted and seen the full goodness of the Lord until you have considered his Word from a gardener's point of view. The whole Bible is meant to be known with book in one hand, trowel in the other. More than a metaphor, gardening unlocks insight, explanation, practicality and company with God in grasping and delighting in the Word of God.


RSVP to the garden's invitation: **Come!**

Weekly themes include:

**GARDEN TOUR:** Garden of Eden, Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Sinai Desert, Promised Land, En Gedi, Cedars of Lebanon, Palace Gardens, Mount of Olives, Asia Minor and Macedonia, Revelation's Urban Garden

**GARDEN WORK:** Choosing, Preparing the Soil, Planting, Planting Pots, Watering, Cultivating, Weeding, Pruning, Propagating, Composting; Sowing and Reaping, Rooting, Growing, Flowering, Bearing Fruit, Celebrating the Harvest; with age-old spiritual disciplines as Garden Tools — Prayer, Work Ethic, Humility, Thanksgiving, Hope, Peace, Generosity

**GARDEN STORIES:** Seasons, Sun and Shade, Weather, Pest and Pestilence — because calamities eventually make the best stories; Jesus' Horticultural Parables, Israel's Horticultural Allegories, Away from the Last Supper, Jesus, the Seed, Root, Branch and First-fruit, The Harvest of Righteousness, Intimacy with God in the Garden

	GARDEN WORK
	WEEK <b>8</b> WATERING

This week our watering focus shifts from despairing thirst to water's refreshment, a welcome reminder of God's forgiveness, pictured in ancient life at water wells. God's Word features several water-well stories; wives were met at wells, flocks were watered and well territories were lost and won. Akin to the town square, the grocery store or even Facebook today, water wells depict a central place where people met as they went about their daily routines. As we fill up with God's living water, his Spirit in us, we become the well for our own social network, a well-watered garden refreshing others.

The hyssop plant, a fragrant mint family herb, symbolized cleansing of sins and the chance to begin with a fresh start. Hyssop grows lowly yet holds the mighty message of God's forgiveness, its humble branches raised to the lips of our Savior as he demonstrated God's love for us.

**Continue along in the *Garden Work* of WATERING:**

**DAY 1:** Read Psalm 51 and the devotional essay on page 643. David cried out in his sin, "Cleanse me with hyssop," and the humble herb reminds us to take up the fragrance of God's forgiveness.


**DAY 2:** Read John 19:28 – 30 and the devotional essay on page 1226. In poignant horticultural detail, hyssop branches were raised to Jesus' lips even as he was winning our forgiveness and cleansing.

**DAY 3:** Read John 4:4 – 42 and the devotional essay on page 1196. In the well-known well story, Jesus met the Samaritan woman, showing us the refreshment in his eternal water source.

**DAY 4:** Read Isaiah 58:6 – 12 and the devotional essay on page 831. God will make us into a well-watered garden, connecting us to a current of love flowing from him through us to others.

**DAY 5:** Read Proverbs 11:24 – 28 and the devotional essay on page 721. Before a generous God, we too are moved to generosity. With our inner spring of living water we refresh others.

**WEEKEND:** Read Genesis 21:8 – 21 and the devotional essay on page 39. Hagar cried out to God from the lowly desert floor, desperate for water as she and her son traveled desolate terrain.


	GARDEN WORK
	WEEK <b>9</b> CULTIVATING

Cultivating is a general term gathering up the practices of pulling weeds, thinning seedlings, fertilizing, trimming here and there; and the bolder works of pruning and rescuing from the ravage of disease. Cultivating also refers specifically to roughing the top layer of soil to promote soil moisture and cut off weedlings. Though cultivating our gardens implies a range of activities, all its aspects have a hint of work occurring over a length of time; not keeping the yard for just one planting afternoon, but returning for regular care and tending. Likewise God has not merely planted a garden; he is working and watching over it actively and continually. His works unfold over time.

The devotion of continual cultivating is represented in the cucumber crops introduced to the Israelites during their slavery in Egypt; plants which grow well in the heat of summer with continual watering, weeding and watching over.

**Follow along in the Garden Work of CULTIVATING:**

- DAY 1:** Read Isaiah 1:2 – 20 and the devotional essay on page 768. The cucumber hut in the farmer’s field symbolizes devotion to work and a reminder that work alone leaves us defenseless.
- DAY 2:** Read Genesis 4:2 – 7 and the devotional essay on page 19. Cain’s first story of cultivating did not end well, showing we are defenseless against our own passions unless we cultivate our worship of the Lord.
- DAY 3:** Read Psalm 104:13 – 15 and the devotional essay on page 677. Cultivating and worshipping are hand-in-hand metaphors to open up our hearts to God, whatever we do.
- DAY 4:** Read Ezekiel 36:28 – 26 and the devotional essay on page 961. Cultivating can be a euphemism for waiting . . . while we wait for a garden to grow from desolation, we cultivate trust in God’s promises.
- DAY 5:** Read Proverbs 4:20 – 27 and the devotional essay on page 713. The practical cultivating advice for creating “dust mulch” serves as a metaphor for guarding our hearts and following the Lord.
- WEEKEND:** Read Joel 2:18 – 24 and the devotional essay on page 1011. An excerpt from the great sermon of C.H. Spurgeon, “Supposing Him to Be the Gardener,” reminds us God is the gardener supplying our work.

GARDEN WORK	WEEK <b>10</b>	<b>CULTIVATING</b>
		

In cultivating this week, we are going to be honest about the hard work of enduring each other, and see if God’s Word is really as useful as it claims to be. For by design, our cultivated relationship with God grows into our relationships with others, and he is with us as we connect not merely with the fun people in our lives who we meet for coffee or a class at the public gardens every so often, but also with the people who seem to cause tension, rift, annoyance or offense on a daily basis, even if it’s just the way they leave the garden tools caked with mud.

Our study will be seasoned by leeks, onions and garlic; these alliums are revealed in Scripture along with the complaining Israelites, yet their alluring, sautéed aroma is a powerful metaphor for God’s way of drawing us near.

