

## sharper focus “Another look”

*By Kelly Pontsler, Major*

Summer around here means buckets of fruit. Drive along just about any road in our part of the state and you will see the signs: u-pick, we-pick, fruit ahead. Cherries and berries, peaches and grapes—Oregon explodes in the colors and smells of summer as the tiniest of blossoms grow into balls of fruit and ripen in the warm summer sun. (In case you haven't figured it out, I love summer fruit.)

So, a few days of vacation unfolded naturally into some berry picking and jam making. Heading out into a brilliant and hot, sunny day, I found myself 10 minutes down the road at a fruit farm just outside of town. I'd been there last year and knew this was the place for me.

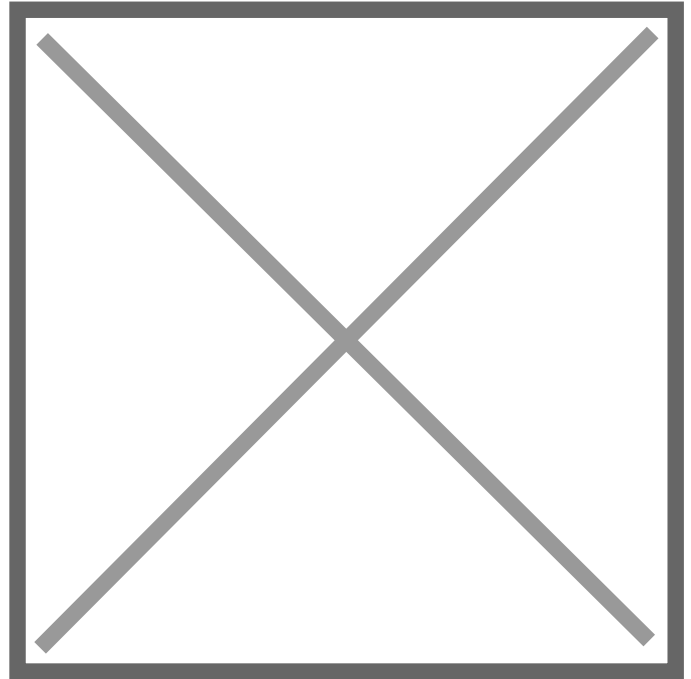
I checked in at the counter in the small enclosed fruit stand. My buckets were weighed and I was asked which fruit I was hoping to get. Raspberries! I had no idea how far along the season was, but as the berries were noted on the board as available for picking, I figured I had a chance. The staff girl smiled and said yes, there were still some there but “you have to hunt for them.” I wasn't in a rush and figured time was not an issue. So off I went, down the little straw-covered road, through the orchards and beyond to the berry section, ready to get to work.

I planned my attack and decided to start on the last row and work down and back. At first glance, I didn't see much fruit. The bushes, cultivated to reach up a bit over my head, were a couple of feet deep. Where was the fruit? The first 20 feet of berry bushes yielded about a handful of raspberries, and I thought, “this may not have been a great idea.” But then some little splashes of red color caught my eye, as I glanced back over my shoulder. Catching a glimpse of the fruit tucked behind and well up into the green bushes, I discovered loads of berries. One glance wasn't enough; I had to have another look.

I worked my way forward another five feet and then looked back. Again, what appeared to be bushes completely barren of fruit in fact had an impressive amount still to give. Another look. A change of position and perspective. Several rows later, my buckets were full and I was on my way home.

There must be a lesson in that, right?

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How often do we walk the path of daily life, staring straight ahead, scanning quickly for some easily spotted fruit and seeing nothing, to give up or move on? Some of the best leaders may not be the most obvious. Some of the best ideas may not come from those who speak up first. Some of the most effective ministry action we have may not have much visible pizzazz to it. Perhaps we need to take another look.

We've been working our way through the Sermon on the Mount this summer as the focus of our Sunday worship. It's an amazing passage—Jesus' first big sermon. "Here is what the kingdom of heaven on earth is supposed to be like, and it's not what you think." The crowd gathered around him knew the Scripture texts of the Old Testament writings. And they had heard the religious leaders of the day giving interpretation that often compacted the teaching into an endless litany of limitations. They didn't quite understand yet, but there was something different about this teacher.

To those listening that day, Jesus was very clear. He wasn't there to throw out all that was known. As they leaned in to hear better, Jesus looked into their eyes and said, "there is much sweet fruit there, take another look." Many of them got it, and their lives were changed forever.

Not seeing any low-hanging fruit around you at the moment? Have a walk around the block, move your chair, lean in, get a new perspective. I tell you the truth, the fruit is yours for the picking.

By the way, those raspberries? I'll be enjoying homemade jam until next season. Yum!