

Jesus has some advice for people who have a hankering for weed-pulling.

In 2009 Toni LaRussa manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, who has four World Series rings and a lock for a future first-ballot pass to Cooperstown was MAD. Somebody had “twitter-jacked” his name. They opened a Twitter account and said some really nasty things about some Cardinals players. LaRussa sued. It is impossible to know the fake from the fraud on twitter. The only thing you can do is get on these social networking sites and register. Knowem.com will help you do that—for Hundreds of dollars! That’s the cost of 21st Century pretenders.

Jesus said we're going to have to put up with the weeds among the wheat, the phonies among the pious, or the sinners among the saints. We can spot the fakes but they are clearly hard to remove. What is the difference?

- * Wheat is in the planted row. It follows the rules. Weeds, on the other hand are unruly.
- * Wheat pretty much all looks the same. Weeds are all completely different.
- * Some weeds are like vines. They cluster and grow along the top of the ground.
- * Some weeds have pretty flowers and are very deceiving.
- * Some weeds grow tall and are clumped into bushes.
- * Some weeds grow like camouflage changing as they grow.
- * Wheat multiplies only by planting. But weeds send seed in the air everywhere.
- * Weeds use wildlife as a host to drop seeds elsewhere.
- * Some weeds spread underground to pop up later.

Comparing Christians to Wheat can be tough also. Many Christians look very different, and trying to get them to agree on something is like trying to herd cats. But in terms of the essentials, in terms of core values, Christians are pretty much the same. We do attempt to follow the rules, to live in the rows, to grow where we're planted, to display the peaceable fruit of righteousness. There is more about Christians that is the same than there are differences that divide.

That aside, evil people destroy the innocent, the greedy steal, and the wicked prey upon children. Some weeds are harder to detect. They look "religious," but act despicable. They condemn persons who are different in lifestyle, nationality, or ethnicity. They burn books of faith that disagree with theirs. I'm remembering a self proclaimed Christian who did that – by the name of Hitler. Some so called Christians do incredibly stupid, evil things in anger or ridicule. But what does Jesus ask us to do? You can see weeds in a wheat field, and Jesus' remarkable advice is to let them be.

A first line of defense in dealing with weeds is to cultivate the fields before the wheat is planted. The ground is *left fallow during the summer months*. When the weeds dry out then the farmer cultivates the ground which enriches it with fresh oxygen and natural fertilizer. Other ways are spray herbicides. This can harm natural predators such as ladybugs, moths, bees and birds. Some chemicals get into the ground harming natural organisms that make fertilizer.

Can we just let things go fallow, uncultivated, and bare? Yes, because Jesus says they'll be taken care of on harvest or judgment day. Among the “children of God” are "children of the evil one" (v. 38). The good news is that Jesus describes this field, which is the "world" (v. 38), as a field of wheat, not as a field of weeds. Jesus sees WHEAT!

So don't be discouraged! The children of God outnumber the weeds. Jesus knew that a strong and thick wheat crop can leave no room for weeds. By shading the ground with thick and healthy wheat, the crop takes away the oxygen and sunlight the weeds need to grow strong.

Are some weeds worse than others? Yes, some weeds are worse. You fight dandelions all weekend, and late Monday afternoon there they are, pert as all get out, in full and gorgeous bloom, pretty as can be, thriving as only dandelions can in the face of adversity.

We all know that Crabgrass can grow on bowling balls in airless rooms, and there is no known way to kill it that does not involve nuclear weapons.

To some people weeds are natural enemies. “(Weeds) know, they just know where to grow, how to dupe you, and how to camouflage themselves among the perfectly respectable plants, they just know, and therefore, I’ve concluded weeds must have brains.”¹ Weeds can suck the water & nutrients from wheat until the heads are small and useless. A bushel of wheat that’s depleted produces less and the farmer loses cash.

Remarkably, Jesus doesn't offer a grand plan for getting rid of the weeds that plague the field of wheat. There's no protocol for waging war on weeds. There are no rules of engagement about marching into a field of wheat to root out the weeds. Certainly, we all can trust that everyone has enough weeding to do in their own garden. We don't need to weed our neighbors' garden either. Let them be.

In fact, Jesus says that we should go about our business. Our job is to be *wheat*, not weeds. We're not called to be the farmer. Rooting up weeds is not part of our job description. We'd like to rain down hellfire and brimstone, but Jesus counsels us otherwise. Wheat farmers say that at harvest the dry weeds will just blow right through the combine.

Be the wheat:

- * Grow in the row in which you were planted.
- * Grow tall and strong and crowd out the weeds.
- * Let your influence shade out or deprive the weeds of sunlight and water they need to survive.
- * Don't be a stalk of wheat in a field by yourself. Grow with others in a community of wheat.
- * No stalk of wheat worries about a weed nearby; the farmer is going to take care of that weed.

God has a plan. God's field of wheat may be bigger than we think. We can trust the plan. Amen Lord. It shall be so.

¹ Dianne Benson, *Dirt* (1994), 128.