**Continue in the Garden Work of CULTIVATING:**

- DAY 1:** Read Numbers 11:1 – 15 and the devotional essay on page 177. As if chopping a bunch of the onions they craved, the Israelites cried to Moses for a little zest in their lives beyond daily manna.
- DAY 2:** Read Philippians 2:12 – 16 and the devotional essay on page 1354. How can I take the fun I have in gardening to the rest of my work?
- DAY 3:** Read Zephaniah 3:14 – 17 and the devotional essay on page 1052. There is no work as fun and as delightful as gardening!
- DAY 4:** Read Philippians 4:1 – 9 and the devotional essay on page 1356. Paul teaches us the secret of cultivating a good attitude toward those we love and work with.

**Cain and Abel**

**4** Adam<sup>a</sup> made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.<sup>b</sup> She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth<sup>c</sup> a man.”<sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.<sup>4</sup> And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,<sup>5</sup> but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

<sup>8</sup> Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”<sup>d</sup> While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

<sup>10</sup> The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup> Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup> When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup> Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. <sup>14</sup> Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

<sup>15</sup> But the LORD said to him, “Not so<sup>e</sup>; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. <sup>16</sup> So Cain went out from the LORD’s

presence and lived in the land of Nod,<sup>f</sup> east of Eden.

<sup>17</sup> Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch. <sup>18</sup> To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

<sup>19</sup> Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. <sup>20</sup> Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. <sup>21</sup> His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. <sup>22</sup> Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of<sup>g</sup> bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain’s sister was Naamah.

<sup>23</sup> Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me;  
wives of Lamech, hear my words.  
I have killed a man for wounding me,  
a young man for injuring me.

<sup>24</sup> If Cain is avenged seven times,  
then Lamech seventy-seven times.”

<sup>25</sup> Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth,<sup>h</sup> saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” <sup>26</sup> Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time people began to call on<sup>i</sup> the name of the LORD.

**From Adam to Noah**

**5** This is the written account of Adam’s family line.

When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup> He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “Mankind”<sup>j</sup> when they were created.

<sup>3</sup> When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. <sup>4</sup> After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup> Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Or *The man*    <sup>b</sup> 1 Cain sounds like the Hebrew for *brought forth* or *acquired*.    <sup>c</sup> 1 Or *have acquired*

<sup>d</sup> 8 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have “*Let’s go out to the field.*”    <sup>e</sup> 15 Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew *Very well*    <sup>f</sup> 16 Nod means *wandering* (see

verses 12 and 14).    <sup>g</sup> 22 Or *who instructed all who work in*    <sup>h</sup> 25 Seth probably means *granted*.

<sup>i</sup> 26 Or *to proclaim*    <sup>j</sup> 2 Hebrew *adam*



GARDEN  
WORK



WEEK

9

CULTIVATING

DAY

2

CULTIVATION BREAKDOWN

*Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.* ~GENESIS 4:2



**READ:** Genesis 4:2–7

**FERTILIZE WITH:** Genesis 3:17–19; Proverbs 28:4–7; Hosea 6:6

In the story of the first children born to the first parents just east of the intended garden home, the beauty and devotion of keeping and working the garden turned into brute labor—anyone with clay soil can relate here. Cain endured painful work (Genesis 3:17–23), cultivating the arduous soil to produce something from the hard ground. However, greater heartache ensued when Cain’s offering to the Lord was rejected. Why did the Lord find his offering unacceptable? Perhaps sensing the need for cover, as his parents had (3:8), Cain hid in his work, the produce representing his own efforts to combat his circumstances, the fruit of his own strength.

As Paradise (though of God’s own Planting) was no longer Paradise than the Man was put into it, to dress it, and to keep it; so, nor will our Gardens (as near as we can contrive them to the resemblance of that blessed Abode) remain long in their perfection, unless they are also continually cultivated.

— John Evelyn, *Kalendarium Hortense: or, the Gard’ners Almanac*, 1669

The life lesson revealed in this story shows us that we are not to work the poor soil conditions of our lives, so to speak, with all the strength we can muster. God intends for us to acknowledge him (Hosea 6:6)—and he will pour out strength, mercy, grace, favor and a way to overcome situations where there seems to be no way. Simply put, we are not to work alone; it leaves us defenseless. “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you” (Genesis 4:7). Cain did not understand that his desires would invade his heart and destroy him; his desires were hunkered down, God explained, ready to lay siege. Had Cain sought the Lord in cultivating his offering, he would have been under God’s shelter (Psalm 91:1–2), well defended against his oppressing sin, fortified through rightful worship to avoid the snare of his own emotions. He would have been given understanding of the true dynamics of the situation, able to do what was right (Proverbs 28:5).

The curse was not for us to prove our own strength; the curse was to make it clear to us the humble limits of our efforts, ultimately realizing that the only way for us to act beyond our abilities is for God to work through us. Acting alone in his cultivating work, Cain became consumed with anger, unleashing his untilled passions on his brother, killing him. God cultivates right worship in us so that his mercy (Hosea 6:6) will prevail in our relationships, guarding them from vengeful acts of hurts and grievance. As John Evelyn reminds us, it is continual cultivation.

TO CONTINUE YOUR GARDEN WORK, GO TO PAGE 677 FOR YOUR NEXT DAILY READING.

**Psalm 103***Of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy  
name.
- <sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits —
- <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
<sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and  
compassion,  
<sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good  
things  
so that your youth is renewed like the  
eagle's.
- <sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.
- <sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- <sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- <sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;  
<sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above  
the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear  
him;
- <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our  
transgressions from us.
- <sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his  
children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those  
who fear him;
- <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.
- <sup>15</sup> The life of mortals is like grass,  
they flourish like a flower of the field;  
<sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.
- <sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting  
the LORD's love is with those who fear  
him,  
and his righteousness with their  
children's children —
- <sup>18</sup> with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.

<sup>a</sup> 4 Or *angels*

- <sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne  
in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.
- <sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
who obey his word.
- <sup>21</sup> Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.
- <sup>22</sup> Praise the LORD, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion.
- Praise the LORD, my soul.

