

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, April 1, 2017

Years ago, we were the recipient of a very special dwarf apple tree. It was a gift from a dear friend at church who developed a new variety called New Dawn which had unusually deep roots. Deep roots allow for a much longer plant life. The first fruit from that tree was simply delicious. Unfortunately, we sold our home and had to leave the gift behind for the new owners to enjoy. Most dwarf fruit trees have very shallow roots which greatly reduces their life span. In Jeremiah 17:7-8 we're told, *"But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots by the stream."* I would have loved to have taken that New Dawn apple tree with us, but the roots were quite deep and I felt it was best to simply allow the tree to thrive in our old backyard. I'm certain it's doing quite well these days many years after we planted it. Now, let's address the depth of our spiritual roots.

It's quite possible to go through life and not develop deep roots in our spiritual lives. I've been fortunate to have several excellent pastors and mentors who have stressed the value of strengthening my understanding of God's Word and the importance of developing an intimate relationship with Christ. I've also been held accountable through programs like CBMC's Operation Timothy study. Heavy rains and high winds often uproot trees here on the West Coast. The problem stems from the lack of deep roots in many varieties of trees planted in our area. Needless to say, an uprooted tree has met its demise. All it's good for is firewood!

Healthy fruit trees with deep roots produce much fruit, which is their sole purpose in existing. Healthy shade trees will obviously grow taller and fuller and provide more than adequate shade. In our individual lives, we must allow our roots to go deep spiritually in order to meet our true purpose for God's glory. We exist for His purpose and need to be in tune with His desires for our lives. That means we need to be planted near the Living Water that will allow our roots to grow deep and bear much fruit.

One of my early scriptures memorized in Operation Timothy was Galatians 5:22-23. After Paul discusses the conflict all believers have with their sinful nature and addresses the deeds of the flesh, he continues, *"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."* That pretty well sums up what our Lord expects from us as His disciples. This can only be accomplished supernaturally with the help of the Holy Spirit which lives within all believers.

While attending a CBMC National Convention years ago, I had the pleasure to be one of twenty or so men to meet with our keynote speaker Steve Farrar one evening. Steve's book *POINT MAN* was instrumental in helping me focus on my Christian walk and becoming a better husband and father. Steve tells a story in the book about his experience as a young boy seeing his father frequently on his knees as he went through deep financial hardship in his development business. This helped Steve to realize that we often can't tell the depth of a person's faith until they've literally fallen and we can see the extent of the roots exposed. Steve's Dad came through the storm that would topple most men because of his unwavering faith in Christ.

So, how deep are your spiritual roots? Now please don't kid yourself. Our Heavenly Father knows the depth of our relationship and we all know that there's certainly room for improvement. Why don't you have an intimate conversation with Him this day and strive to deepen those roots for His glory!

Passages to Ponder: Psalm 1:1-3; Galatians 5:17-21; Ephesians 3:14-19; Revelation 22:16-17

© 2017, all rights reserved. Note: Jim Langley has been an agent with New York Life since 1983 and an active member of CBMC of Santa Barbara since 1987. These "Fourth Quarter Strategies" discussions are designed to "light a fire" under Christian business and professional men so we might be more effective in the marketplace for the sake of Christ, our Lord and Savior! Please visit our website @ <http://www.fourthquarterstrategies.com>.

Passages to Ponder: Psalm 1:1-3; Galatians 5:17-21; Ephesians 3:14-19; Revelation 22:16-17

Psalm 1:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

¹ Blessed is the one

who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,

² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

Galatians 5:17-21 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19 New International Version (NIV)

A Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Revelation 22:16-17 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.