

Root Stimulators
Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC – 8/18/24

As you know, Joe and I just got back from Europe. One of our favorite places to visit is Venice, Italy. I am fascinated with this city that was built on a swamp. I wondered how the Venetians built on a foundation of mud. So I did some research. Here's what they did:

They brought tree logs over from the mainland and drove them into the earth – one by one – until they hit bedrock. Then on top of the logs they put concrete and marble slabs. They did this over the entire Island. Why? Because they knew they needed a solid foundation to build on. If they had built on the mud Venice wouldn't be standing today.

And if we build our lives on anything other than Jesus Christ, we will not stand either! We must build our lives on Jesus Christ who is the rock of our salvation. Isaiah 28:16 says:

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

1 Corinthians 3:11 tells us what that foundation is.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is our ONLY sure foundation.

Money isn't a sure foundation.

Drugs or alcohol aren't sure foundations.

Entertainment isn't a sure foundation.

Even though relationships are vital...they alone are not a sure foundation.

Your spouse or your best friends are not a sure foundation.

Nothing other than Jesus Christ is a sure foundation.

Building your life on Christ is the only way to stand in the storms of life!

We are in a sermon series called Putting Down Roots. Our main text is Colossians 2:6-7.

Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him. Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built up on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

Letting our roots go deep into Christ is another way of saying that we need to build our lives on the foundation of Christ. He is our center. We live for Him. We obey His word. We do His will.

This means we are rooted and grounded in Christ. Trees need water, light and nutrients for their roots to go deep. It's the same way for us in our Christian lives.

Last week, Pastor Joe taught us how to have the living water of the word and the Spirit flowing in our lives, so our roots go deep. Hebrews 10:22-25 says:

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Our roots start growing when we receive the living water of salvation and the cleansing waters of baptism and the word of God. Then Hebrews builds on that by saying:

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day of His return drawing near.

The writer of Hebrews tells to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Other translations translate stimulate as stir up one another, motivate one another, spur on one another.

Today I am preaching a message entitled Roots Stimulators. We've told you about the tree we recently planted in our front yard. When we planted it, we dug out the bad dirt, put in some good soil, water and root stimulator. Root stimulator has nutrients that cause the roots to go deeper quicker.

God has designed the body of Christ to stimulate spiritual growth and deep roots in each other. For this to happen our roots MUST go down deep in the church.

One of the most disheartening situations I've observed over 40 years of ministry occurs when people don't let their roots go down deep in the church. They are either in and out of church, or they don't go to church at all. And guess what happens? They establish close friendships with unbelievers. Their circle of friends are worldly and ungodly. James 4:4 says:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

I've seen people excuse their worldly friendships as they justify sinful behaviors. Most of time they begin calling evil good and good evil. They become friends of the world: adulterers, haters and enemies of God. And all along they think they are being unaffected. The truth is if someone believes in God, and they have close friendships with the world –they can be contaminated.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34 says:

Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character. Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning.

One of my favorite stories Pastor Olen used to tell goes like this. When he was a young boy his mother sent him to the market to get a bag of hot dogs. In those days they were sold individually and put in a bag. As he was walking home with the hot dogs, he tripped and fell and some of the hot dogs fell out of the bag into the dirt.

He didn't want to get in trouble, so, he picked up the dirty hot dogs and put them in the bag with the clean hot dogs thinking the clean hot dogs would clean the dirty ones. Now, what do you think happened?
Did the clean hot dogs get the dirty hot dogs clean?
NO. the dirty hot dogs got the clean hot dogs dirty.

It's the same way with relationships. If you hang out with the world you will become like the world. However, if you hang out with the church you will become the church.

You see, the biblical root word for stimulate literally means to sharpen one another. That reminds me of Proverbs 27:17 which says:

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

A good, strong Christian friend will strengthen and sharpen you. They will stimulate you by encouraging you to know God.

Do your friends make you sharper or weaker?
Do they build you up or tear you down?
Do they draw you closer to God or pull you away from God?

Choose your friends carefully...you become who they are.
Make sure it's someone who is stimulating you to love and good works.
Make sure they are sharpening you. That means they reveal things in our lives that we aren't aware of. Things that we need to change! They don't compromise the word of God and lead you astray.

This is why Satan fights church attendance and relationships.
He knows the power of us stimulating spiritual growth in each other.
He knows if He can lure you away from church He can lure you into sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us three ways to stimulate one another.
By the way – love and good works don't just happen automatically.
They must be stirred up!

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day of His return drawing near.

You're probably thinking - I only see two ways to stimulate growth here: Assemble together and encourage one another. But I'll show you how I see three ways here. The first way is this:

1- Church attendance is required to stimulate roots to grow

I know it's popular these days to talk about how you don't need the church to grow. But you won't find that in the Bible. How can we impact one another if we never see one another? Spiritual growth requires commitment to a local church. Psalm 92:12-15 says:

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The Lord is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him."

You will not flourish if you are not planted in the house of the Lord!
Being planted does not mean you occasionally attend church.
Being planted does not mean you keep moving from church to church.
Being planted means I join a local church and I put down roots.
I get involved, I serve, I give.
That requires commitment.

Whatever happened to commitment to God and church? It's so sad that many American Christians see church attendance as something that is optional. We are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and He did not see church attendance as an option. He had the habit of attending the synagogue weekly. Luke 4:16 says:

On the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom.

