



# OPINION

## Building Check

This has been a hard winter! Snow, high winds, heavy rain, cold temperatures, and flooding have all taken their toll on buildings and farmsteads. Many buildings may be damaged but still look okay from the outside. An important spring activity will be to inspect all buildings, including silos, for hidden damage. Roof rafters may have cracked from heavy snow or wind but may not be obvious from the outside. Foundations or poles may have been undercut by flood waters or overflowing roof gutters but be covered with other debris. Major parts of buildings such as an "L" or lean-to may have been shifted from the force of high winds.

You can tell a lot by performing your own thorough inspection or retain a qualified engineer or builder. Expect to pay for an inspection. Beware of casual people stopping by from out of the area trying to rush you into repairs or replacements. Don't be afraid to get a second or third opinion. If the problem can't be explained to your understanding, look elsewhere for more help.

To do a good inspection you need a high powered light (large bright flashlight, portable vehicle search light or high intensity work light). Be careful of fire when using high powered lights around hay or in dusty locations; these lights get very hot! You can also get severe burns from touching the reflector housing. A ladder is needed to get into attic spaces and to get closer to support beam connections. A pair of binoculars will help you look at high areas. A long screwdriver or ice pick is handy for poking at suspect areas, and a hammer can be used to detect cracked beams and joists:

Look for anything that is abnormal:

- Cracked or broken rafters, beams, poles, or support walls.
- Movement of joints such as truss plates and where trusses or rafters rest on walls and beams.
- Shifting or sliding of walls on foundations.
- Gaps around the base of poles between the ground and the pole.
- Bends and bows in rafters or beams.
- Poles, posts, or trusses that are out of plumb.
- Loose roof sheets, singles, or sidewall panels.

Take the time and money to inspect and repair your buildings while the ravages of this winter are fresh in your mind. It's cheaper to do it now than wait for the building to fall down during a summer thunderstorm or under next winter's heavy snows. The value of a couple of cows, pieces of machinery, or especially a human life is not worth taking a chance! — Robert E. Graves, Agricultural and Biological Engineering Extension, Penn State.



### To Improve Yields

Robert Anderson, extension agronomy agent, offers the following steps to improve crop yields and profitability in 1996:

1. Soil tests. They point out how much nutrients are present and recommended application rates for crop yield goals. They also help identify where fertilizer costs may be reduced.

2. Select hybrid and varieties based on performance. Use test comparisons that are done close to home under conditions and management similar to yours.

3. Practice patience. Do not be in a big hurry to get into the field in the spring. Wait until soil conditions are favorable. Soil compaction will rob yields. Plant as early as possible but only under favorable soil conditions. If soil conditions are unfavorable, keep the seed in the bag.

4. Check equipment before heading to the field. Late winter maintenance which replaces broken and worn parts will decrease the amount of down time during planting.

5. Harvest at optimum time. Timely harvesting reduces drying costs and minimizes field losses.

### To Plant Seeds Properly

Some additional planting tips from Robert Anderson, extension agronomy agent, to help increase yields and profits are:

1. Slow the planter down. Research has shown that the difference between planting corn at seven miles per hour compared to five miles per hour may be as much as 10 to 15 bushels per acre less of

harvested corn.

2. Plant enough seed. The most consistent variable in yields is plant populations. Research at Penn State shows that corn yields are highest when plant population approaches 28 to 30 thousand plants per acre.

3. Plant uniformly. Adjust the planter so that each seed is planted at the optimum depth. Planting some seeds deep and others shallow often affects when plants emerge and later when they pollinate.

4. Calibrate the plant metering systems. Over- or underapplying an insecticide or fertilizer may affect both yields and cost.

5. Constantly check to see that seeds are being placed properly and that the planter is closing the furrow and packer wheels are firming the seed bed.

### To Select Seeds For The Garden

According to Dr. Tim Elkner, extension horticultural agent, one

of the most important traits to look for in flower or vegetable seeds is disease resistance.

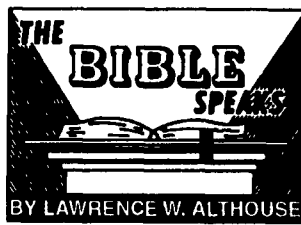
This is especially true if you have been having a problem with a particular disease in the last few years.

Read the individual seed variety descriptions closely for mention of resistance to disease or look for capital letters such as F or V next to variety names. These letters signify resistance to particular diseases and are usually found with tomatoes.

By planting resistant varieties, you can reduce the time and expense required for pesticide sprays. Also, resistant varieties allow you to grow plants where there may be soilborne wilt diseases that you cannot spray for.

This protection is part of the plant's genetic makeup. You do not need to do anything special to receive this benefit.

*Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "Celebrate what makes you different. Be yourself and respect the uniqueness of others."*



AN UNINTENDED SECRET  
March 3, 1996

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### Background Scripture:

Matthew 13:1-12

### Devotional Reading:

Matthew 13:10-17

Does God want us to understand the gospel, or is it intended to be a message for some and a mystery to others?

There are passages in the New Testament that can give rise to the latter conclusion. One of these sources is in Matthew 13 where Jesus is asked by his disciples why he speaks to the crowds in parables, and he replies, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away." Jesus also goes on to quote Isaiah: "You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive..."

One might conclude from the above that it is God's will for only a few select to truly understand the gospel, while the rest must be content with something more superficial. The gospel would thus be essentially a "secret" to be grasped only by a chosen few. But if we examine this passage more carefully, we will see that this is not the meaning. The gospel is a secret, but that is not God's will. It remains a secret only because of our own receptivity.

