



*The Journey*  
Week of 08.08.10

## **Bud Break**

By Sarah Leimer

Last fall we were neck deep in some of our darkest days. Our hopes for our family had shattered and the color had faded from both the landscape outside our windows as well as within our hearts. We had been plunged into a season of life where hope felt not only foreign but forgotten. There was no light or life in our hearts and the months ahead held little promise of relief.

It was during these impossible days, that two dear women came to our home with the intention of planting tangible reminders of hope and praying that it would take root. They arrived on a brisk, drizzly day, sank to their knees in our front flower bed and began digging. Approximately a dozen tulip bulbs were planted into a patch of earth that appeared as barren as our hearts felt. After carefully placing the bulbs inside the earth, they blanketed them with dirt, patted the ground, and departed. To the unsuspecting human eye, the spot appeared just as empty and hopeless as it had before their visit, but the Master Gardner, God, could see nothing but the potential buds, blooms and beauty that lay inches below the surface of the cold, damp soil. Despite our hunger for beauty and renewal during those desperate days, God knew it was not the right season for the bulbs to bloom. He knew that before they could be ready, they had to first go through the harsh winter ahead.

Through the winter months, bitter winds blew; ice and snow covered the ground, temperatures dropped and icicles formed. Our heating bills rose as our tears fell down and all the while, those bulbs remained buried just outside of our window; invisible, quiet and patiently waiting for the season of their purpose to arrive. We watched that tiny patch of earth like we never had before. We were waiting for evidence of growth, for beauty after bleakness, for change after stagnation, for purpose to blossom out of difficulty.

When we experience seasons of drought or “winter” in our souls, just like with flowers, it does not mean that nothing is happening outside of what we can see or feel. God does not squander time or seasons. He does not create and forget. He remains, he tends, he shapes, he develops new branches and grows them in new directions on his vine. He encourages growth through whispers and is patient while he waits for our roots to deepen in him. He allows the harshness of our “winters” to strengthen our branches so they are able to handle the weight of the new fruit he plans to grow on them. He calls us forth out of our darkness into His sunrise. He beckons us toward new beginnings, fresh starts, new possibilities, and increased fruitfulness. He summons us toward hope for plans and purposes greater than we can imagine. He instructs us to remain in him, but beyond that, he whispers deep into our hearts to not just remain, but to grow and better yet, even bloom.

*“And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”*

- Anais Nin

(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. Page numbers refer to "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

## **monday, 08.09**

Read: [John 3:1-8](#) (Pg. 727)

## **tuesday, 08.10**

Read: [Mark 4:1-20](#) (Pg. 686)

## **wednesday, 08.11**

Read: [Luke 13:6-9](#) (Pg. 714)

## **thursday, 08.12**

Read: [Proverbs 3:1-6](#) (Pg. 433), [Proverbs 11:2](#) (Pg. 438)

## **friday-sunday, 08.13-15**

Read: [Jeremiah 17:7-8](#) (Pg. 528)

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**grow** (resources to help you in your study)

**Sunday's Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or here for [video](#)

**go** (action steps)

- **prayer?** Please send us an email by clicking [here](#)
- **care?** Do you need to talk with someone? Please call us at 913.341.5820 ext. 330
- **go**—Sign up to serve: email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **grow**—Join a small group, a 1:1 spiritual mentorship, or find about the many other [ways to grow](#)
- **give**—click [here](#) to make an online gift to Heartland and learn how you can set up recurring gifts

Small Group/ 1:1 Question Samplers:

1. How did you respond to Pieter's questions in his message:
  - Am I vitally connected to Christ as the branch is to the vine?
  - Am I paying attention to the instructions of the vinedresser?
  - Am I accessing the community of love that provides that necessary spectrum of support?
2. Where do you see evidence of new growth budding in your life?
3. Per Sunday's message, there are things that threaten or inhibit the vineyard's new growth, the budding grapes. What might inhibit or be a threat to your spiritual growth?