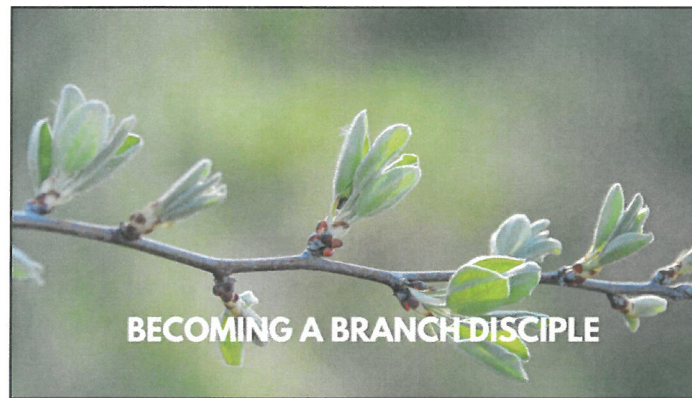


Becoming a Branch Disciple / By: Nick Wise



Have you ever heard the Dallas Willard quote, “Grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning”?

While I’m certainly inclined to agree, I also used to lean on this as a sort of “just cause” for my constant striving to be a better follower of Jesus. It wasn’t to earn favor from God or salvation from Him, so it’s good, right? I should strive to be like Jesus!

So I did that. I worked my butt off trying to be more loving, more kind, more joyful, more at peace, more gentle, etc. And you know where I found myself?

Tired and wanting.

Tired and wanting. Anybody resonate with that one?

About 18 months ago, as a full-time Discipleship Pastor, I started to feel some tension as I worked hard to become like Christ: I agree with Willard; effort is not wrong, but this effort thing doesn’t seem to be working, only wearing me down. If anything, I was feeling less joyful, less kind, less gentle, less patient. I was going backwards! And so I did all I knew how to do... try harder! More effort! Sin is a tough enemy! If I was going to become like Jesus—which I was determined to do—I was going to have to put my back into it.

You can probably guess where that left me.

Tired and wanting. Again.

Jesus said something in Matthew 11 about an easy yoke and a light burden. But I’ll tell you what: if that’s the case, He must have been really strong because this yoke did NOT feel easy, and the burden definitely didn’t feel light.

Then, thanks to the Holy Spirit and some friends further along in the journey of discipleship, I saw my mistake: I wasn’t being a branch.

In John 15:4–5, Jesus says,
“Abide in me, as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

Paul echoes this idea in his letter to the church in Galatia:

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22–25 (emphasis mine)

We cannot miss this!

Several other places throughout the New Testament get at this concept:

The fruit belongs to the Lord.

To put it in Willard’s framework—grace isn’t opposed to effort, but what is the effort toward?

Is it toward bearing fruit?

Or letting the Holy Spirit do it?

Friends, the fruit has always been His. All good things come from Him. I’m sure this isn’t totally new information, but I would argue that many of us have been living a life of discipleship that reads Galatians 5 as the fruit of the disciple rather than the fruit of the Spirit.

The yoke becomes much easier, and the burden much lighter, when our effort is not toward fruit, but toward submission.

We were never meant to be the vine, just a branch. Becoming like Jesus, the goal of discipleship, happens when we remain in Christ and allow Him to do the transforming. Sanctification is the work of God, not us.

So, I encourage you this week to sit down with the Lord and pray this short, simple prayer:

Father, I repent of striving to do what only You can do. Help me to submit to You and listen to Your voice. Help me be dependent on You. I only want to do what I see You doing. Holy Spirit, come. Amen.

As you pray this prayer and abide in Him, I’d like to offer you a few other verses to encourage you. I pray that the Spirit renews you with their words...

