

ReFocus 2019  
Branches – Significant Community

I do a series each year that reminds us of these principles because we need YOU to help us stay on track. If you see me or the leadership veering off of these traits, please speak with us – immediately and appropriately.

What are the tracks that we need to stay on – ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT – Psalm 1; John 15

Deep roots- ongoing growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything else flows from that. While we do have a relationship with the church and the people, the primary relationship is VERTICAL  
Branches– Significant Community. The Christian life can't be done alone. It takes a church to raise a Christian. Along with that is our Natural sphere of influence – job, neighbor, family  
Fruit– Salty lives: not just “clean” living but living in a way that can only be explained by the Holy Spirit and creates a thirst for God. A life that catches people off guard so that others are blind-sided by grace.

A normal part of the Fruitful life is that each believer would take what they learn and pass it along to someone else who can in turn pass it along.

DEEP ROOTS LEAD TO 6-E's - ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT

EMBRACE – A Heart That Trusts And Treasures Christ John 12:1-8

EXALT – A Heart Response of Faith Toward God Luke 17:15

EQUIP – Learning To Be A Disciple Lk 11:1-4; Heb 3:12-14; Col 4:1 4

ENCOURAGE – Learning To Love Others And To Be A Part Of The Body Of Christ- Heb 10

EXPRESS – To Communicate The Reality Of Christ Through Word And Deed- Col 4:4-6; 1 Pet 3:15

EXHIBIT – Life Changing Transformation Is Becoming Evident - Gal 5:22

BRANCHES:  
SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY = SUPERNATURAL COMMUNITY

By the Fall we disconnected from God and others. What does that look like?

I Am a Rock – Simon and Garfunkel

A winter's day  
In a deep and dark December  
I am alone  
Gazing from my window to the streets below  
On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow  
I am a rock, I am an island

I've built walls  
A fortress deep and mighty  
That none may penetrate  
I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain  
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain  
I am a rock I am an island

Don't talk of love  
But I've heard the words before  
It's sleeping in my memory

I won't disturb the slumber of feelings that have died  
If I never loved I never would have cried  
I am a rock I am an island

I have my books  
And my poetry to protect me  
I am shielded in my armor  
Hiding in my room, safe within my womb  
I touch no one and no one touches me  
I am a rock I am an island

And a rock feels no pain  
And an island never cries

The result of the Fall is the Flesh driven introvert or the flesh driven extrovert Only by the grace of God can each one get out of her flesh driven weakness and learn to value and honor the image of God in others. God specializes in changing our relationship weaknesses, if we'll sink our roots in Him.

### WHAT RESOURCE HAS God GIVEN TO HEAL THE BROKENNESS OF OUR DISCONNECTION???

LOOK AROUND... YOU are God's unlikely answer to the brokenness and disconnection of our world. WHAT????? According to the cultural mantra of our day "the church is problem; it offers no solutions; it is irrelevant."

According to the bible, when Jesus left this earth, he established The Church as the laboratory for personal, relational, and cultural healing- crazy right? What was He thinking?

THE CHURCH IS NOT PERFECT, but it is at the center of God's plan for bringing a sense of wholeness and well-being to the world. The church is to be a place where we can be honest about ourselves and about God; it is a place where we are to turn away from envy, jealousy, self-justification strategies, gossip, impurity and strife to live out the gospel realities of compassion, sacrifice, and speaking the truth in love. We lay aside the natural things that attract us or divide us so we can experience community with those we might not normally be in contact with. That would include the normal social barriers of demographics, race, education, economics and stage of life.

Harvey Conn calls the church the "model home of the new development." The church is supposed to be the way things will look when Jesus is through fixing us. OBVIOUSLY, we don't reach that in this life, but we should be getting a good glimpse of it.

That truth pushes us to think about our own relationship to the church. That is another series by itself, but just consider this: If we fight against the biblical design and calling of the church, then we are fighting against the plan of God.

Lewis wrote in Surprised by Joy:

<http://www.cslewis.com/c-s-lewis-sat-here/>

"As soon as I became a Theist I started attending my parish church on Sundays and my college chapel on weekdays... because I thought one ought to "fly one's flag" by some unmistakable overt sign.

I was acting in obedience to a (perhaps mistaken) sense of honor.

The idea of churchmanship was to me wholly unattractive... though I liked clergymen as I liked bears, I had as little wish to be in the Church as in the zoo. It was, to begin with, a kind of collective; a wearisome "get-together" affair. I couldn't yet see how a concern of that sort should have anything to do with one's spiritual life. To me, religion ought to have been a matter of good men praying alone and meeting by twos and threes to talk of spiritual matters. And then the fussy, time-wasting botheration of it all! The bells, the crowds, the umbrellas, the notices, the bustle, the perpetual arranging and organizing. Hymns were (and are) extremely disagreeable to me. Of all musical instruments I liked (and

like) the organ least. I also have a sort of spiritual awkwardness which makes me unfit to participate in any ritual" (1).

Let's peek ahead in Hebrews to see what God has to say about this "model home", the church.

