

The Banana Plant

Volume 3

Issue 5

August, 1998

In our church we have a few banana plants. I planted them to be able to make a few extra centavos for the church while we were beginning. However, I have to admit, even though I haven't gotten any fruit from them yet, I have gotten much teaching and inspiration as I water them. Pastoring a new church, I'm always looking for new and easy ways to make the gospel easy to understand. I bought these banana plants all at the same time and they were all about the same size and age. When we came to Zihuatanejo, we planted them in the cinema on the side where we have fellowship. (it has a dirt floor) I planted them in the same spot and at the same time. However, some have taken better than

need to have a lot of water. I suppose that with any fruit tree you must have a lot of water. With our lime tree you can definitely see the difference in the fruit. When there is a lot of water, the fruit is jucier. When there is little water, there may be fruit, but even so, that is dried out and doesn't have much juice. With fruit trees, healthy, juicy fruit is the name of the game. So I try to stay on top of giving them lots of water. New Christians, like banana plants, need much water of the Word of God to help them to take root. Many times new Christians don't take root for this reason; not enough water (Word). The Lord seems to pour out extra grace, more to those who struggle than to those who have taken root quickly. He wants them to grow to their full potential.

Many times while watering the plants, from the outside the plant appears all well and fine. However, the inside of the banana plant may be home to many different types of dangerous pests. For example, hidden in the center of the plant can live fireants, tarantulas, scorpions, and even snakes and the like. Though you wouldn't expect to find those there; much caution is advised when working around these plants. The hidden poisonous pests can be a cause of problems for both the plant and the one who tends it. Just like hidden sin in the life of a Christian, can also become a source of pain and hurt, not only for



him, but also for the ones around him. The banana plant sends forth a flower, which in turn begins to produce the fruit. As

others, and one of them didn't look like it would make it. When I watered them, I tried to give that one more water than the others to try to stimulate it to grow. I really wanted to see it produce, but it just seemed to plod along. The others have seemed to do alright. Everybody who talks to me tells me that they

1

← BACK

HOME

NEXT →

Continued Article Heading

(Continued from page 1)

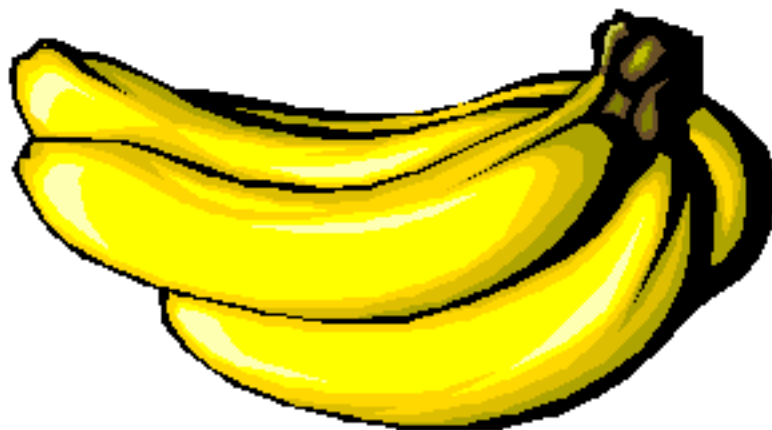
the flower begins to grow, it looks like a big rose bud. As the outer leaves begin to die and wither, they fall off. As they fall off they reveal a row of bananas. The first few rows are what produce the most fruit. As the bud grows down, and as the leaves continue to fall off, rows and rows of small bananas are revealed. As the bud grows down, the fruit grows smaller and fewer. Each time the leaves die and fall off, they reveal another row of fruit. When it has all grown, then the fruit begins to ripen. When it has fully ripened it's all cut off at once. The way for the Christian to bear fruit is to die to one's self. As we begin to die to self, more and more fruit is revealed. At the beginning of the Christian walk, many things are given up and much fruit is seen, but as the Christian matures, the fruit that is seen is smaller, or not as visible. The fruit is not of lesser type, but it doesn't have the big rows of bananas like it had in the beginning. Depending on the health of the plant, it can produce up to two dozen bananas per row and about 8 rows. So if the plant is in good soil with plenty of sun and especially water, many bananas

off from the cinema at the bottom of the stairs and collects at one spot. The results have been tremendous, and this plant may now supercede the others. I had to take it out of it's environment and put it into another place to really see it flourish. Sometimes, we as well, need to change our environment so that God can really work in us. Sometimes we are not in the right place to really see God move. Many say, "I need to get my life in order before God can use me". However, I would ask, "How do you know that where you are right now, is where God wants to work out the things in your life? Maybe you need a new challenge to see God move." We were comfortable in Acapulco. We had a nice church, nice pastor friends, a nice house; we were all set. Only problem was we came to a point in our ministry where we were producing leaves and not much fruit. When we were transplanted to Zihuatanejo, we really began to see fruit. Even though we were pulled out of where we had taken root and were planted with the risk of not being able to take root, the move was for our good.

