

## *Are You A Tree or A Post?*

*Leslie Diestelkamp*

A tree and a post stood side-by-side. At first the tree was small and slender and could have been broken very easily. The post at that time was large and solid and strong. It supported a fence. Then the forces of nature began their work. The post rotted and in time fell down, causing the fence to be spoiled. At the same time the tree grew, little by little, until it was large, sturdy and very strong. What was the difference between the post and the tree? Well, one was dead and the other was alive! Being dead, the post grew weaker. Being alive, the tree grew stronger.

Now what about those of us who claim to be Christians? Are we like the post or the tree? If our religious qualities are dead, then we are surely growing weaker each year. If we are truly alive in Christ, then each year will find us stronger than ever before. As Christians we have been made alive by the regenerating power of the blood of Christ. Afterward, real spiritual life in us is maintained by fellowship with God, with Christ and with the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 1.1-7).

Editor's Note: The above article is *not* our weekly newspaper article. That article is titled "What Do You Say About Jesus?" and is a follow-up to last week's article. The above article fit perfectly with the other two articles in this bulletin, so I thought it was best to include it with them. Are you a tree or a post? One possible test is---are you using our weekly articles to teach the lost around you?

\* Bobbie Runsick wants to join us in the Lord's work. She confessed her failure to live the life of a Christian a few weeks ago. More recently, she has had health problems and needs our prayers. She is currently living with Carole. Her phone number is (870) 376-6572. If we, with her, will turn *every one unto his work* as *sons and daughters of encouragement*, then the church here is sure to grow in Christ.

### Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

*Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.*

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# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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## *Every One Unto His Work*

*Larry Ray Hafley*

Despite their troubles and tribulations, Nehemiah reported that the people of God returned "every one unto his work" (Neh. 4:15). This statement says a number of important things.

First, when the rush of enthusiasm that accompanies challenge is over, it is important that an organization not become lethargic and ignore the duties of everyday life. A team may build a big lead and then relax. That, of course, allows their opponents to come back. A business attends to detail and overcomes many obstacles to get their product on the market. Then, flush with success, they become top heavy with management and burdened with employees who seem to think that customers "owe" them honor. Many companies are bankrupt today because they did not continue to act on the principles of service that made them great. Occasionally, it is true with the church of God (Rev. 2:2-5).

Second, "everyone" went to work, not just one or two, but "every one." A "one man" team is certain to lose when that "one man" has a bad night. Nehemiah never could have been successful if he alone had gone back to work. It takes "the effectual working...of every part," each of whom is holding to the Lord, for the church to be effective and fruitful (Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19).

Third, each one must do "his work." A catcher generally cannot play centerfield. A quarterback is not a defensive tackle. Companies may be overseen by skilled executives who would be failures in sales. Let each, though, do "his work," and the group will be successful. The same is true in the church (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-28). "It is not reason (fit, suitable, proper) that we (the apostles) should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over

this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:3, 4).

Does that mean the apostles were too "high and mighty" to serve tables? Does it mean others could not pray and preach the word? No, of course not. It meant that each had a work to do, and they were to attend to that work (1 Pet. 4:10, 11).

Consider that what Paul said to the Thessalonians was spoken to us also—"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thess. 4:11). That is, "every one unto his work."

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### *Sons (and Daughters) of Encouragement*

*John R. Gibson*

Acts 4 introduces us to a well-known Bible character named Joses. Of course, few today know him by the name Joses, for the apostles changed his name to Barnabas, i.e. Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36, 37). The first time he is mentioned he had sold land to help the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, but his encouraging spirit is also seen in his befriending of Saul (Acts 9:26, 27), his selection by the church at Jerusalem as the best man to go strengthen the young church in Antioch (Acts 11:22, 23), and in his unwillingness to give up on John Mark (Acts 15:36-39).

I hope we can all learn from Barnabas to commit ourselves to being sons and daughters of encouragement. We need to look for opportunities to build others up and encourage them in their service to God. Let's all make a greater effort to seek and find ways to encourage others. That being said, I want to focus on a few things related to the family that I find especially encouraging.

**Enduring Marriages** I don't have to tell anyone we live a time of throwaway marriages. All you have to do is drive down the road or turn on the television and you will see attorneys advertising inexpensive, quick divorces. It is truly discouraging to see this destructive trend in our society, but more importantly this is something God hates (Mal. 2:16). That being said, it is encouraging to see couples who have not divorced, but continue to love one another with the intent of "till death do us part." Enduring marriages are not the result of a couple getting "lucky" and never enduring hardships; instead, they are the result of two people having a commitment to overcoming the difficulties of life and the differences two distinct individuals bring to a relationship. They understand that God has made them to be one flesh and though they, like all couples, may have some rough times, they are not going to separate what God has joined together (Matt. 19:3-6). To all who are building these enduring marriages—thank you for your encouragement.

**Concerned Fathers** Though Eph. 6:4 admonishes fathers to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord, a large percentage of children do not even have the privilege of growing up in a home where a father is present. And then, in those homes where fathers are found, far too many are so absorbed in their careers or their hobbies that they have little time to actually teach their children. While this is worrisome and displeasing to God, there are fathers who, while not neglecting their work (1 Tim. 5:8), make time for their children. They rarely miss a recital, school, or sporting event. They may spend some time in recreation, but not at the expense of building a relationship with their children. And even more importantly, they make time to read Bible stories to the little ones; they see that lessons are prepared and the family is on time and present for Bible study; they teach their children to participate in the worship and they talk with them about the things they have heard. There are fathers who with firm patience seek to guide their children through the difficulties of adolescence. They realize this is a time when they must back off some and allow more freedoms, but they also know they are still fathers charged with a great responsibility. Though they are encouraging their children to learn how to make their own decisions, they realize they must sometimes exercise veto power and must always be available when needed. You fathers who manifest these concerns for your children are true sons of encouragement in a world that has produced so many discouraging fathers.

**Dedicated Mothers** Just as many fathers are too focused on their careers, it is becoming increasingly rare to find mothers who appreciate the value of being the kind of woman described in 1 Tim. 5:14 and Titus 2:3-5.

"Therefore I desire that *the* younger *widows* marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

"...the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." While the world may look on the dedicated mother as one who is wasting her talents, I am encouraged to see young women able to appreciate the difference they can make in the lives of their children, their community, and in the Lord's church by making this kind of commitment to their children. Mothers, please don't listen to those who would minimize what you are doing and be a discouragement to you. Be strong and know that you are rendering an invaluable service and are an encouragement to many.

*All quotes taken from the New King James Version, copyright 1994, Thomas Nelson Publishers.*