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 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 drawing near.

**Community flourishes in an atmosphere of intentionality**, where people are not holding onto their rights and agenda but are intentional about encouraging each other. This involves an investment of time and a Holy Spirit wrought humility and love for those who are different.

c.s. Lewis 1944, "Is attendance at a place of worship or membership with a Christian community necessary to a Christian way of life?" Lewis answered:

"My own experience is that when I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to the churches and Gospel Halls; and then later I found that it was the only way of flying your flag; and, of course, I found that this meant being a target. It is extraordinary how inconvenient to your family it becomes for you to get up early to go to Church. It doesn't matter so much if you get up early for anything else, but if you get up early to go to Church it's very selfish of you and you upset the house. If there is anything in the teaching of the New Testament which is in the nature of a command, it is that you are obliged to take the Sacrament, and you can't do it without going to Church. I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit" (11).

Bonhoeffer Life together: "Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by Christ in which we may participate." <http://longstoryshort.nz/life-together/>

We want community because GOD lives within us, and God exists in Triune community. His spirit wants community. We are to maintain the community that He has given us.

### What Destroys SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY?

#### Unforgiving spirit-

Frederick Beuchner <https://www.johnpleggett.com/maybe-you-should-be-angry/>

"Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you."

**UNWILLINGNESS to go to those who sin against us** – FIRST OF ALL determine if it was SIN or simply something that you didn't like.

When PEOPLE get hurt or offended and don't go to the person it will destroy community.

Some things are worth confronting, most things are worth overlooking – Prov 19:11

Gossip is NOT AN OPTION

**UNWILLINGNESS to reconcile with those we have knowingly offended – Matt 5**

Ex: A man I had offended and kept silencing the “little voice” that said, “Go to him”. Finally it took a major sin against me that caused me to see what I needed to do.

**Receiving AND PASSING ALONG GOSSIP – giving a bad report**

You can promote Harmony By Means Of Giving Only Good Reports.

**Definition Of A Bad Report:** *“It is using words, tonal patterns or facial expressions to put someone else in a bad light. It is damaging someone else’s reputation with information that Does not need to be shared. It is encouraging or spreading discontent or discord among others.” –Bill Gothard*

Regarding Good Reports

*“In obedience to the Word of God, I hereby commit myself to the goal of giving only good reports. When this is not possible, I purpose to remain silent or to privately go to the person, confirm my goal, and explain the offense that would hinder me from giving a good report. I hereby purpose to approach an offender in a spirit of genuine love having first examined and corrected my own attitudes and actions. Only if I am unable to restore an offender will I share the problem with others according to the principles of Scripture. When I violate this goal, I purpose to ask forgiveness knowing that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

Ways to Stop Someone from Giving a Bad Report:

1. Lovingly ask, “Do you feel I am responsible to know about this? I would rather not hear about this unless I am directly involved.”
2. Lovingly say, if speaking with a member of this Church: “Don’t forget about our covenant concerning bad reports.”

**IMPUTING NEGATIVE MOTIVES – Love thinks the best of others**

**YOU ARE NOT A MIND READER –** (if you are then go on America’s Got Talent).

You can only know what people have done. You can’t read their minds. A person’s behavior makes sense to him or her at that time. If it doesn’t make sense to you then it may be because there is something you don’t know.

**Significant Community is built around a PERSON, not a cause.**

The basis of our fellowship is Christ.

It happens in circles not rows

**Community GROUPS: For the Fall Semester**

Sunday 12:30 at the church

Sunday 5:30 at the church

Cove Group

Cathy Anderson

**MEN’S GROUP Wed 6:30 pm**

How many of you have heard of John Rawlins?



How many have heard of Ulysses S. Grant??



Ulysses S. Grant was a 4 star general of the union forces during the Civil War and became the 18th President of the United States. John A. Rawlins was Grant's friend and fellow general, who became Grant's chief of staff. During the Civil War, no one was closer to Grant than Rawlins.

Ulysses S. Grant had a drinking problem, but he made a pledge to Rawlins that he would abstain from intoxicating liquors during the war so that he could carry out his duties. On one occasion when Grant broke that promise, Rawlins pleaded with great earnestness that Grant refrain from strong drink. Rawlins' advice was heeded, and Grant was not impaired by drink when his decision-making was critical.

Wounds from a friend can be trusted! There stands today, in front of the Capital in Washington, a magnificent monument to General Grant. He sits upon his horse in characteristic pose and is flanked on either side by stirring battle scenes. At the other end of the mall and a little to the south of Pennsylvania Avenue is Rawlins Park. There stands a very ordinary statue of Grant's friend, John A. Rawlins.

There might be no monument to Grant had there not been the admonition of a faithful friend. It was Rawlins, and his admonition, who kept Grant on his horse.

Who is keeping you on your horse?

Who are you helping to stay on his/her horse?

The TABLE is the symbol of Christ's work for us and it reminds us of our common union with Christ and with one another.

It's a way that Jesus gives us to stay on our spiritual horse.

--	--