**Psalm 104**

- <sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul.
- LORD my God, you are very great;  
you are clothed with splendor and  
majesty.
- <sup>2</sup> The LORD wraps himself in light as with a  
garment;  
he stretches out the heavens like a tent  
<sup>3</sup> and lays the beams of his upper  
chambers on their waters.  
He makes the clouds his chariot  
and rides on the wings of the wind.
- <sup>4</sup> He makes winds his messengers,<sup>a</sup>  
flames of fire his servants.
- <sup>5</sup> He set the earth on its foundations;  
it can never be moved.
- <sup>6</sup> You covered it with the watery depths as  
with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.
- <sup>7</sup> But at your rebuke the waters fled,  
at the sound of your thunder they took  
to flight;
- <sup>8</sup> they flowed over the mountains,  
they went down into the valleys,  
to the place you assigned for them.
- <sup>9</sup> You set a boundary they cannot cross;  
never again will they cover the earth.
- <sup>10</sup> He makes springs pour water into the  
ravines;  
it flows between the mountains.
- <sup>11</sup> They give water to all the beasts of the  
field;  
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- <sup>12</sup> The birds of the sky nest by the waters;  
they sing among the branches.
- <sup>13</sup> He waters the mountains from his upper  
chambers;

the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

<sup>14</sup>He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate — bringing forth food from the earth:

<sup>15</sup>wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.

<sup>16</sup>The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

<sup>17</sup>There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers.

<sup>18</sup>The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

<sup>19</sup>He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.

<sup>20</sup>You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

<sup>21</sup>The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God.

<sup>22</sup>The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens.

<sup>23</sup>Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening.

<sup>24</sup>How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

<sup>25</sup>There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small.

<sup>26</sup>There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

<sup>27</sup>All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

<sup>28</sup>When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

<sup>29</sup>When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

<sup>30</sup>When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

<sup>31</sup>May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works —

<sup>32</sup>he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

<sup>33</sup>I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

<sup>34</sup>May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

<sup>35</sup>But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.

Praise the LORD, my soul.  
Praise the LORD.<sup>a</sup>

### Psalm 105

<sup>1</sup>Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

<sup>2</sup>Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

<sup>3</sup>Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

<sup>4</sup>Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

<sup>5</sup>Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

<sup>6</sup>you his servants, the descendants of Abraham, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.

<sup>7</sup>He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

<sup>8</sup>He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations,

<sup>9</sup>the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.

<sup>10</sup>He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

<sup>11</sup>“To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.”

<sup>12</sup>When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it,

<sup>13</sup>they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another.

<sup>14</sup>He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings:

<sup>15</sup>“Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm.”

<sup>a</sup> 35 Hebrew *Hallelu Yah*; in the Septuagint this line stands at the beginning of Psalm 105.

GARDEN  
WORK



WEEK  
9

CULTIVATING

DAY  
3

WHAT IS CULTIVATING? WHAT IS WORSHIP?

*He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants  
for people to cultivate. ~PSALM 104:14*



**READ:** Psalm 104:13 – 15

**FERTILIZE WITH:** Exodus 34:5 – 14; Luke 22:19; Colossians 3:22 – 23

**W**hat is cultivating, anyway? Everyone knows that gardeners cultivate their gardens, but what are they doing, exactly, when they are cultivating? In practice, it is not one action but a collection of actions, mostly anything working toward the best for the garden: Scratching the soil, usually, but also overturning the manure, stirring up leaf mold, watering plants, fertilizing, weeding, mulching, pruning, clipping, raking, dead-heading, trimming, drenching out pests, remedying disease — and any other action one can categorize under the practice of “puttering in the garden.” It is whatever we do when we drift out to the yard intending to pinch back or pull a few for just five minutes, and return two and a half hours later.

And what is worship, anyway? What do the Scriptures mean when they tell of people worshipping the Lord (Exodus 34:8)? Herein lies one of the most poignant analogies in the overflowing basket of garden metaphors from God’s Word: Worship is not one action but a collection of actions, mostly anything that expresses honor and love for the Lord: Singing, usually, but also praying, reading, wondering, working, considering, writing, giving, praising his character, standing in awe, sitting in solitude to do any of these alone, gathering with others to do any of these together, serving, sacrificing, or any other action under the practice of responding gratefully, joyfully, reverently, humbly to God. It is whatever we do (Colossians 3:22 – 23) when we are remembering God (Luke 22:19), the greatness of his character, the righteousness that he stands for and the love that he has demonstrated — and moving, however meekly, toward him.

What is worship? To worship means not to figure out, not to analyze, not to pin down like a dried butterfly on a grid, but to value. Deeply to value.

— William Bryant Logan, *Dirt: The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth*, 1995

There is a crazy love in cultivating, our hearts captivated by beautiful roses or whatever plants capture our fancy. Why did God make plants for us to cultivate? (Psalm 104:14). Perhaps so that we might gain a working knowledge of worship, understanding its value through the simple practices of our hands and heart.

TO CONTINUE YOUR GARDEN WORK, GO TO PAGE 529 FOR YOUR NEXT DAILY READING.

<sup>9</sup>She will give you a garland to grace  
your head  
and present you with a glorious crown.”

<sup>10</sup>Listen, my son, accept what I say,  
and the years of your life will be many.

<sup>11</sup>I instruct you in the way of wisdom  
and lead you along straight paths.

<sup>12</sup>When you walk, your steps will not be  
hampered;  
when you run, you will not stumble.

<sup>13</sup>Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;  
guard it well, for it is your life.

<sup>14</sup>Do not set foot on the path of the wicked  
or walk in the way of evildoers.

<sup>15</sup>Avoid it, do not travel on it;  
turn from it and go on your way.

<sup>16</sup>For they cannot rest until they do evil;  
they are robbed of sleep till they make  
someone stumble.

<sup>17</sup>They eat the bread of wickedness  
and drink the wine of violence.

<sup>18</sup>The path of the righteous is like the  
morning sun,  
shining ever brighter till the full light  
of day.

<sup>19</sup>But the way of the wicked is like deep  
darkness;  
they do not know what makes them  
stumble.

<sup>20</sup>My son, pay attention to what I say;  
turn your ear to my words.

<sup>21</sup>Do not let them out of your sight,  
keep them within your heart;

<sup>22</sup>for they are life to those who find them  
and health to one’s whole body.

