

Tara Plog

311 13th Avenue E
Polson MT 59860

plog@naim.ca
303 / 304 0528



NAIM NORTH AMERICA
INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

February 2019 Update

Just Because

Recently, I asked God some difficult questions. One was, "How would You have me find flexible work?" His answer? "Praise Me! And be open." Not what I expected. "Praise Me!" "Praise Me ... before I provide a specific answer." "Praise Me ... in the midst of confusion." "Praise Me ... when you don't understand." "Praise Me ... just because I'm God." "Just because I'm good." "Just because I've loved you—and love you still."



Winter Harvest

As we lean into **February**, I'm a bit confused. Confounded. Befuddled. Looking for circumstances to "fall into place", it seems my life is closer to "falling apart". Anticipating the abundant life that Jesus promises, I often feel more as though I'm wandering through a sparse landscape. I've received some clarity in two parables whose deeper meaning has eluded me ... until recently. So, bring on the fruit!

First, figs. Teaching about **spiritual pride**, Jesus refers to a fig tree (Mark 11:13-21). I've often wondered why Jesus' reaction seems so harsh. Well, each season, as a fig tree grows—according to orchard workers in the know—the fruit ripens *before* the foliage fully matures. In Jesus' parable, though it wasn't yet in season, the fig tree already had abundant leaves. Thus, it ought to have had lots of fruit, too! As an illustration to those who do things to look good, not *bring about* good, Jesus curses the fig tree. Those who do things for show ... will wither!

Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

—Hebrews 12:15 (emphasis mine) *NLT*

Next, grapes. Teaching about **spiritual growth**, Jesus refers to a grapevine (John 15:1-8). I've not understood why life is often so painful for those who follow God. Well, in pruning our spiritual lives, what's cut away isn't only unfruitful, dry parts (sin). According to the best vine-growers, what's cut away must be *good, healthy parts* (flowers). In Jesus' parable, though the vine is profuse, it's not as fruitful as it *can* be. Poor pruning causes shallowness (weak roots) and tangles (premature death). Attentive pruning brings rich, sweet fruit ... in our lives and the lives of others. As an illustration to those who think belief is enough, Jesus shows the difference between surviving and *abiding*. Those who want to grow in God lean into tough times, and seek encouragement!



Cultivating a Fruitful Lifestyle

In mid-**November**, Pablo Nazarene hosted a *Christ, Culture and Community* seminar, led by YWAM's Tribal Waves. Taught by a multi-cultural group of friends, the focus was on relevant—sometimes puzzling, often funny—stories of “walking together” in God (aka, “discipleship”). What impressed me most about the four co-leaders was their vulnerability. They shared things that were embarrassing, eye-opening ... and real.

Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much!

—Helen Keller



For me, this recent seminar and a book we read at NAIM's Annual Conference are entwining. Growing in God *can't be* merely individualistic but *must be* communal. Another phrase for it: discipleship”. For those who follow Jesus, “making disciples” (and “being made”) ... *isn't* optional. Those who want to grow in God *must* share fruit with others!

Being fruitful involves inviting people into our everyday life. Cultivating Godly seed requires a messy, step-by-step *walking together*. A daily practice of weeding out our faults and culling others' insights. Discipleship involves shedding light on a humbling display of frequent foibles and moments of truth, turning and trust! Growing in God means cultivating a lifestyle of grace and gratitude.

This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce [fruit], when you mature as my [ie, Jesus'] disciples. ... Make yourselves at home in [God's] love.

—John 15:8, 9 (emphasis mine) *MSG*

Praises and Prayer Requests

LOCAL EVENTS PRAISE! Pablo Nazarene recently hosted a *Christ, Community & Culture* seminar, led by YWAM's Tribal Waves.

REQUEST Please ask God to establish more fruitful work together!

GLOBAL OUTREACH PRAISE! To end **2018**, I put together several boxes for Samaritan's Purse & Operation Christmas Child. Friends at Whitefish Nazarene then contributed to ship them!

SPIRITUAL GROWTH REQUEST Please ask the Good Steward to show me how to make myself at home in His love—and invite others in—even in the midst of mess and uncertainty!



Tara

Give online at www.naim.ca Or, make checks out to NAIM and send to:
PO Box 499, Sumas, WA 98295.

To be a financial Ministry Partner, please designate donations to NAIM **Project #771**.

NAIM staff and the ministries they represent are solely funded through and fully accountable to North America Indigenous Ministries.