“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23

“But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13

“...and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Galatians 2:20

“who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood”

1 Peter 1:2

“I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

Blog Article from:

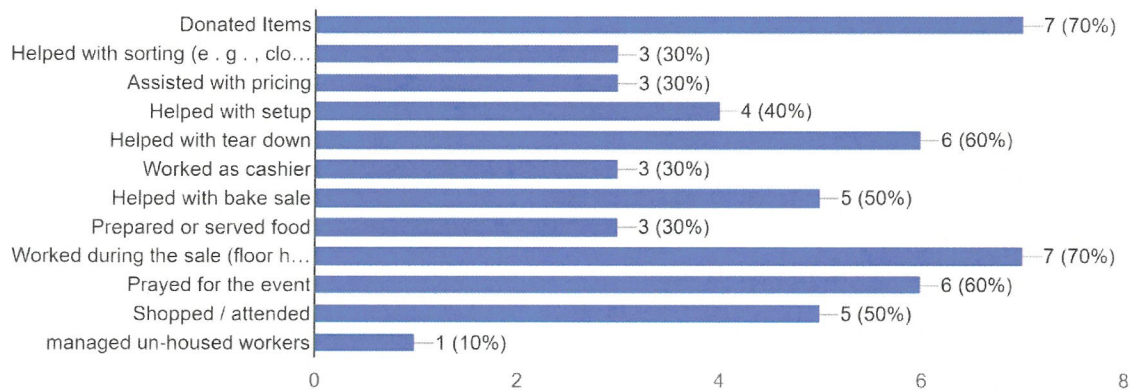
<https://discipleship.org/blog/becoming-a-branch-disciple/>

August 2026 newsletter

Greetings! As promised, we are sharing data related to the yard sale results and your opinions: Ten respondents have completed surveys related to the yard sale. A summary follows:

1. How Did You Participate In The Yard Sale? (check All That Apply).

10 responses



2. Do you have a story or moment from the yard sale that stood out to you?

9 responses

The Bobby story (from Woodbury)

Bobby!

I got to know sherry and bobby so nice to talk too and laugh with

Too little help from outreach group/neighbors

Seeing children light up when they found treasures

The urge to help as we struggled against time

No

Kids enjoyed shopping, often thinking of who they could get things for and not always just themselves

Working alongside bobby and sherry allowed me to get to know them on a different level.

Note: The "Bobby story" referenced above tells of a yard sale participant who experienced a providential reunion with his daughter. Our friend Bobby Sowell had been separated from his daughter for several weeks. She lives near the Warren/Cannon County line and had been searching for him since they parted ways. Then, at just the right moment, Bobby walked onto the back porch of the outreach building as his daughter happened to drive by still looking for him. With the help of her concerned boyfriend, Bobby and his daughter were reunited. Bobby is now housed with his daughter, where he is grateful to be. Since that providential encounter, First UMC has been blessed to welcome Bobby Sowell in worship several times, along with his

future son-in-law on one occasion. This is a story of grace and God's provision, and we hope it blesses all who hear it with the reminder that God is still in the business of restoring families!

3. The most challenging moments of the yard sale were when:

8 responses

Getting the recipients to actually help out some were wonderful

Too few volunteers for set-up, tear down and managing help

People bringing items late day before sale and worse the day of and having to drop everything to price

Sorting & setup with too few help

Having a few people do all the work

The rain

Help loading large items

When certain individuals perceived entitlement did not match their work performance.

4. If We Have Another Yard Sale, We Could Improve By:

9 responses

Do not involve Tena in any way she is overwhelmed as it is and needs no extra work - she was treated badly by some recipients

not having another one

refusing (double stress way ahead) that we will not accept items the day of sale and think to it sorting item as received

not selling clothes a lot of the time was spent on clothes wares , furniture , linens , etc. but no clothes

do it at the first of the month

don't take in donations that is junk no tires

label clothing racks - sort by size

Management and monitoring of our workers who will be recipients of the proceeds. It was observed that some individuals would work the clock, but were not actively assisting.

5. Instead Of a Yard Sale, We Could Achieve Similar Results By:

4 responses

Car wash

I don't know, but I'm willing to research

Fundraising is hard - competing with schools , sports , etc. I like the yard sale because we interact with church members (picks up stuff) & interacting with the community it might help to have stuff sitting outside to sell - people driving by would see it (did that in past) and more signs outside

Work on the church property or in the community that is monitored and role modeled by volunteers.

1. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Spiritual Connection					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt connected to God while preparing for the yard sale.			8	2	
I felt connected to God during the two days of the yard sale.			7	2	
The involvement of participating neighbors (those earning support) was meaningful and respectful.	3	1		4	2

Organization & Volunteer Experience					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I had a clear understanding of my role.	1	2		3	2
Donations were easy to drop off and organize.	1		3	3	1
The time required was reasonable given the impact.	3	3	1	1	

Funds & Purpose					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident in how the proceeds will be used.	2		2	1	4
I would like more information about how funds are distributed.	1	1	1	2	2
I understand how the yard sale directly supports our unsheltered/financially distressed neighbors.	1	1	2	3	3

Future Support					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would be willing to help again next year.	3	2	1	1	1
The yard sale positively impacted our community beyond the church.	1	1	3	2	3
The yard sale was worthwhile.	2	2	2	3	1
The yard sale was more trouble than it was worth.	1	1	2	3	2
I would support having a similar purpose-driven yard sale next year.	3	2	2	1	2

Yard Sale Disbursements

For transparency, yard sale proceeds have been disbursed as follows. To date, 17 recipients have redeemed \$4,492.24 in proceeds. (This total was calculated using Microsoft Copilot).

Redeemed proceeds have supported:

- Transportation needs, including car payments and fuel.
- Basic household and personal items purchased through the yard sale, including clothing, furniture, and a cooking grill.
- Legal and court-related obligations, including court fines and court-ordered classes such as anger management.
- Housing-related needs, including apartment rent, essential lawn mowing at public housing, renters' insurance, and a storage unit payoff to eliminate a recurring monthly bill.
- Bad debt reduction & elimination of predatory high-cost loans such as furniture rental agreements.
- Prescription medicine and Walmart gift cards restricted to charitable use. Gift cards could not be used for alcohol or tobacco products.

Additional reimbursements and repayments:

- HOME was reimbursed \$125 for lodging one participant.
- One contributor used proceeds to repay a previous church loan.

Coming soon: Wednesday night Bible study covering John 15-17 will begin the end of August.



Please be in prayer for our Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee as they evaluate vacant staff positions.

In Christ,
Ryan Heatherly



Start with something. Choose one or two easy changes to make, perhaps swapping single-use water bottles for a reusable one or refusing plastic bags. Commit to your action and allow it to lead you to another “something” you can do for Earth.

Work together. Join or create a local effort, perhaps to clean up a waterway or to help plant a pollinator garden. Or donate to a large-scale organization that can use your support to make a greater difference.

Stay ambitious. The goal is big change. Start with a small action, but keep your eyes, mind, and heart open to opportunities that move you—and those with you—closer to what you desire for the sake of Earth and all its inhabitants.

Act for the good of all. Individual actions have a collective impact. For example, when one person installs solar panels or buys an EV, it signals that renewable energy is desirable. When more individuals buy in, that creates demand, which drives down cost, expands investment, creates jobs, and pressures politicians to deliver for their constituents. Apply the same principle to all the places you can act for good.

If a move is on your timetable, flatten any shipping boxes you receive and store them for when you need to start packing. If you’ve just moved, advertise through your networks to find someone who can **use the boxes again.**

Use and reuse the same natural fiber dryer balls 1,000-plus times instead of single-use, chemical-laden dryer sheets. Think of the difference for your wallet, your health, and the landfill.

For packed lunches for school, purchase foodstuffs in the largest package available and then **divvy them out into reusable containers** for the day. Avoid the trash of “snack size” packaging that adds to the landfill, teach your children an alternative to the throw-away culture, and empower them to do something good for the environment.

Change your light habits. To save money and Earth, transition to LED bulbs. Also, engage the whole family in turning off lights when they are not in use. This easy practice is a reminder to care for Earth in other actions too.

Avoid the toxic trio: food, plastic, and heat. Do not cook meals in a sealed plastic bag. Don’t heat up leftovers in plastic in the microwave. The heat releases chemicals from the plastic into the food you consume.

Tree planting season (September–March) is coming. Now is the time to **investigate potential tree sources** and planting services, including local government, nonprofit foundations, and nursery businesses. Trees pull down carbon from the atmosphere and nourish the soil, provide habitat and food for birds and other pollinators, and give shade in the summer and allow sun in the winter, reducing the need for fossil fuel energy.

WARREN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.

Farmer's Market Senior Nutrition Program

Vouchers are available for pick up at 1410 Sparta Street Suite 21 from 8:00am - 4:30pm.

Need to be age 60 or older and provide ID, Warren Co. Resident (proof by bringing piece of mail with your address), and proof of income.