<sup>23</sup>Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it.

<sup>24</sup>Keep your mouth free of perversity;  
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

<sup>25</sup>Let your eyes look straight ahead;  
fix your gaze directly before you.

<sup>26</sup>Give careful thought to the<sup>a</sup> paths for  
your feet  
and be steadfast in all your ways.

<sup>27</sup>Do not turn to the right or the left;  
keep your foot from evil.

### Warning Against Adultery

**5** My son, pay attention to my wisdom,  
turn your ear to my words of insight,  
<sup>2</sup>that you may maintain discretion  
and your lips may preserve knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>For the lips of the adulterous woman drip  
honey,  
and her speech is smoother than oil;  
<sup>4</sup>but in the end she is bitter as gall,  
sharp as a double-edged sword.

<sup>5</sup>Her feet go down to death;  
her steps lead straight to the grave.

<sup>6</sup>She gives no thought to the way of life;  
her paths wander aimlessly, but she  
does not know it.

<sup>7</sup>Now then, my sons, listen to me;  
do not turn aside from what I say.

<sup>8</sup>Keep to a path far from her,  
do not go near the door of her house,  
<sup>9</sup>lest you lose your honor to others  
and your dignity<sup>b</sup> to one who is cruel,

<sup>10</sup>lest strangers feast on your wealth  
and your toil enrich the house of  
another.

<sup>11</sup>At the end of your life you will groan,  
when your flesh and body are spent.

<sup>12</sup>You will say, “How I hated discipline!  
How my heart spurned correction!”

<sup>13</sup>I would not obey my teachers  
or turn my ear to my instructors.

<sup>14</sup>And I was soon in serious trouble  
in the assembly of God’s people.”

<sup>15</sup>Drink water from your own cistern,  
running water from your own well.

<sup>16</sup>Should your springs overflow in the  
streets,  
your streams of water in the public  
squares?

<sup>17</sup>Let them be yours alone,  
never to be shared with strangers.

<sup>18</sup>May your fountain be blessed,  
and may you rejoice in the wife of your  
youth.

<sup>19</sup>A loving doe, a graceful deer —  
may her breasts satisfy you always,  
may you ever be intoxicated with  
her love.

<sup>20</sup>Why, my son, be intoxicated with another  
man’s wife?  
Why embrace the bosom of a wayward  
woman?

<sup>21</sup>For your ways are in full view of the LORD,  
and he examines all your paths.

<sup>22</sup>The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare  
them;  
the cords of their sins hold them fast.

<sup>a</sup> 26 Or *Make level*    <sup>b</sup> 9 Or *years*

GARDEN  
WORK



WEEK  
**9**

CULTIVATING

DAY  
**5**

DUST MULCH

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything  
you do flows from it. ~PROVERBS 4:23*



**READ:** Proverbs 4:20 – 27

**FERTILIZE WITH:** 1 Samuel 15:22 – 23, Psalm 40:1 – 11, Hebrews 12:10 – 11

Current organic gardening practices recommend applying mulch to the ground to impede the growth of weeds and loss of moisture. Though this is a proven method widely adopted among gardeners and landscapers today, in recent decades, the dirt itself was cultivated as “dust mulch.” The soil surface was broken up to capture rainfall, as garden writers Harry Wood and Gertrude M. Smith describe, simultaneously uprooting newly sprouted weeds and creating a discontinuity with the lower soil. The upward movement of water by capillary action from deeper ground to the surface was interrupted, preventing evaporation. It was necessary to routinely reestablish the dust mulch after rainstorms or repeated watering.

This shallow cultivation destroys many weeds before they get to the stage when the more back-breaking process of pulling by hand must be used.

— Harry Wood and Gertrude M. Smith, “Maintenance,” from the  
*Woman’s Home Companion Garden Book*, John C. Wister, Editor, 1947

We can imagine our garden beds as symbolic of our hearts, susceptible to weeds of ill-thinking and to moisture loss — the precious, soul-satisfying sense of God’s Spirit evaporating as the day’s fears and worries heat up. Our hearts need a cultivated “dust mulch.” Figuratively speaking, we need a fortified layer that is ready to capture the watering of God’s Word, to keep the refreshment we have already received from disappearing, to prevent stray thoughts and exaggerated emotions from establishing like weeds.

Today’s verse encourages us to give as much attention to strengthening ourselves with God’s Word as we would to protecting our plants against drying out. And just as the garden authors remind us to restore the dust mulch over time, another verse tells us, “Be steadfast in all your ways,” (Proverbs 4:26), which is to continue this practice all season long. For the garden, we must continue through the end of the summer; for our hearts, we will work at it through the end of our lives. Yet we know this! We are gardeners, fully aware that rejecting the work of cultivation means accepting the degeneration of our gardens no matter how many years previously we have worked the land.

**Prayer:** *O Lord, help me to embrace the discipline (Hebrews 12:11) of keeping myself fresh in your Word, just as I fortify my garden soil with mulch to hold in life-giving moisture. Your words are life and health to my whole body! (Proverbs 4:22). I praise you, Lord, for the ground you have given me (Psalm 40:2), a solid place to stand.*

TO CONTINUE YOUR GARDEN WORK, GO TO PAGE 1011 FOR YOUR NEXT DAILY READING.

GARDEN  
WORK



WEEK

9

CULTIVATING

DAY

1

CULTIVATING WORSHIP

*Daughter Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard,  
like a hut in a cucumber field.* ~ISAIAH 1:8



**READ:** Isaiah 1:2 – 20

**FERTILIZE WITH:** Numbers 11:5; Psalm 91:1 – 4; Jude 24 – 25

Cucumbers, *Cucumis sativus*, from the *Cucurbitaceae* or gourd family, grow as vines, easily trained up trellises or fences, their curly tendrils grasping anything nearby, whether support structures or the stems and leaves of neighboring plants. Broad, pointed leaves accompany bright, yellow flowers and shade the forming fruit. Surprise! All of a sudden cucumbers seem to appear from behind the leaves' dense covering, fruits with a firm skin, watery flesh and distinctive flavor. Cucumbers are refreshing to eat in slices or salads, lending a sense of chill to a summer meal.<sup>1</sup>

I suppose if I could have only one cucumber a year, I should eat it in chunks, raw, unpeeled, with fresh, home-made bread and butter and cheese. But we take care to grow plenty ... The outdoor kinds have a special quality of crisp juiciness, good for eating and cooking.

