

## ***Do We Hear What Plants Say?***

*“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you...”*

*Job 12:7-8*

*What about the plants--what do they say? Most of us don't think about the fact that our very human existence depends on plants. Years ago in Biology class I learned that without “Kingdom Plantae,” life as we know it couldn't exist. Plants supply essential oxygen and provide food for innumerable creatures, including man. And they're beautiful; Solomon's glory could not compare to the lilies of the field. Moreover, Jesus often used plants to illustrate His teachings. Likewise, if I stop and listen to any common plant, I can hear it declare its creator's wisdom.*

*For example, a plant's fruit and flowers teach that reward follows diligence. If I keep a plant around, it needs water, food and light for future blooming. But there's something else needed--time. Weeks and months pass when I see green leaves but no flowers; and I consider tossing it. But then...a few buds appear! Suddenly, it erupts into color. The lesson: life at times can seem like the flowerless plant--a bit dull. In long periods of 'green leaves' without flowers, I might question whether God is listening. The plant reminds me that He is; its flowers encourage perseverance, “for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).*

*Plants' teaching continues; after blooming they need a resting period. Likewise, our bodies need rest to keep productive. This isn't laziness but wisdom to prevent burnout. God commanded a day of rest to His people Israel under the Mosaic Law, and rest is also necessary today. Stress abounds, in spite of (or even because of) many technological advances. When we juggle the responsibilities of a home, family and work, rest may seem difficult--or impossible--to manage. But without it, the details of life consume us and overcrowd our time with God. How can we quietly meditate upon God while tired and distracted by worldly details? When a plant awakens from a time of rest, it grows rapidly. Flowers are soon to follow. Likewise, after rest, our weak flesh receives strength for our willing spirit to produce spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22).*

*Furthermore, a plant needs pruning. So do we, as disciples of Christ. A plant's wild shoots are trimmed to stimulate vital growth because an unpruned plant is weak and shabby. But a groomed plant is strong and bears many flowers or fruit. Likewise I need to cut away worthless distractions and “throw off everything that hinders (Hebrews 12:1).” Otherwise, I--like the unruly plant--remain weak and unfruitful. I naturally resist painful prunings! However, spiritual growth is stimulated by cutting away those dead works and worthless distractions which in time will be forgotten like those dead shoots.*

*Plants also teach about our eternal future. As the seed must die before the plant is formed, our human bodies must die before they are transformed in eternity. Although I don't want to remain a seed forever, my weak flesh battles fear of death, an enemy. But a barren seed can't bear fruit, nor can flesh and blood inherit God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:50). My “seedy” body isn't suitable for eternity; in it I must endure sickness, pain and weakness. But beyond these afflictions lies a better life, and a day when I'll never be weak and vulnerable again.*

*Although all creation groans, beset with weakness, God lavishes upon it much beauty to enjoy. The fact that a flower will quickly fade doesn't diminish its beauty when it's blooming. Rather, its fading beauty serves to remind us that our earthly lives are likewise fleeting; but with this perspective we learn that each breath of life is a precious gift. Also I wonder, if a spectacular red rose never faded, would I cease to marvel at it? And if my days on earth were limitless, could I find any real meaning in them? Does this draw me to God whose glory never fails? Am I hearing what the plants say?*

***By Mary Nixon***