

Are You A Tree Or A Post? **By Tommy Thornhill**

This question may seem strange to you, but there is a good lesson to be learned in the answer. As a young man, my family maintained a small herd of cows. One of my brothers and I milked about four of them each day for milk, but we also raised a few for beef. We kept these cows in a fenced in pasture. From time to time some of the posts holding up the fence had to be replaced because they were rotten. They would fall over and cause the fence to sag where the cows could get out. This was a source of aggravation to me, since I had to round up the cows that got out, and then fix the fence. This required both time and work. You know how kids enjoy such things. I sometimes wished the posts would be like the trees so they wouldn't have to be replaced.

What made the difference? Think! Plant a post and a tree in the ground side by side. At the beginning the tree is small, slender and easily bent or broken. The post, on the other hand, is large, solid and strong. It is hard to move and will support a fence.

But then the forces of nature take over. The tree begins to grow little by little, gradually becoming bigger and stronger. In a few years it stands tall and sturdy, while the post planted at the same time has rotted and fallen down.

What made the difference between the tree and the post? One was dead and the other was alive. The tree, being alive, continued to develop and mature. That is why it got stronger with time. On the other hand, the post was dead, and the ravages of time caused it to become weaker until it collapsed.

Now, the application. What about those of us who claim to be Christians? Are we like the tree or the post? If our religious life is dead, like the post, then we will surely grow weaker year by year, until we finally fall away. But, if we are truly alive in Christ, then the passing years will see us grow stronger and more mature than in the beginning.

As Christians we have been made alive by the regenerating power of the blood of Christ (Titus 3:5). Afterward, real spiritual life in us is maintained by fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit (1John 1:1-7).

Recipe for Gossip

"And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1Tim. 5:13). "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends" (Prov. 16:28).

"Take a grain of falsehood, a handful of runabout, and the same quantity of limber-tongue, six sprigs of backbite, a spoonful of don't-you-tell-it, add a drop of agony, and a little discontent and jealousy, strain it through a bag of misconstruction, cook it in a meddlesome pot, hang it on a string of street-yarn, and shake well before using" (Author Unknown). Prov. 17:9 says, "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends."

Humility

The story is told of a millionaire who attended a banquet and sat next to some people who were discussing the subject of prayer. He declared, "Prayer may be all right for you, but I don't need it. I worked hard for everything I have. I didn't ask God for anything!" An elderly, retired school teacher responded, "Sir, there is one thing you don't have that you might pray that God would give you." "And what might that be?" sneered the man. The educator replied, "You could pray for humility."

When the Israelites were about to occupy the land of Canaan, Moses looked ahead and knew they would be blessed with an abundance of flocks, silver, and gold--all the result of God's goodness. Knowing that this could easily lead to a feeling of self-sufficiency, he warned that no one should ever boast by saying, "My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth" (**Deut. 8:10-17**).

We are all prone to a certain amount of pride. If everything goes well, we feel self-sufficient. When a blessing comes our way, we may think we received it because we deserved it. That's foolish pride, and it's out of place in the life of the child of God. Let's honor the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17) by praising Him for His generosity.

Walking the Wrong Way

A social worker in Philadelphia told her colleagues about a young boy in an urban ghetto who appeared to be little more than a bit of twisted human flesh. He had been struck by a car several months before and had not received proper medical attention. Although not part of her caseload, she took the boy to an orthopedist, who performed several surgeries on his legs. She diligently gave her attention to his case, making certain he got to therapy and rehab. Two years later the boy walked into her office without crutches. His recovery was complete. The two embraced and wept. "If I accomplish nothing else in my life," said the social worker to herself, "I have made a real difference with at least this one!"

She paused, then said to her colleagues, "This was all several years ago now. How far do you think that boy has gone today?" Some suggested that he might be a school teacher, others a physician, a PT, or a social worker. With deep emotion, the woman responded, "No, he's in the penitentiary for one of the foulest crimes a human being can commit. I was instrumental in teaching him how to walk again, but I did not teach him where to walk."

We often say, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime. We're very good at getting the poor back on their feet; we attend to the needs of the sick until they can get up and walk; we give an arm to the weak and help them to stand... But where are we when it comes to giving them direction. We must point people to Jesus. Through Him, those with broken bodies, broken dreams, broken homes, and broken hearts receive wholeness of life in spite of the brokenness of body. Give CPR to a dying man, and he'll live another day. Give the gospel to a lost man, and he'll live eternally. May all who call themselves Christians cultivate the spirit of Paul in Romans 1:14-17