— Constance Spry, *Come Into the Garden, Cook*, 1942

Yet contrasting the cool, thirst-quenching crunch of the cucumber is the persevering work required to raise them under the searing sun of a long summer; cucumbers love the heat. Their fruit forms and ripens continually throughout the season, mandating a steady watering and ongoing watch for pests and weeds, the essential definition of a gardeners' cultivating. The diligent, bordering on not-enough-hours-in-a-day-type work in their tending and keeping is represented by the "cucumber hut" (Isaiah 1:8), a temporary shelter providing rest and shade for the farmer-gardener who is in his field for long hours.

Whereas the cucumber hut might represent profound devotion, the gardener never leaving his tended vines, God's Word plays an irony in this passage: The simply-structured shack is defenseless under siege. Who would take refuge in a hut against the sweep of invading armies and expect to survive? Likewise, we cannot expect to work and work and work to fortify ourselves. Our strength and fruitfulness come through worship of the Lord — right worship, sincere and integral worship, not a meaningless token gesture (verse 13).

**Prayer:** *O Lord, by living in your shelter, I will have rest and shade (Psalm 91:1 – 2). You are my true fortress; surprise me by protecting me in ways my work cannot. You are able to keep me from stumbling (Jude 24). May cucumbers remind me of your refreshment — you will wash me and lead me away from meaningless gestures into restoring worship of you (Isaiah 1:13 – 17). Keep my heart cultivated in your word and instruction (Isaiah 1:10).*

TO CONTINUE YOUR GARDEN WORK, GO TO PAGE 19 FOR YOUR NEXT DAILY READING.



<sup>18</sup>“Come now, let us settle the matter,”  
says the LORD.  
“Though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red as crimson,  
they shall be like wool.  
<sup>19</sup>If you are willing and obedient,  
you will eat the good things of the  
land;  
<sup>20</sup>but if you resist and rebel,  
you will be devoured by the sword.”  
For the mouth of the LORD  
has spoken.  
<sup>21</sup>See how the faithful city  
has become a prostitute!  
She once was full of justice;  
righteousness used to dwell in her —  
but now murderers!  
<sup>22</sup>Your silver has become dross,  
your choice wine is diluted with water.  
<sup>23</sup>Your rulers are rebels,  
partners with thieves;  
they all love bribes  
and chase after gifts.  
They do not defend the cause of the  
fatherless;  
the widow’s case does not come before  
them.  
<sup>24</sup>Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty,  
the Mighty One of Israel, declares:  
“Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes  
and avenge myself on my enemies.  
<sup>25</sup>I will turn my hand against you;<sup>a</sup>  
I will thoroughly purge away your  
dross  
and remove all your impurities.  
<sup>26</sup>I will restore your leaders as in days  
of old,  
your rulers as at the beginning.  
Afterward you will be called  
the City of Righteousness,  
the Faithful City.”  
<sup>27</sup>Zion will be delivered with justice,  
her penitent ones with righteousness.  
<sup>28</sup>But rebels and sinners will both be  
broken,  
and those who forsake the LORD will  
perish.  
<sup>29</sup>“You will be ashamed because of the  
sacred oaks  
in which you have delighted;

<sup>a</sup> 25 That is, against Jerusalem

you will be disgraced because of the  
gardens  
that you have chosen.  
<sup>30</sup>You will be like an oak with fading leaves,  
like a garden without water.  
<sup>31</sup>The mighty man will become tinder  
and his work a spark;  
both will burn together,  
with no one to quench the fire.”

### The Mountain of the LORD

**2** This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw  
concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

<sup>2</sup>In the last days  
the mountain of the LORD’s temple will  
be established  
as the highest of the mountains;  
it will be exalted above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it.  
<sup>3</sup>Many peoples will come and say,  
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of  
the LORD,  
to the temple of the God of Jacob.  
He will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths.”  
The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
<sup>4</sup>He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many  
peoples.  
They will beat their swords into  
plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against  
nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.  
<sup>5</sup>Come, descendants of Jacob,  
let us walk in the light of the LORD.

### The Day of the LORD

<sup>6</sup>You, LORD, have abandoned your people,  
the descendants of Jacob.  
They are full of superstitions from the East;  
they practice divination like the  
Philistines  
and embrace pagan customs.  
<sup>7</sup>Their land is full of silver and gold;  
there is no end to their treasures.  
Their land is full of horses;  
there is no end to their chariots.



show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.

<sup>24</sup>“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. <sup>25</sup>I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. <sup>28</sup>Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup>I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. <sup>30</sup>I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. <sup>31</sup>Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. <sup>32</sup>I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, people of Israel!

<sup>33</sup>“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. <sup>34</sup>The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. <sup>35</sup>They will say, “This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.” <sup>36</sup>Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.’

<sup>37</sup>“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Once again I will yield to Israel’s plea and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep, <sup>38</sup>as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals. So will the ruined cities

be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

### The Valley of Dry Bones

**37** The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

<sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath<sup>a</sup> enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’”

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’”

<sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophecy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup>I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’”

<sup>a</sup> 5 The Hebrew for this word can also mean *wind* or *spirit* (see verses 6-14).

GARDEN  
WORK



WEEK  
**9**

CULTIVATING

DAY  
**4**

CULTIVATING METAPHORS

*“The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it.” ~EZEKIEL 36:34*



**READ:** Ezekiel 36:28 – 36

**FERTILIZE WITH:** Joel 1:16 — 2:19; Habakkuk 2:1 – 3; 2 Peter 3:9

Let’s take a personal point of view in grasping how committed the Lord is to cultivating, comparing the flowering and fruiting of the land to the blessing we can experience personally. For every desolate area of our lives, we can trust that God will make it as lush and full as a garden. He will cultivate us, so to speak, producing blossoming beauty and fruitful harvest. Every urge we have in approaching our gardens to fix, tend, cultivate, water and freshen up reflects his nature; how he longs to bring what is desolate and destroyed under his shelter to become full of life and strong against attack (Ezekiel 36:35). The Lord will put his “thought, care, [and] work” into us to produce a “glorious bloom.”

