

## Planting seeds: Notes from the field

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Published by the *Conversations with God* Foundation, Celebrations newsletter, Issue 103, March 2008

Have you ever been surprised when someone's told you that something you said or did, perhaps years ago, changed their life in some way and you can't even remember it?

It happened to me a few days ago when a friend thanked me for encouraging her to make a phone call. She had been out of work and feeling hopeless. "I can't thank you enough for our conversation" she said. "It was the start of things turning around. I don't know where I'd be now if I'd not picked up the phone as you suggested."

I was delighted to see her flourishing. I was also a bit bemused as I had no memory of ever urging her to make that call. It turned out that our conversation was a seed that flowered into an abundance of fulfilling work for her but I could never have known that at the time.

Our lives are rich and complex. We live in a dense tapestry of thoughts, feelings and actions. *Conversations with God* calls on us to be a gift to all the people whose lives we touch – and to not enter someone's life if we can't be a gift.

But it's hard to know what the gift is that we bring. What seeds are we sowing? One way to find out is to ask. In my job as a coach in business, I recently came to the end of a 2-hour session where I felt concerned my client hadn't got much out of it. I didn't seem to have said very much. I'd *done* very little.

So I asked her "What difference, if any, has this conversation made to you?" Her answer was instant. "I feel relieved", she replied, "This keeps me sane. I can go back out there now and do my job". Now she was being *my* messenger. She reminded me that there is nothing I have *to do* and that it is more important what I am being than anything I am doing.

It wasn't that I'd asked her the killer question or given her a key insight. The gift I'd given was being receptive and non-judgmental. It was the quality of the relationship that opened her up to her own truth. How easy it is for me to forget these things! Who's waking who up here? I asked myself. Then I remembered the wisdom articulated in CWG that *all true benefits are mutual*.

I believe that we are all planting seeds all the time, in our own lives and in the lives of others. It has helped me to reflect on the parable of the sower that Jesus told:

*A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown (Matthew 13, 3 - 8)*

This story helps me to cultivate acceptance, one of the five attitudes of Godliness in *Friendship with God*. There are times when I reach out to someone, give them my highest thoughts and best energies, and it seems to make no difference whatsoever.

The other person doesn't appear to hear or be open to what I believe God is saying to them through me. May I accept that some seed fall on stony ground.

Other times I decide to go for it, to make that job application, and then someone else gets the position. This can be very disheartening. In my upbeat moments I choose to believe that this is God shutting doors, closing off opportunities that are not for the highest good of all concerned. Surrendering my small will to the bigger divine Will is a work-in-progress for me. I want to see tulips but no flowers grow at all, at least not this springtime. May I accept that the birds of the air eat some seed.

Then there have been times when I have started a relationship and it has withered on the vine. The seed sown has not matured. Why is this? A former friend once told me that she was cancelling our friendship as she felt that she was putting more into it than I was. Maybe I believed that I was in some way superior and that she could do more of the keeping in touch? It was a hard piece of feedback to receive. May I accept that sometimes seed get choked by my ego.

And then there are the times when the seed fall on good soil and produce an abundant crop. And it can be the tiniest things that make a big difference. How did *Conversations with God* enter your life for example? I came across Neale's writing after speaking with someone in a health food store about 10 years ago. I was telling them how much I'd enjoyed *The Celestine Prophecy* and he half-joked "Then you should read *Conversations with God* because it will blow your socks off!"

So I did and life has never been the same since. And yet I believe that the reading of the books, amazing though they are, is not enough to transform a life. *Conversations with God* comes to full harvest through our lives, lived. We know that all flowering takes place because of seeds sown, watered, warmed and properly nurtured. And this is where we can help each other in manifold ways. Through conversations, words of encouragement, honest answers to questions and even tough bits of feedback.

Happy gardening!