

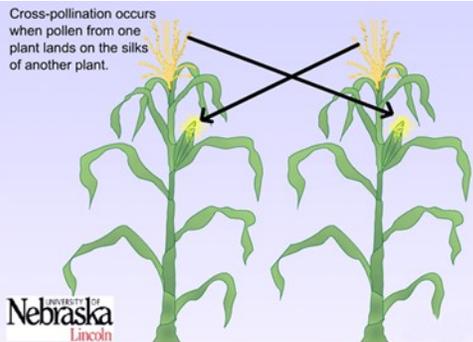


FRANKLIN ROAD

baptist church

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CROSS-POLLINATION



PASTOR ANDY AND I WERE RECENTLY TALKING ABOUT GARDENING. THE JOHNSTONS ARE ACTIVE GARDENERS AND WE ARE FORMER GARDENERS. OUR TOPIC WAS THAT OF GROWING CORN. THE JOHNSTONS LIKE TO GROW INDIAN CORN TO USE FOR DECORATION IN THE FALL BUT WERE ALSO THINKING ABOUT PLANTING SWEET CORN TO ENJOY LATER THIS SUMMER. THEREIN LIES A PROBLEM.

THE FIRST YEAR WE PLANTED INDIAN CORN AND SWEET CORN I PUT THEM IN ROWS RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER. WHAT I DIDN'T REALIZE IS THAT OUR SWEET CORN WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE INDIAN CORN AND VICE VERSA. WE ENDED UP WITH SWEET CORN THAT HAD SOME HARD AND DARK KERNELS INTERMINGLED WITH THE GOOD ONES AND INDIAN CORN THAT HAD PALE YELLOWISH-WHITE KERNELS AMID THE OTHERWISE COLORFUL ONES. I LEARNED THAT THE CAUSE OF THIS KERNEL CONFUSION IS THE RESULT OF CROSS-POLLINATION. AS THE PICTURE AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE ILLUSTRATES, THE POLLEN ON THE TASSEL OF ONE CORN VARIETY FELL ON THE SILK OF THE OTHER WHICH CAUSED EACH VARIETY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE OTHER AND NEITHER ENDED UP BEING WHAT IT WAS EXPECTED TO BE. THAT YEAR WE DIDN'T HAVE GOOD SWEET CORN OR INDIAN CORN.

I THINK THERE'S A SPIRITUAL LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS AGRICULTURAL REALITY. IN OUR EFFORTS TO EVANGELIZE AND AFFECT THE WORLD WE CAN SOMETIMES GET SO CLOSE TO THEM THAT IT'S HARD TO TELL WHO IS AFFECTING WHOM. THE CHRISTIAN'S INTENTIONS ARE NOBLE BUT THE RESULTS CAN BE DISASTROUS. THE UNBELIEVER HAS SOME CHRISTIAN CONTENT BUT NO SALVATION AND THE CHRISTIAN HAS THEIR SALVATION BUT LITTLE SANCTIFICATION. NEITHER ARE WHAT THEY WERE INTENDED TO BE.

BELIEVERS ARE WARNED "LOVE NOT THE WORLD" (1 JOHN 2:15) AND JESUS PRAYED THAT WE WOULD BE "KEPT FROM THE EVIL ONE." (JOHN 17:15). PSALM 119:1 INDICATES THAT THE BLAMELESS ARE BLESSED AND JAMES 4:4 INFORMS US THAT FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS HOSTILITY TOWARD GOD.

SO WHAT'S THE SOLUTION TO THE CROSS-POLLINATION PROBLEM? PLANT THE CORN IN THE SAME GARDEN BUT NOT NEXT TO EACH OTHER. KEEP THEM SEPARATED BUT NOT ISOLATED. I THINK THE THESSALONIANS HAD IT RIGHT WHEN PAUL INDICATES THAT THEY WERE EXEMPLARY AMONG BELIEVERS AS THOSE WHO WERE SOUNDING FORTH THE WORD OF THE LORD TO THOSE ALL AROUND THEM. SEE 1 THESSALONIANS 1:7-8. THEY WERE INFLUENCING THE UNSAVED BUT NOT BEING AFFECTED BY THEM.

MIGHT WE BE A CHURCH THAT EFFECTIVELY EVANGELIZES THE LOST WITHOUT BEING AFFECTED BY THEM.

LOOKING UP,
PASTOR CHUCK CIRCLE