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Productive or Fruitful?



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



THAILAND

Do you have a garden? We have had one the past few years and we have enjoyed growing varieties of tomatoes, artichokes, peppers, herbs, potatoes, and some fruit. Gardening has forced me to be more patient because no matter how hard I work, I can't make the vegetables grow any faster. I can see why so often in scripture, the analogy is about farming, gardening, or growing. But for many of us, our lives are just the opposite. So often life lends itself to a lifestyle of "production" where hard work and long hours equates to success. The problem of course is that when we have a lifestyle geared towards production, we tend to

view our spiritual life along those same terms: “if I try harder and work harder I can be more successful spiritually.”

Spirituality works differently. The goal, like in gardening, is to be fruitful, and there is only so much we can do to get that to happen. No matter how hard we try, we can't control the process. We can't force the Holy Spirit to work in us or through us. What we can do is cultivate an environment where we can listen to what God is saying. We can prepare ourselves by recognizing that God has control, not us. What God has in store for us is a mystery, we need to learn how to partner with that mystery. When I garden, I can prepare the soil, water the seeds, and put them in a position to get sun – but there is still a level of mystery over which seeds will grow that is totally out of my control. How similar is that to our Spiritual lives? We don't have control of what God is going to do or send our way. What we can do is put ourselves in a position where, when given the opportunity, we know how to respond and our response is automatic. Cultivating such an environment means we are not waiting for the Holy Spirit to do it all for us. It does not mean that we take it all on ourselves. It means that we have an **ongoing relationship** with God so that we can listen to what He is saying and partner with Him. Such a partnership makes us stronger than we could ever be on our own. Our relationship with God, as with any relationship, grows and changes over time. We have to be intentional about cultivating an environment for the relationship to be healthy, we have to set aside time to spend together in the relationship.

When we go to Thailand, we cannot force people to put their faith in Jesus. No matter how much we talk or how much time we spend with some people, production is not the goal. Our role is to be fruitful; to partner with the mystery of God and be prepared to respond. People need to experience God on their own; our role is to create an environment where they will recognize and know how to respond when God's works His mystery in their hearts.

Things have been non-stop here with Team Juanes! I have been sick the last few weeks (and not quite feeling like myself yet). As a result, Alise has been visiting churches and Bible studies solo. This month she shared at the *Bay Area Christian Homeschool (BACH) Global Culture and Mission Night*, at *Community Baptist Church* in San Mateo, at her friend's Bible study group in West Sacramento, and at *American River Community Church* in Carmichael. This past Saturday we were able to share with *Fill My Cup*, a local mission support group, and on Sunday we were thankful to be back at our home church, *Crosswalk Community Church*, and give an update and celebrate missions month! It was great to celebrate with our home church family. We are currently enjoying a time to meet church leaders and receive encouraging teaching in Cambria at the *Growing Healthy Churches Leadership Retreat*. Thank you to GHC Executive Director Tim Brown



What's next? On Sunday 4/9 we will be at *Church on the Corner* in Albany. After that we will be packing the minivan and heading to Colorado Springs for language and culture acquisition training. This is a month long training session for the whole family where we will all be trained on how to learn a new language and adjust to a new culture. We are looking forward to the road trip and are planning to meet up with friends along the way and explore the United States while we can. Please keep us in your prayers for this adventure and road trip we are embarking on. The kids as they are excited, but also a little apprehensive about living elsewhere for a month. This is the new adventure we are on and they are learning to adapt! We thank God for His faithfulness and for your love, financial support, and prayers!



Kolin is on a tee-ball team, the Cubs, and beyond excited to be playing a team sport...this kid has such a love for the game at the age of 4...it's unreal! Gavin continues to amaze us with his creativity and "out of the box" thinking. He participated in his first science fair project focusing on hydraulics. Though he and Mark worked hard for several days to try to get his homemade hydraulic lift working, it was unsuccessful...however, Gavin took it in stride and presented his "failed hydraulic lift" as is at the Science Fair, simply informing everyone that he just couldn't get it to work. We were so proud of his positive attitude throughout the whole learning experience. Sydney's big moment came earlier this month when she asked the question, "mommy, how do I know the God of the Bible is the one true God? Other people around the world worship other gods and they think their god is the right god." WOW!!! A wonderful conversation followed which ended in her praying a beautiful, memorable, from her heart prayer to ask Jesus to be the ruler of her heart! Praise the LORD!!!