Thank Heaven, one cannot turn a crank and grow flowers; neither can one press a button, or merely pay a fee perhaps, and produce the glorious bloom of tall mock-oranges, those shrubs whose lovely flowers and delicious fragrance are filling me with joy at this moment in my garden. No. Thought, care, work, time, all these must be put into gardening before even the least effective planting can become attractive.

— Louisa Yeomans King, *Chronicles of the Garden*, 1925

The devastating failures common among us and their impact on our relationships are analogous to “land . . . laid waste” (verse 35). Therefore the healing, restoration and recovery that is possible with God compares to our lives “becom[ing] like the garden of Eden.” From all the sins ready to sweep in and devour, we can be cleansed and washed completely clean (verse 33; Genesis 4:7; Isaiah 1:16). Gardeners, how about a Hallelujah! “Surely the LORD has done great things!” praised the people of Israel (Joel 2:21).

However, as we know from our gardening, this process takes time. “Wait for it; it will certainly come” promised the Lord (Habakkuk 2:3). As gardeners we wait patiently, knowing the time is purposeful. God’s Word gives us the same assurance: the Lord keeps his promise; slowness does not diminish his commitment to cultivating (2 Peter 3:9).

**Prayer:** *Lord, help me to see my life becoming like the Garden of Eden; how amazing that you will do such a work in me. In the meantime, Lord, as I wait, you know that my devastation is laid bare in everyone’s view; help me to believe your compassion for me and your earnest desire for my replanting. May my life become fruitful and be fully satisfying (Joel 2:18 – 19), and may everyone know it was you, Lord, who did it.*

TO CONTINUE YOUR GARDEN WORK, GO TO PAGE 713 FOR YOUR NEXT DAILY READING.

**The LORD's Answer**

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD was jealous for his land  
and took pity on his people.

<sup>19</sup>The LORD replied<sup>a</sup> to them:

“I am sending you grain, new wine and  
olive oil,  
enough to satisfy you fully;  
never again will I make you  
an object of scorn to the nations.

<sup>20</sup>“I will drive the northern horde far  
from you,  
pushing it into a parched and barren  
land;  
its eastern ranks will drown in the  
Dead Sea  
and its western ranks in the  
Mediterranean Sea.  
And its stench will go up;  
its smell will rise.”

Surely he has done great things!

<sup>21</sup> Do not be afraid, land of Judah;  
be glad and rejoice.

Surely the LORD has done great things!

<sup>22</sup> Do not be afraid, you wild animals,  
for the pastures in the wilderness are  
becoming green.

The trees are bearing their fruit;  
the fig tree and the vine yield their  
riches.

<sup>23</sup> Be glad, people of Zion,  
rejoice in the LORD your God,  
for he has given you the autumn rains  
because he is faithful.

He sends you abundant showers,  
both autumn and spring rains, as  
before.

<sup>24</sup> The threshing floors will be filled with  
grain;  
the vats will overflow with new wine  
and oil.

<sup>25</sup> “I will repay you for the years the locusts  
have eaten —  
the great locust and the young  
locust,  
the other locusts and the locust  
swarm<sup>b</sup> —  
my great army that I sent among you.

<sup>26</sup> You will have plenty to eat, until you  
are full,  
and you will praise the name of the  
LORD your God,  
who has worked wonders for you;  
never again will my people be shamed.  
<sup>27</sup> Then you will know that I am in Israel,  
that I am the LORD your God,  
and that there is no other;  
never again will my people be shamed.

**The Day of the LORD**

<sup>28</sup> “And afterward,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your old men will dream dreams,  
your young men will see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and  
women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

<sup>30</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens  
and on the earth,  
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

<sup>31</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood  
before the coming of the great and  
dreadful day of the LORD.

<sup>32</sup> And everyone who calls  
on the name of the LORD will be  
saved;  
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
there will be deliverance,  
as the LORD has said,  
even among the survivors  
whom the LORD calls.<sup>c</sup>

**The Nations Judged**

**3**<sup>d</sup> “In those days and at that time,  
when I restore the fortunes of Judah  
and Jerusalem,

<sup>2</sup> I will gather all nations  
and bring them down to the Valley of  
Jehoshaphat.<sup>e</sup>

There I will put them on trial  
for what they did to my inheritance,  
my people Israel,  
because they scattered my people among  
the nations  
and divided up my land.

<sup>a</sup> 18,19 *OF LORD will be jealous . . . / and take pity . . . /* <sup>19</sup>*The LORD will reply*    <sup>b</sup> 25 The precise meaning of the four Hebrew words used here for locusts is uncertain.    <sup>c</sup> 32 In Hebrew texts 2:28-32 is numbered 3:1-5.    <sup>d</sup> In Hebrew texts 3:1-21 is numbered 4:1-21.    <sup>e</sup> 2 *Jehoshaphat* means *the LORD judges*; also in verse 12.

GARDEN  
WORK



WEEK  
9

CULTIVATING

WEEK-  
END

SUPPOSING HIM TO BE THE GARDENER

*“I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil,  
enough to satisfy you fully.” ~JOEL 2:18*



**READ:** Joel 2:18 – 24

**FERTILIZE WITH:** Song of Songs 5:1; Matthew 11:28; John 20:15

This weekend, we rest from cultivating work with an excerpt from a sermon (No. 1699), delivered on Lord’s Day Morning, December 31, 1882, by C. H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.<sup>1</sup> He reflected on the simple moment when Mary Magdalene mistook Jesus for a gardener (John 20:15), translated “supposing him to be the gardener” in the King James Version. His message reminds us it is the Lord who bears the burden of cultivating, sending all that is needed to bring a satisfying, fruitful harvest.