### SOW, DON'T WORRY!

Jesus told this parable for two audiences, the inner circle of disciples and the crowds. To the disciples he was saying that like the sower, they were to spread the seed of the good news of the kingdom and not to worry about the results. Some people would hear and respond, while others would not. Be glad that some receive it and don't worry about those who do not. This is God's concern, not ours. This is God's concern, not ours. That's a good teaching for all those who work at communi-

cating the gospel. I long ago decided that here were enough people who would respond to my efforts that I need not worry about those who did not. Concentrate on those receptive and leave the rest to God.

Jesus was also speaking to the crowds with this parable, saying that their understanding was determined by their receptivity. Some heard the message but didn't try to understand it. Others heard it, but they didn't let it attain any depth in their lives. Others heard it gladly but they let other things take precedence and choke it out of their lives.

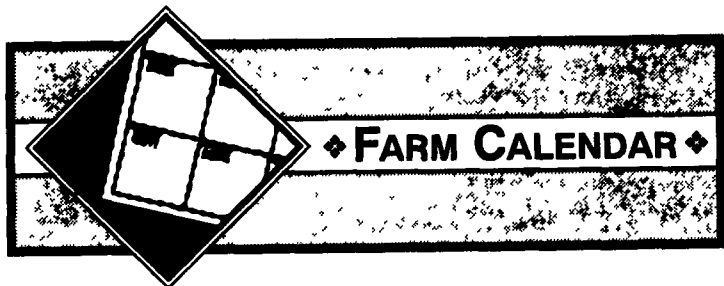
### LISTEN UP!

When God calls someone to sow the gospel, he doesn't intend to take root in just some and not others. Still that's what happens if we are not receptive. Some of us, like those of whom Jesus was speaking, don't understand. Some of us don't let the gospel attain any depth in our lives. We may go through the motions, but we don't let it go to that level of our lives where it determines how we live. And there are some of us who permit the gospel to be choked out of our lives because, although we are glad to hear it, we are too stuck on other things: success, money, power, and our own egos.

Nor are Isaiah's words meant to indicate that God intends us to be ignorant of the gospel. They are sarcastic: you have ears, but you're not listening; eyes, but you aren't looking. And when Jesus says that those who have will get more and those who do not will lose what they have, he is challenging us to use what we have. If you don't want to lose it, you've got to use it.

So, if the gospel is a "secret" to us, it is not intended to be. It is a "secret" only because we choose to let it be.

*The Althouses will lead a group to the Holy Land, Oct. 9 to Nov. 2, 1996. Space is limited. For information, write them at 4412 Shenandoah Ave., Dallas, TX 75205.*



- Saturday, March 2**
- Ninth Annual Fellowship of Christian Farmers Outreach Luncheon, Wilhelm Ltd., Westminster, Md., noon-2:30 p.m.
  - Dauphin County Livestock Banquet, Ag and Natural Resources Center, 7 p.m.
  - Northeast Regional Produce Marketing Seminar, Holiday Inn, Bartonsville, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Sunday, March 3**

    - National DHIA annual meeting, Kansas City, Mo., thru March 5.

**Monday, March 4**

      - Pesticide review and exam, Clarion County Extension Office, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., also March 5.
      - Cornell Conference on Dairy Marketing and Product Research, Syracuse, N.Y., 8 a.m.
      - Dairy information meeting, Holiday Inn, Waterloo, N.Y., 7:30 p.m.
      - 1996 Crops Clinic, Penn State Schuylkill Campus, 9 a.m.-3

- Tuesday, March 5**
- Solanco Young Farmers meeting, Udder Health, Solanco High School.
  - Christmas tree meeting, Lebanon Valley Ag Center.
  - Bedford County Holstein annual meetings, Northern Bedford H.S., Loysburg, 7 p.m.
  - Schuylkill County Crops Clinic, Conference Center, Penn State Schuylkill Campus, Schuylkill Haven, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
  - Strawberry School, Berks County Ag Center, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
  - Dairy-MAP, financial module, Walker Township Municipal Building, Bellefonte, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
  - Lancaster County Dairy Day, Part II, Farm and Home Center.
  - Cedar Crest FFA annual banquet/member banquet, Cedar Crest Middle School, 7 p.m.
  - Tractor Safety Training Workshops, Lehigh County Ag Center, Allentown, 7:30 p.m., continues March 12, 19, and 26 and April 2 and 9.

- U. of Del. Field Crops Meeting,** Townsend Fire Hall, Townsend, Del., 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
- Managing Food Processing Residuals Seminar,** Pa. Game Commission Building, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Nutrient Management Workshop,** computer workshops, Penn State, University Park, also March 7 and 9.
- Wednesday, March 6**
- Pa. Grazing Conference, The Embers Inn, Carlisle, thru March 7.
  - Dairy-MAP, Managing For Success, Venango County Extension office, 9:45 a.m.-3 p.m., also March 13.
  - Potato Day, Schnecksville Grange, Schnecksville, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
  - Ag Outlook meeting, Gettysburg Junior High School, 7:30 p.m.
  - Regional Fruit School, Orchard Floor Management, Penn State Fruit Research Center, Biglerville, thru March 7.
  - Tractor Safety Training Program, Crawford/Eric County, Ag Service Center, Waterford, 6:30
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