FREE EVENT

Join us for a **Community Baby Shower** on Friday, August 7th from 10AM - 1PM. Hosted by The Warren County Health Dept. at Three Star Mall on 1410 Sparta St., McMinnville, TN 37110. For expectant Mothers, new Mothers, and Families.



Early Voting from July 17 - August 1, 2026 at Warren County Election Commission on 201 Locust St. Suite 3 in McMinnville. (931) 473-5834

Federal/State Primaries for US Senate; US House 4th & 6th District; TN State House of Representative 43rd District; Warren County General Election - Countywide offices.



HYGIENE ITEMS NEEDED FOR WCHS STUDENTS:

I am again asking for feminine and hygiene products for WCHS students. I am in need of pads and tampons specifically but can also use deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste. Thank you so much for your help in the past. It has made a world of difference for our students. You can bring items to the church office or give directly to Dana Mullican at early service.

THANK YOU TO PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Thank you for the beautiful shawl and prayer crosses. This touched my heart. Our family will cherish them in years ahead. Please continue to keep us in your prayers. Losing Mike "Big Pa" has left a huge hole in our hearts. Each day is a struggle not having him with me, but we know he is in no more pain and present with the Lord.

In Christian Love,
Sheila and the family of Mike Young "Big Pa"

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Thank you so much for the shawl and the cross squares. It was so nice of you to think of me at the loss of my husband.

We love Beth, Ryan and Hudson so much and pray for your church.

Beth's Aunt Patsy Jones

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMORIAL GIFTS

To: General Fund & Local Expenses

In Memory of: Marsha Jacobs

Given By: Louise Brown, Ronnie & Debbie Dunham

Good Neighbors Cooks & Driver Schedule

Aug 6

Cook: Mac

Route 1: Sandlin

Route 2: Sub

Route 3: Sandlin

Route 4: Young

Route 5: Alsbrook

Aug 20

Cook: Brock's

Route 1: Sandlin

Route 2: Sub

Route 3: Miller

Route 4: Dodson

Route 5: Alsbrook



We can always use drivers, lead cooks, and team helpers to prepare and pack the meals. Contact Kate Alsbrook if you can serve on a team or drive a route.

(931) 273-4329

Calendar

Sunday, August 2 from 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Youth Director Interviews

Sunday, August 2 @ 5:00pm

SPPRC meeting to evaluate interviews

Monday, August 3 from 10am - 2pm

Blood Assurance Blood Drive in Parking Lot

Wednesday, August 5 @ 6:00pm

Deborah Bible Study

Thursday, August 6

Good Neighbors

Monday, August 10

Prayer Shawl Meeting @ 10:00am

Tuesday, August 11 @ 10:00am

Staff Meeting

Thursday, August 13 @ 10:00am

Shepherding Team Meeting

Saturday, August 15 @ 8:00pm

Gilley Pool Party and Movie with McMinnville Parks and Recreation. Admission is \$5.00. Movie will be *The Lion King* from 2019.

Wednesday, August 19 @ 5:00pm

Wednesday night meal & activities resume.

Thursday, August 20

Good Neighbors



Wednesday, August 19: Wednesday night meal & activities resume.

We need volunteers to continue our Wednesday night meals. We need a team leader with several volunteers for each team to plan the meal, do the shopping, set up, prepare the meal, and clean up after the meal each Wednesday night. We hope to have enough volunteers so each team only has to do it once a month. Contact the church office, hospitality chair, Lucinda Smith or Pastor Ryan if you are available to volunteer and serve as a team leader or support person on a team.