I was sitting about a fortnight ago in a very lovely garden, in the midst of all kinds of flowers which were blooming in delightful abundance all around. Screening myself from the heat of the sun under the overhanging boughs of an olive, I cast my eyes upon palms and bananas, roses and camellias, oranges and aloes, lavender and heliotrope. The garden was full of color and beauty, perfume and fruitfulness. Surely the gardener, Whoever he might be, who had framed, and fashioned, and kept in order that lovely spot, deserved great commendation. So I thought, and then it came to me to meditate upon the church of God as a garden, and to suppose the Lord Jesus to be the gardener, and then to think of what would most assuredly happen if it were so.” “Supposing *him* to be the gardener” . . . You know the “him” to whom we refer, the ever-blessed Son of God, whom Mary Magdalene in our text mistook for the gardener . . . You see it is yours to work under the Lord Jesus; but it is not yours to take the anxiety of his office into your souls as though you were to bear his burdens. The under-gardener, the work-man in the garden, needs not fret about the whole garden as though it were all left to him. No, no; let him not take too much upon himself. I pray you, bound your anxiety by the facts of the case. So you have a number of young people around you, and you are watching for their souls as they that must give account. This is well; but do not be worried and wearied; for, after all, the saving and the keeping of those souls is not in your hands, but it rests with One far more able than yourself. Just think that the Lord is the gardener.

TO CONTINUE YOUR GARDEN WORK, GO TO PAGE 177 FOR YOUR NEXT DAILY READING.

44–46; Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible* (Waltham, Mass., Chronica Botanica Co., 1952); Allan A. Swenson, *Your Biblical Garden, Plants of the Bible and How to Grow Them* (Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Co., 1981), pages 164–66; Michael Zohary, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982). See also *Asia Minor & Macedonia* Notes for additional sources. Ironically, General Norman Schwartzkopf (1934–2012) died on the day before I began writing up my notes about bay laurel, and the article about him appeared in my morning newspaper with the “wreathed in laurels” reference. I couldn’t help but thinking God and the General were leading me to get moving!

2. Insight into the puzzling question of Jesus’ concerning the green tree (Luke 23:31) that led me to consider this Scripture in light of Ezekiel 20:45–21:10, the discussion of green and dry wood, came from David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, Maryland, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1996), pages 148, 237, 547–48, 749, 795, 856, and 933. Stern pointed out that the core issue was “green and dry trees refer to the righteous and the wicked” (page 933). From his leading, it seemed to me that Psalm 37, which spends most of its verses in consideration of the righteous and wicked, was a natural connection or extension of this discussion, and no surprise to this gardener, the green (bay) tree is “planted” in this psalm. Wow.

#### GARDEN WORK: Week 8 Day 1 (page 643)

1. I consulted with the following sources to report the hyssop plant species as *Origanum syriacum* (also known as *Majorana syriaca*): Nogah Hareuveni, *Tree and Shrub in Our Biblical Heritage*, translated from Hebrew and adapted by Helen Frenkley (Neot Kedumim Ltd., Kiryat Ono, Israel, 1984), pages 107–122; Simon Khairallah, [www.kew.org/msbp/plantstories/Origanum\\_syriacum.htm](http://www.kew.org/msbp/plantstories/Origanum_syriacum.htm), (Dec. 2, 2010); [www.flowersinIsrael.com](http://www.flowersinIsrael.com); [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org); [www.mountainvalleygrowers.com/bibleherbgarden.htm](http://www.mountainvalleygrowers.com/bibleherbgarden.htm), (Dec. 2, 2010); [www.horizonherbs.com](http://www.horizonherbs.com), who sells *Origanum syriacum* seeds (and many other Biblical seeds and starts) that are sowed in my garden as I write; I am so anxious for them to grow so I can breathe deep their fragrance!

#### GARDEN WORK: Week 11 Day 1 (page 737)

1. I was continually confused by the apple’s scientific name, especially not growing up in apple country. To clarify, *Taylor’s Encyclopedia of Gardening*, 3rd ed. (H. M. Co., 1956), page 910, offers the following explanation: “The ancient Greeks and Romans distinguished two distinct genera to include the apples and pears. To the first they gave the name *Malus*, and to the pears, *Pyrus*. In mod-

ern times some botanists have included all these plants in *Pyrus* ... others have included some in *Malus* ... The confusion in naming is thus very great.” Additionally, the reference lists *Malus pumilla* as being the same species as *Pyrus malus* and *Malus communis*, page 656.

Further resources for apple and apricot research: L. H. Bailey, *Gardener’s Handbook*, (New York, The MacMillan Co., 1934) pages 16–20; Charles E. Bessey, *The Botany of the Apple Tree*, Extracted from the *Annual Report of the Nebraska State Horticultural Society* (Lincoln, Neb., 1894), page 10, available at <http://www.archive.org/details/botanyofapple-tre00besrich>; T. H. Everett, Editor, *New Illustrated Encyclopedia of Gardening*, (New York, Greystone Press, 1960), Volume 1, pages 88–98; Allan A. Swenson, *Fruit Trees for the Home Gardener*, (New York, Lyons & Burford, Publishers, 1994), pages 33–58; Winifred Walker, *All the Plants of the Bible*, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1957) page 22; and for an especially lovely commentary by Matthew Henry (1662–1714) on “giving a reproof with discretion,” Proverbs 25:11, go to <http://mhcw.biblecommenter.com/proverbs/25.htm>, verses 11–12.

2. Thank you to Allan A. Swenson and his discussion of the apple vs. apricot debate in *Your Biblical Garden, Plants of the Bible and How to Grow Them*, (Garden City, NY, Doubleday & Co., 1981).

#### GARDEN WORK: Week 5 Day 4 (page 743)

1. I have deduced Alice Hoschede’s “fear of the Lord” from the report that she refused to divorce her first husband, though he abandoned her and the children, because “it smacked of sin,” and the description of Alice as “devout,” written by Claire Joyes, *Claude Monet: Life at Giverny*, (New York, Vendome Press, 1985) page 61. Also Joyes’ observation “A deeply sensitive woman, with mystical tendencies, Alice transformed her genteel upbringing into great personal strength and showed remarkable dignity in the face of marital and financial humiliation.” (Page 20) This seemed to me to translate the essence of “noble character” depicted in Proverbs 31:10–30.

