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(Pharisaic) Hedges and Fences

By Aleck Cartwright

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Hedges and Fences

Donna, my wife, and I recently moved into a small flat. We have been married for three years and in all that time we had never had a home of our own. We had lived our whole lives as missionaries with no home and no possessions. We travel a lot, all over the world but had been praying for our own space for a long time. God provided a small flat in our little village where we could finally have a two bedroom home and we were overjoyed.

The flat had a little garden in the front and at the back of the house and suited us fine. The house was in varying stages of disrepair and we wondered how much time and money we should spend on fixing it up as we were just renting. In some ways I think it was indicative of how we as Christians are unsure of how involved in the world we should be since we are "just passing through". We relinquish our duty as Christians not willing to engage with the world because we don't think that it is worth it! All the while disregarding the one verse we all know by heart (For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only begotten son... how much more can you invest, than to die for the ones you love?) But that is another story and I could possibly write chapters on it, but we'll leave that for another day.

On that note, we realised that we had a lot of work to do on the little place. We came home from the office and spent every evening cleaning until midnight as it was such a mess! As I said before we had no furniture or any worldly possessions so we had an empty house to fill and we would have to, over the next six months, trust God to fill it with everything we needed!

We would need appliances, cutlery and plates, a sitting room suite, tables, a bed, cupboards, drawers and wardrobes. We also needed to get into the garden which was looking like a jungle! I remember how exhausted I felt coming home from work each day and seeing all the work we still had to do.

I also used to borrow garden equipment from a neighbour. I distinctly remember the first time I cut the hugely overgrown hedge. The neighbours all noticed and commented on the change. The elderly neighbour upstairs was very grateful too. It was amazing how encouraged the neighbourhood was that

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someone had moved in and was actually looking after the property and taking the time to look after the garden.

I realised that pruning hedges makes people stand up and take notice. If people in my neighbourhood are touched by the fact that I cut my hedge, how much more is the world touched by Christ in me on a daily basis through my life. This hedge was a witness in the neighbourhood and was in complete contrast to the previous tenants way of thinking. People noticed and appreciated the effort we made to make our home inviting.

In this small way I realised that people, like children, notice the smallest detail of our lives and can be affected by it both positively and negatively. We have lived in this little flat for seven months now and recently new neighbours moved in to take the place of our elderly friend upstairs, as she went to a

home where she can be better cared for. These new neighbours have an effect on us too. They are very loud and constantly fight and scream obscenities at each other. It has been a loud and hard lesson to learn, but how we live really has an effect on the world we live in and people take notice!

We can either put up hedges which need maintenance and upkeep and are a delight to see when they are cared for or in our lives or we can put up fences which distance us from the world and become a judgement on the world. We all like friends we can relate to and be real with not holier-than-thou people who keep up a façade of holiness. Putting up fences make me less approachable and more unreachable. The Pharisees had many fences to "keep them from sin" and they were fenced in and bound to them and by them.

Pharisees had the most law because they figured that if they did not keep the law they would suffer the consequences of disobeying God. For this reason they decided to make more laws to protect them from being tempted to break the original law of God. If there were grey areas new laws were made to clarify old ones, it was never ending. These laws were to prevent them from coming anywhere close to temptation and gave them a sense of holiness not because they just kept the law of God but also because they were trying to keep the man-made laws that were thought up to keep them as far away from sin as possible!

So in their minds they were holy and blameless above and beyond the law of God. In effect going beyond the call of duty! This sounds good doesn't it? Yet ultimately it turned to bite them in the heel. No one can keep the law of God and that is why we need divine redemption because nothing in us can save us. Humanism will never be salvation to us. The Pharisees started out wanting to please God and ended up displeasing Him because though they had made it harder for themselves to sin against the law they had now nurtured pride for this achievement in their hearts!

Many of us today are just as Pharisaic and want to be noted as spiritual and above reproach, praying longer, studying more diligently, fasting more often and tithing the greatest amounts. There is nothing wrong with any of these things but ultimately what other people see is either hedges or fences in our lives. Both need time invested in them and yet they can conjure up different responses from the world. The differences between hedges and fences is in their motivation, the idea of pleasing God can be executed in two very different ways depending on our focus, either ourselves (selfishness) or God

(Godliness). One is holier than thou and judgemental, demanding that others follow to the letter of the law, and the other is humble and upright but realistic and vulnerable and without care for reputation.

Which one am I building up in my life? Hedges or fences? I think that many times we call a fence a hedge. Time will tell what will survive and last into eternity as an offering dedicated to God and what will just be a work of dedication to self.

My prayer is that God would search my heart and allow me to see the fences that need to be pulled down to make way for hedges.

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Aleck is a missionary and teacher, find out more at www.god-life.com

How To Use Hedges In Landscaping

By Paul Curran

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A hedge that is well kept and attractive can do much for your grounds. Used in the front of the house and on the sides of your lot, hedges are a barrier against traffic, noise and all things unsightly; at the same time they enhance the proportions and general appearance of your house and lawns. And within the boundaries of your property, hedges define paths and walks, demarcate various areas, and help to screen service areas and vegetable gardens.

The plant materials generally used for hedges are mentioned elsewhere in this book. They include the tall background hedges of holly, thorn or wattle; the informal flowering hedges of rose, bridal wreath spirea or barberry; Such evergreens as mugho pine, globe arbor vitae, box or eunonymus (most of which are used as low edgings) and the colorful fruit and-nut hedges of thorn apple, hazlenut, cherry, beach plum, cranberry and quince.

And, of course, there are the formal clipped hedges. Of these, the Amur privet is by far the most widely used. In fact, the privet is used so universally that it is original to choose any of the above for hedging.

How to Plant Hedges

Hedge shrubs must be planted in the same manner as any other

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shrub, with soil preparation all-important to the continued life of the plant. The main consideration here is the spacing and planning of the plants in relationship to each other.

One way to get a straight hedge is to dig a trench the length of your intended hedge, with one side straight and your plants set against this straight wall. The depth of the plant depends on what you are planting, but privet may be set 3 inches deeper than it was before being transplanted.

How far apart the hedge shrubs are set again depends on what shrub it is, as some hedging materials are spreading and bushy. Privet is usually set 1 foot apart; barberry, 9 inches to 1 foot; larger shrubs, 2 to 4 feet.

The way hedges are trimmed has much to do with their health.

While a flat top is neat looking, it is easily damaged by snow and ice accumulating on top. A rounded top is better, therefore, for northern winters. And hedges should be trimmed to slope outward from top to bottom so that the leaves on the bottom also get sun.

Paul Curran is CEO of Cuzcom Internet Publishing Group and webmaster at Trees-and-Bushes.com, providing access to their nursery supplier of a range of quality plants, trees, bushes, shrubs, seeds and garden products.

Visit their site now to find a great selection of hedges for your garden



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