The stem of the banana plant which holds the fruit produces a liquid which is called milk here in Mexico. If you should you handle the stem and the fruit incorrectly, and that milk touches your clothes, it can stain them forever. Many here have banana picking clothes that have been stained, and the milk just won't come out. You have to be careful how you handle the stem as

can come from one plant. As well as with the Christian; depending on the depth he has, he can come to produce much fruit for God. Some plants only produce a few rows and those aren't full rows. The fruit producing just doesn't seem to continue. With our plant that was struggling, it seemed to just produce leaves, one at a time and by the time another leaf was ready to come out, the previous one seemed to die. Indeed, this plant struggled just to produce leaves. I wanted to see it bear fruit, so I pulled it out of its spot and planted it in another spot. This time the spot was where the water runs

stained, and the milk just won't come out. You have to be careful how you handle the stem as



(Continued from page 2)

well as the fruit. Same with the Spirit and His fruit. If you handle them wrong you can have an eternal stain. Don't let a stain on your clothes testify against you that you handled the stem and the fruit wrong.

Another aspect that is different from all other trees, is that the banana has only one chance to produce fruit. After it has produced it's fruit, the banana tree is cut down and never produces again. Most other trees have seasons, but the banana has one season and then it is cut down and dies. The Bible teaches this as well. "The kingdom of Heaven is like a man who casts his seed upon the soil; and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed grows up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows-how, he does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits he **immediately** puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:26-29). While the banana plant is healthy, it is up to the banana plant to produce what they call here in Mexico, hijos,

not the message Jesus has for us? In Matthew 28 Jesus says, "Go into all the world and make disciples" (or reproduce yourselves in others so that the good news can continue). Jesus said: "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear (produce) much fruit." (John 15:8) Part of that fruit is reproducing ourselves in another, so that when our brief life is over, the work can continue on, and even be multiplied. The only failure is if the banana is bad or doesn't produce. Something would have to be very irregular for it to not do that. Same with the Christian, something would have to be very wrong for us not to reproduce ourselves in others. The option to reproduce actually doesn't even exist. It's really an option that the devil has given to us to stop the advancement of the gospel. We have only one shot at life then, we go on to face the Lord. Could we really be so self-centered that we don't have time to invest in even one other soul (that would be the minimum)?

Let's take this analogy. Let's suppose that I got a big inheritance. Before the inheritance I had no place to live. When I get it, I begin to look for a nice place to live. A friend says he has a vacant house that I can live in. It needs a little work but I have all the liberty to make the changes I want. However the owner says that after one year he'll need the land and I'll need to disoccupy the land. I agree and
move in.
Like he
said, it



(children). That's how the banana plant ensures producing more bananas after it is cut down. If it fails to produce children, it will stop producing bananas. The one banana plant in my house had already produced three children before it was cut down. If those three, produce three each, the multiplication process begins, and I reap a harvest of bananas within a short time. For the life of the bananas is short. The whole trick to the banana is to have it reproduce itself in it's offspring so more and more fruit can come from them, as opposed to when the father plant was alive. Actually, one could have in very little time, an abundance of bananas if the plants continue to produce children. Do you see the analogy? Is that

said, it needed work and I begin to spend to get the plumbing fixed and decide for a jacuzzi as well. Seeing

**3**

(Continued from page 3)

how my inheritance was a big one, I opt for a built-in swimming pool too. Later on, as it gets hot, I decide to get central air-conditioning, as well as fireplaces in a few rooms. I want to stay fit, so I have a tennis court and a basketball court put in as well. Finally, after 11 months, I'm very comfortable. My inheritance is also spent. On the twelfth month the owner comes to me and says, "I'm ready for my land now; you need to be off it by the first of the year." I say, "It took me 11 months to finally get comfortable in this house and now you want to take it from me?" He says "Remember the agreement? I said after 12 months I was going to come for it and ask for it, and now you must leave." I leave, but seeing how my inheritance was spent and I don't have anything anymore, I wander around the streets begging. What would you think of such a person? Would you take pity on him? Wasn't he a fool? He spent all his inheritance on short range comforts and when it came time to live for the long range he had nothing. You may say that this story doesn't make any sense. But how many Christians live their Christian life just like that? Their attention is so put on the temporal pleasures, that no thought is ever placed on the eternal or the task that is set before us, the great commission. I'm not saying that to have any

of those comforts is wrong, (I wouldn't mind a few myself) but it's the mindset that we have, that seems to say that we don't need to get involved in making disciples. We have a person here staying with us for 6 months. Suzanne said that I should remember that she is giving up 6 months of her life to come and live with us. I said that she didn't have that option as a Christian to decide to give up a few months of her life and decide to do this thing and to do that thing. This option essentially does not exist for the Christian. Our whole life is God's to do with as He pleases, as He sees best. We've been bought with a price and are not our own. Can I really say to God that I have a right? Have I given back anything to God by becoming a missionary? No. **He bought me.** Usually, when someone buys something he controls the right to do whatever he feels like doing with what he bought. Are you exercising a right you do not have by deciding to do this or that thing?

One last thought. Twice in my life I have been diagnosed with a potassium deficiency. On both occasions the doctors said that I should eat bananas everyday to keep my system in balance because they are high in potassium. The fruit has all you need to keep your life in a healthy balance. Lack of fruit, lack of balance. Much healthy fruit, good healthy balance. "And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Against such things there is no law. (Deficiency)"
(Gal.5:22-24)

Support address:

Greg & Suzanne Winslow
c/o Household of Faith
30 Merrimack Rd.
Amherst, NH 03031

Please make sure any support checks get made out to the Household of Faith with a note attached designated for the Winslows

email gwinslow@cdnet.com.mx

<http://www.cdnet.com.mx/zihua/winslow>

Field address:

Greg & Suzanne Winslow
Apartado 424
Zihuatanejo, Gro. Mexico
C.P. 40880