#### GARDEN WORK: Week 9 Day 1 (page 768)

1. Thank you to the many resources teaching me about cucumbers and melons; I am not up to the task of growing them myself even though I have the hot summer for it: *Taylor’s Encyclopedia of Gardening*, 3rd edition (New York: H.M. Co., 1956), 256–58; T. H. Everett, editor, *New Illustrated Encyclopedia of Gardening*, vol. 3 (New York: Greystone, 1960), 507–10; John C. Wister, editor, *Woman’s Home Companion Garden Book* (New York: Doubleday, 1947), 746–748; Rosalind Creasy, *Cooking From the Garden* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988),

160, 462, 463, 473; W. E. Shewell-Cooper, *Plants, Flowers, and Herbs of the Bible: The Living Legacy of the Third Day of Creation*, Oenoke edition (New Canaan, Conn.: Keats, 1988, originally published 1977), 57, 100; Duane A. Garrett, general editor, *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 186. For the flavor of cucumber without the need for a cucumber hut, grow the easy herb salad burnet; its leaves taste like cucumber.

**GARDEN STORIES: Week 10 Day 1 (page 795)**

1. Support for *Nigella sativa* as the species translation for the Hebrew word *qetsach* (Isaiah 28:25, 27) comes from Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible* (Waltham, Mass.: Chronica Botanica, 1952), 152–53; Winifred Walker, *All the Plants of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 80–81; and Michael Zohary, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 91. Gesenius's *Lexicon*, posted on the *Blue Letter Bible* website, cites another *Nigella* species, but clearly not an Umbelliferae plant, *Blue Letter Bible*; dictionary and word search for *qetsach* (Strong's 7100), *Blue Letter Bible* (1996–2013), [www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7100&t=NIV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7100&t=NIV).

For sorting out the difference between *nigella* and black cumin names (as it is called by Moldenke, Walker, Zohary, and *Hortus Third*, below), I referred to the following cookbooks: May S. Bsisu, *The Arab Table* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 23; Ian Hemphill, *The Spice and Herb Bible: A Cook's Guide* (Toronto: Robert Rose, 2002), 157–58, 256–57; Niloufer Ichaporia King, *My Bombay Kitchen: Traditional and Modern Parsi Home Cooking* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2007), 295; and Margaret Shaïda, *The Legendary Cuisine of Persia* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Interlink, 2000), 31.

**GARDEN WORK: Week 6 Day 1 (page 802)**

1. Hebrew translation from dictionary and word search for *karkom* (Strong's 3750), *Blue Letter Bible* (1996–2011), [www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3750&t=NIV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3750&t=NIV) (May 6, 2011).

2. Information for autumn crocus from the following sources: T. H. Everett, editor, *New Illustrated Encyclopedia of Gardening*, vol. 3 (New York: Greystone, 1960), 500–02; Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, Cornell University, *Hortus Third* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 294; William C. Welch, *Perennial Garden Color* (Dallas: Taylor, 1989), 54, 55, 182; dictionary and word search for *chabatstseleth* (Strong's 2261), *Blue Letter Bible* (1996–2011), [www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H2261&t=NIV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H2261&t=NIV) (May 6, 2011); Martha Modzelevich, "Colchicum stevenii, Steven's Meadow saffron," *Flowers in Israel* (2005–2011), [www.flowersinrael.com/Colchicumstevenii\\_page.htm](http://www.flowersinrael.com/Colchicumstevenii_page.htm)

(May 7, 2011); Martha Modzelevich, "Sternbergia clusiana, Sternbergia spaffordiana, Sternbergia, Autumn Corcu, Autumn Daffodil," *Flowers in Israel*, (2005–2011), [www.flowersinrael.com/Sternbergiaclusiana\\_page.htm](http://www.flowersinrael.com/Sternbergiaclusiana_page.htm) (May 7, 2011); Martha Modzelevich, "Crocus hyemalis, Winter Crocus," *Flowers in Israel* (2005–2011), [www.flowersinrael.com/Crocushyemalis\\_page.htm](http://www.flowersinrael.com/Crocushyemalis_page.htm) (May 7, 2011).

**GARDEN WORK: Week 1 Day 2 (page 813)**

1. Definition of *bachar* (Strong's 977) from *Blue Letter Bible* (1996–2010), [www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H977&t=NIV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H977&t=NIV) (April 2, 2010).

2. "Handpicked" was a word marvelously chosen by Dr. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 1291. His translation of Isaiah 43:10 reads, "But you are my witnesses." GOD'S Decree. "You're my handpicked servant so that you'll come to know and trust me, understand both *that* I am and *who* I am." "Handpicked" spoke all kinds of gardening allusions to me, for example, selecting certain garden plants by hand, picking the ripest fruits off the tree, choosing just the right blooms and branches for the vase in the center of the dinner table, etc.

**GARDEN WORK: Week 2 Day 1 (page 835)**

1. *Quercus coccifera*, the Palestine or Kermes Oak, has a strong possibility of being the oak tree that Abram encountered in reaching Shechem, though a thorough list of possible species is found in Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke's book noted above, pages 193–99.

Additional sources used for research include: Peter R. Dallman, *Plant Life in the World's Mediterranean Climates* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 47, 175, 177, 182, 194, 196; T. H. Everett, editor, *New Illustrated Encyclopedia of Gardening*, vol. 10 (New York: Greystone, 1960), 1738–51; and Julia Ellen Rogers, *Trees That Every Child Should Know* (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1909), 33–54.

**GARDEN WORK: Week 19 Day 1 (page 843)**

1. Sources for almond include: Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 131–32; Carroll D. Bush, *Nut Grower's Handbook* (New York: Orange Judd, 1941), 111–15; Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, Cornell University, *Hortus Third* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 55, 918–19; Harold N. and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible* (Waltham, Mass., Chronica Botanica, 1952), 35–38; *Taylor's Encyclopedia of Gardening*, 3rd edition (H.M. Co., 1956), 21–22; T. H. Everett, editor, *New Illustrated Encyclopedia of Gardening*, vol. 1 (New York: Greystone, 1960), 45;