



# Parable

## OF THE POTATO WEED

*When I realized I had let the weeds in my garden grow out of control, I learned an important lesson about daily repentance.*

By Larry Pearson

One autumn I discovered a weed in my garden that I thought looked just like the potato plants that surrounded it. When I pulled the weed, hundreds of little seeds burst from it and fell to the ground. “I hope they don’t sprout next year,” I thought.

Unfortunately, they did. By early in the season the weed had reproduced innumerable times. Even though the weeds looked to me like potato plants when they were mature, as young seedlings they were easy to distinguish and pull. I knew that if I didn’t remove them, I would pay the price again the next year, so nearly every morning I carefully weeded to protect my potatoes.

Later in the spring, I neglected weeding for a couple of weeks. When I returned to the task, everything looked good to me. It seemed as though I had finally conquered the enemy weeds. But months later at harvesttime, when I lifted the leaves of my potatoes, my heart sank. I spotted the same little flowers from the weed that had mixed with my potatoes the year before. I lifted more leaves only to discover that it had spread everywhere.

I had missed the opportunity to eradicate the weed. I followed the weed’s vine to the ground, pulled it (as well as the many potatoes with which it was entwined) out of the ground, and rolled it into one great big ball. The ball was so enormous that it took two people to lift it into a large garbage container. And of course, as we rolled it, the weed

seeds burst everywhere—seeds that would cause problems the following year.

All of this because I failed to be diligent for a mere two-week period.

In the gardens of our lives, weeds are always present. Some are small seedlings that don’t immediately do damage. Prophets of God have told us, however, that we need a daily reckoning of our lives, a frequent removal of all those weeds to keep them from overpowering us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles commented on repentance, saying that it is “too little understood, too little applied by us all, as if it were merely a word on a bumper sticker. Since we have been told clearly by Jesus what manner of men and women we ought to become—even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27)—how can we do so, except each of us employs repentance as the regular means of personal progression?”<sup>1</sup>

I learned from my experience with the weeds that when we allow things to go unchecked, small problems can grow into enormous sins that cannot be removed without tremendous effort. I am grateful for the principle of repentance. I am trying every day to identify small errors and sins, weed them out, and in small steps become more like our Savior. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTE

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 30.