AUGUST



Birthdays & Anniversaries

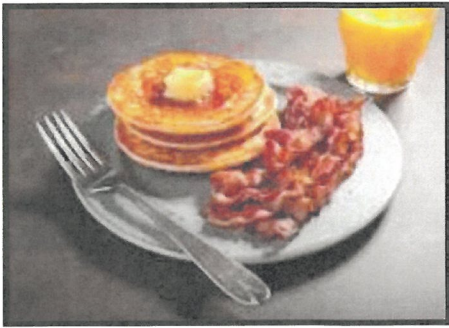
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 David & Julie Holt
2 SPPRC Meeting 5:00pm	3 Blood Assurance 10-2 in CCC Parking Lot	4	5 Deborah Bible Study @ 6:00pm	6 Bryan & Melinda Miller Good Neighbors	7	8
9 Will Davis	10 Dennis Kronlage Prayer Shawl 10:00am	11 Staff Meeting 10:00am	12 Evie Hodges	13 Shepherding Team Meeting 10:00am	14 Jack Phillips	15
16	17 Sheila Younglove	18	19 Charlotte Hamby Wed. Night Meal @ 5pm & Activities @ 6 pm Resume	20 Good Neighbors	21 Whit Taylor Susan Gulick	22
23 Woody Woodiel	24 Barry Medley	25	26 Tina Walker Stacie Harris Meal @ 5pm Adult Bible Study & Children/Youth @ 6pm	27	28	29 John White
30	31					

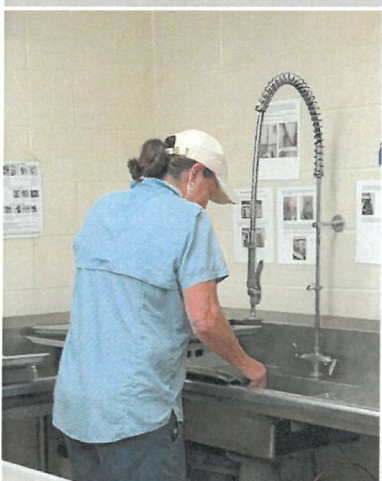
WARREN COUNTY SCHOOLS
One Team. One Goal. High levels of learning for all.

August 26							September 26							08/03/26		Registration Day Abbreviated 7:45-9:45 (No Buses)		
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	08/04/26		No Students		
						1			1	2	3	4	5	08/05/26		First Day for Students		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	09/07/26		Labor Day (No School)		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	09/18/26		Fair Day (No School)		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	09/29/26		Parent/Teacher Conference WCHS 3:00-6:00pm		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30				October 5-9, 2026 - Fall Break (No School)				
30	31													10/12/26		Teacher Professional Development (Stockpiled Day-No Students)		
October 26							November 26							11/05/26		Parent/Teacher Conference Middle School/ Warren Connect 3:00-6:00pm		
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	11/12/26		Parent/Teacher Conference PreK-5 & PreK-8 Elementary Schools 3:00-6:00pm		
					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	November 23-27, 2026 -Thanksgiving Break (No School)			
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	12/18/26		Abbreviated Day 7:45-9:45 (Buses will run)		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	End First Semester				
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	December 21- January 1, 2026 - Holiday Break (No School)				
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30						01/04/27		Teacher Professional Development (Stockpiled Day-No Students)		
December 26							January 27							01/05/27		Students Return from Holiday Break		
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	01/18/27		Martin Luther King Day (No School)		
									1	2	3	4	5	6	01/26/27		Parent/Teacher Conference Middle School / Warren Connect 3:00-6:00pm	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	01/28/27		Parent/Teacher Conference PreK-5 & Prek-8 Elementary Schools 3:00-6:00pm	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	02/15/27		Presidents Day (No School)	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	03/10/27		Parent/Teacher Conference WCHS 3:00-6:00pm	
27	28	29	30	31			27	28	29	30					March 22-26, 2027 -Spring Break (No School)			
January 27							February 27							TBA		Pre-K and K Screening location		
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	5/6/27 – 5/13/27		Kindergarten and 8 th Grade Promotion Window		
					1	2			1	2	3	4	5	6	05/14/27		High School Graduation	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	05/20/27		Teacher Professional Development (Stockpiled Day-No Students)		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	05/21/27		Last Day of School Abbreviated 7:45am-9:45am (Buses will run)		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	End 2nd Semester				
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30									
31																		
March 27							April 27											
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa					
	1	2	3	4	5	6						1	2	3				
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17					
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24					
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22												
23	24	25	26	27	28	29												
30	31																	



First United Methodist Church
Annual 4th of July Breakfast





**The Pancake Breakfast raised approximately \$1,181 for the FUEL program.
Thanks to everyone who volunteered and helped with the event.**

Pray. Love. Praise. and Share



ROTARY RIVER CLEAN UP



VBS: July 25, 2026 Snowball Mountain Challenge