In Hebrews, the Bible commands us to *NOT* stop meeting together. This does not mean we cannot miss church occasionally. Everybody has valid reasons for missing occasionally. But those things should be the exception, not the rule.

For many people, going to church is the exception rather than the rule. It's so easy to get into the habit of not attending church. People who do not regularly attend church have no understanding of Psalm 84:10 which says:

Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere.

means I would rather be in God's house than a thousand other places.
 Better is one day in God's house than a thousand days sleeping in.
 Better is one day in God's house than a thousand days at the lake.
 Better is one day in God's house than a thousand days of vacation. Or working in the yard or cleaning house or doing a side job.
 Better is one day in God's house than a thousand Dallas Cowboys games.
 So I encourage you to put down roots – get committed.

If you want to keep growing in Christ – you must stay committed to God and His family – the church. We need each other because we stimulate one another to let our roots go deep in Christ. That involves letting your roots go deep in the body of Christ – the church. That requires us doing the second thing I see in Hebrews 10.

2. Church assembly is required to stimulate roots to grow

You might think that is redundant, but gathering and assembling are quite different. Assembling does have to do with meeting together. But assembling is more than just meeting. Strong's Concordance says it means to be a complete collection.

Let me illustrate it like this: Joe and I like to put puzzles together. We start with a bunch of individual pieces gathered together in a box. But they look nothing like the picture on the box until we assemble them together. They are assembled when every piece is in the right place rightly connected to the other pieces so the collection is complete!

Some people think believers are assembled together by gathering together on Sunday in this box. NO! We are gathered but not assembled. And we don't look like the body of Christ until we are assembled!

To be assembled means you connect and build relationships. Relationships are the glue that holds the church together. They are also the key to growth – as individuals and as a church. We will grow and flourish when we are committed to God's house and connected to God's people.

Not being connected with the body of Christ limits what the church can accomplish because individuals cannot accomplish what the whole can accomplish when we work together. Ephesians 4:16 says:

From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

How many parts must do their share for the church to grow? Each part!
 What's your part? And are you doing it?

We all have the same responsibility to be gathered and assembled.
 Don't wait for someone else to initiate relationship and get connected!

Don't leave the work of the ministry to everyone else. You need to find your place in the family and do what God leads you to do. We are all needed. This is why small groups are so important to our church. In small groups we meet people, we build relationships and we grow.

You see, relationships are rarely built by just attending Sunday services. You need to be in a small group where relationships are built and then you are built up because spiritual life is developed by your interaction with others. Our small groups are starting up in September and I encourage you to attend. Speaking of encouragement:

3 – Encouraging one another is required to stimulate roots to grow

It's one thing to GO to church: it's another thing to BE the church. Being the church means being at church so you can be in relationships and use your gifts to stimulate others to grow.

In a world full of discouragement, we must use our gifts to encourage others. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says:

Encourage one another and build each other up.

What does it mean to build one another up? The Amplified Versions tells us:

Encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and edify (strengthen and build up) one another.

Synonyms for building up are edify and strengthen. The New Testament Greek word literally means, "to build up from the foundation." That's part of our role as the body of Christ – to build each other up from the foundation.

We usually think encouragement means exhorting. But encouraging also includes admonishing, which means to warn. We encourage people through exhortation by cheering them on in life.

But, when people get off track – they don't need us to encourage them to keep going in the wrong direction. The encouragement they need is the warning to get back on track.

In the Greek, the word for encourage is parakaleo (par-ak-al-eh'-o); which means to call near, to appeal to exhort and to comfort and to pray for.

We really do need each other! Getting connected is a key to your roots going deep so you can make it through the storms of life. We need other believers to support us in times of need. We need other believers to help us get back on track when we stray. We need others who care enough to call us when we're not here, help us when we have needs and encourage us when we're down.

Are you connected?

The pastor is not meant to be a one man show - doing everything - while others sit on their padded seats (meaning chairs.) We ALL have different gifts, but our gifts are for the edification of ALL. Ephesians 4:16 says

The whole body, joined and held together by what every joint supplies, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

I almost didn't use this scripture because I know you've heard it a million times. Then I thought...but have you done it...even once? So, notice that when we all do our part, it builds up the body of Christ and it builds us up personally. The church grows when every PART does its PART. If we don't do our part, it hinders our growth, as a church and individuals.

Let me give you some examples:

Many of you have children in children's church or in the nursery. Each week your children are cared for and taught the word of God. Would you say that builds up your children? If no one did that work, your children would miss out.

Wouldn't you say we are built up when we come to worship or to the altar for prayer? If the praise team and the prayer team did not do their part, we would all miss out. Or, how about this awesome message...Well, I hope your being encouraged. See what I'm saying? You're being built up because someone else is willing to do their PART.

Every week these amazing people lay down their lives and use the gifts God gave them to minister to others. I applaud you!

But what about those who aren't doing their part? What about those who come each week and get built up but do nothing to help in the work? What growth is not happening because some are not doing their part? Now there is a time to rest, but there is also a time to get involved.

Here's the great thing - When you get involved and put down roots, when you get committed, connected and when you encourage others - You get blessed! Your growth is stimulated too.

When you invest yourself in God's house God invests Himself in your house!

When you build up others, God builds you up!

When you encourage others, God encourages you!

When you show up for God, God shows up for you!

Do you want God's blessing?

Put down roots in God's house.

Get committed and get connected.