

## Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

### Oh, Christmas Tree

January 20, 2019



For most of our marriage, my wife Ramona and I have had a tradition. We get a live Christmas tree the weekend after Thanksgiving. We keep it up until the first week in January. Some trees still looked pretty good, others were in pretty rough shape by the time I took them to the curb. None was worse than our 2017 tree. By mid-December it was, well, dead. You couldn't walk near it without needles falling. I was convinced I watered it faithfully, so we were stumped as to what happened.

Fast forward to 2018. We again got a tree shortly after Thanksgiving and this time I took no chances. I checked the water level in the tree stand morning and night; something I had never done before. Most. Amazing. Tree. Ever. As of this writing, January 20, the tree still stands in our house! Not only has it lost virtually no needles, it is sprouting new branches (as seen in the photo above)! I find two important lessons for Christ followers in Bader Christmas trees 2017 and 2018.

Lesson #1: I was certain I had sufficiently watered the 2017 tree. Clearly, I had not. I'm guessing I got busy a few mornings (maybe more than a few) and missed watering it. The proof was in a Christmas tree that would have made Charlie Brown proud. The same principle applies to our faith lives; if we don't water and nurture it every day with God's word, our faith can also shrivel, and we too can lose our spiritual needles.

Lesson #2: Lesson #1 isn't enough to sustain our faith lives. Yes, daily attention has kept our tree alive and even thriving, a bit. But it will never fully thrive in our living room. That sad day will come when watering isn't enough, and it will have to go. Why? Because it has no roots. The same is true with us. Going through daily rituals isn't enough to keep us close to Jesus if we're not firmly rooted in our faith. May I suggest a Christ follower root system I discovered in the book "Stranger on the Road to Emmaus" by John R. Cross?

## **Rooted in Jesus**

When you trusted in Jesus, the Holy Spirit entered you; He lives in you. So, He's there 24/7/365.

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 (NIV)*

Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them remember what He had been teaching them. And the Spirit does that for us.

## **Rooted in Faith**

*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7 (NIV)*

Receiving Christ as Lord of your life is the beginning of life with Christ. But you must continue to follow His leadership by being rooted, built up and strengthened in the faith. That means submitting your will to Him, seeking to learn from Him, his life and teachings and recognizing the Holy Spirit's power in you.

## **Rooted in the Bible**

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)*

Roots need nourishment, right? Throughout the Bible, the Word is compared with spiritual food. The more you study, the stronger you will become spiritually.

## **Rooted in Prayer**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)*

Never being anxious about anything; constantly turning things over to God. And let's be simple about this. Prayer is simply talking to God. Yes, designated prayer times are great. But you don't have to make an appointment you can pray all day long. God doesn't screen prayers with prayer ID anytime, anywhere, to yourself, out loud.

## **Rooted in Other Believers**

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)*

Paul spent a lot of time in his writings on the church body and how we all play our role. We're not just here to for our own spiritual nourishment but to support others on their journey. Sunday services, small groups, gathering in homes, we can do a lot to nourish and support each other's roots.

With a well-established root system, your faith life will remain alive and thrive. Why not use today to check your roots?

*This post was adapted from the message "The Root of the Matter," delivered by Jerry Bader at Oakbrook Church on January 20, 2019.*