



Talking through the message during the week helps you turn what God is saying to you into action steps. These notes

provide some ideas to reflect upon about what we are to achieve in this life.

What are some descriptive words we use for gardens?

 **Genesis 2:8-9** and **Jeremiah 31:12**

Beautiful. Fruitful. Overgrown. Wild. Simple. Varied. Neglected. Extensive. Peaceful. Dry.

A garden is planted in a fertile and delightful spot suitable for the type of plants which will grow. A walk through the Auckland Botanical Garden provides contrasts of gardens from a typical English garden with plenty of rainfall to ones which thrive in dry climates. If you want to see a public garden full of surprises then visit the [Hamilton Gardens](#) for a few hours and take time to sit and be still and know your God. The many types of plants and styles of garden reflect God's creativity and our imagination and our taste. They are like our life and in the Bible God often used gardens to illustrate the way the Holy Spirit works with us.

What surrounds a garden? What is the role of the gardener?

 **Job 1:10** and **John 15:1-11**

Gardens are often surrounded by a fence or a hedge or a wall. This is the way it was in Bible times when gardens meant a protected (defended) enclosure to grow fruit and vegetables. We carry on this practise thousands of years later. It is symbolic of how God surrounds us and protects us. But, this is not heaven so we do have trials and tests and these are similar to pruning and weeding a garden. The gardener's title also meant a watcher. He would protect the garden from animals, pests and thieves. He would also tend the garden to remove weeds and unhealthy growth. The gardener is patient knowing that plants will come into fruit or vegetables will grow to fullness in their due time with the right amount of water, sun and fertiliser. The Holy Spirit is our personal gardener: patient; seeing us as beautiful and individual; creatively shaping us as He knows best.

What is the purpose of a garden?

 Look at the picture of the Church as the Bride of Christ in **Song of Solomon 4:12-16** and read **Luke 13:6-9**

Q. Who needs a garden if they have money and supermarkets with year round supply of any type of food? **A.** No one needs one. Before this modern era ordinary people kept gardens to grow vegetables, herbs, spices and fruit for their own food. If they had the space and leisure time they might have part of the garden planted in flowers and shrubs to bring beauty into life; this is before movies, TV and colour magazines or the amount of leisure time we currently enjoy. So gardens were first of all required to produce for their owner and then they were also to bring beauty into the world. It is the same with our life surrendered to God. We are to produce and share the fruit He has planted in us and we are to bring peace and beauty to those who we come into contact with. The alternative is that the garden becomes overgrown with weeds and is neglected so that the gardener has to take more drastic action to restore the garden.

NEXT STEPS

What are some ways that we give the gardener, the Holy Spirit, room to work in our life for growth?

- *Identify the things which are weeds in our life chocking the good growth. Our conscience is the best indicator. Ask the Holy Spirit to show us one thing at a time to change. He will bring conviction not condemnation. His way will have potential to change and will be specific. It will likely be a habit or attitude or taking a risk. Act. He will tell you when you are ready for the next area.*
- *Be someone who forgives daily and examines themselves throughout the day to repent of sin.*
- *A creative gardener or landscaper can see the potential and beauty in a piece of ground to produce a wonderful garden with patience, time, hard work and love. We are to have the same attitude towards everyone we meet.*
- *More freely share what we have been given: our talent, time, skills, our spiritual gifts, love, money, food etc*

Secrets of the Vine

In this small book Bruce Wilkinson explore Jesus' teaching the night he was betrayed when he talked about believers being grafted into the true vine. We read it in John 15:1-8. There is a chapter titled "The Best Good News (You Didn't Want to Hear)". No guess that this is dealing with pruning. The interesting thing he explores is the difference between pruning to grow bigger and healthier fruit and discipline. They both feel the same but they each work in different ways. Here are some quotes:

"If your life consistently bears no fruit, God will intervene to discipline you."

"If your life bears some fruit, God will intervene to prune you."

"If your life bears a lot of fruit, God will invite you to abide more deeply with Him."

[Click here](#) for more information on this book.