

## ReFocus 2019

### FRUIT: Salt and Light

What are the tracks that we need to stay on – ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT – Psalm 1; John 15  
Psalm 26:8-12

As you read scripture look for.....Roots, Fruit, Branches

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.

**ABUNDANT FRUIT** – The tree rooted in the living water of Christ, with growing branches, will also bear FRUIT. Those who ABIDE will bear fruit – Jn 15:5.

In scripture “fruit” refers to several aspects of spirituality:

- Godly character- LJPPKGFSGS ( Gal 5:22ff)
- Good works – Mat 7:16-17, Col 1:10
- Converts – Jn 4:36; Col 1:6
- Worship Heb 13:15
- Giving – 2 Cor 9:10

Fruit is anything that represents the tangible outflowing of the indwelling Christ. It is His life spilling out through us before God, others, and the world.

### 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

### FRUIT – SALT and LIGHT

Salt of the earth

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

A mark of a church that promotes real life change is one where Every Person is in “Full-Time Ministry of being Salt and Light.”

Every believer seeks to live under the authority of Jesus at work and in daily life.

In a church culture that changes lives, people reject cultural values that view human beings as spectators and consumers. They affirm that every believer is called to full-time ministry for Jesus. Every sphere of daily

activity—paid or unpaid work, or retirement—constitutes an area that needs salt and light. Such believers refuse to compartmentalize work and spirituality, viewing work as an act of worship that brings order out of chaos and builds God’s kingdom.

Salt is important because it helps preserve things from decay. Believers, living in the power of Christ bring a preserving grace and flavor to society in areas of marriage, family, work, play, education, science, help for the disadvantaged and marginalized. For centuries Christians have led the way in terms of help for marriages and families, schools, hospitals, children’s homes, food banks, homeless shelters, etc. Those are aspects of being Salt and Light in a broken decaying world.

We may not think about it, but we are bringing some sort of flavor to the world as we engage in daily life. The question is, “Are we bringing the preserving taste and flavor of salt into our world?”

Here’s a thought that made sense when I heard it...

**The Christian life is not exciting until it becomes salty.** Too many Christians are bored. Why? They aren’t seeking to live salty lives.

**The Christian life is not compelling until it becomes salty.**

When it comes to taste, the opposite to salty is bland and sadly too many people in the church describe their lives as bland. One reason may be that we’ve lost the biblical vision of being salt and light **and we’ve settled for the American dream of what Francis Schaeffer called “personal peace and affluence.”**

<https://chalmers.org/interview-brian-fikkert-on-becoming-whole/>

**Brian Fikkert, at the Covenant College Chalmers Centers puts it this way, “The American Dream is this image of individuals who are free from all constraint, and they are able to work hard. As a result of their work, they are able to flourish economically and to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, and then they accumulate more and more wealth.** The truth of the matter is, there’s some good in that. Western civilization has been remarkable at bringing people out of poverty in the West. And as the rest of the world right now is adopting many Western institutions and markets, we’re seeing massive reductions in material poverty.

There’s something good about Western civilization. There’s something good about the kinds of institutions we’ve created. We’re good at making stuff. We’re good at creating cultures that produce things. If that’s all that life we’re about, then the West would be flourishing fully. So, there’s something here that’s good that we want to tap into, but there are some problems that I think are emerging as well...

**The idea of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to some degree, that’s an okay statement. The problem is that the way that we’re interpreting that in our culture is highly materialistic and highly individualistic. And so, what we’re interpreting as the pursuit of happiness is really the pursuit of individual material prosperity. The way that that’s working itself out in our culture is actually doing lots of damage to us and to the social fabric of our society.**

We live in an age where the cultural tide is to pursue personal peace and affluence. In many ways that it nothing new. It goes back to the Garden- **Gen 3:**

**6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.**

How do we fight against the cultural tide?

One way to be Salty is through our words as we share the truth of God with others. Scary right??

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I'M NOT STANDING HERE AS ONE WHO IS AN EXPERT IN THIS. I AM CHALLENGED BY THIS TEXT FROM COLOSSIANS 4

Words of grace – seasoned with Salt – Colossians 4

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

This aspect of Fruit ties in with DEEP ROOTS AND BRANCHES:

THE FRUIT of Salty lives must be built on and marinated in the scripture. Salty lives have DEEP ROOTS in the grace of God and a Significant Community around them.

It is clear from Col 4 that one aspect of being “salty” is engaging “outsiders” with the truth of the Gospel. (some of you just tuned out, sorry). Don't blame me, God said it first. What did Jesus tell his disciples?

“Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.”

So, if we are following, fishing will happen. If we're not fishing, then we must ask, “Did Jesus lie or am I not following as I should?”

HOW IS THIS GOOD NEWS?

All the resources you need to be a Salty Christian are yours in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. You are not alone.

Plus, God has made you a part of His Body so that we can labor together. The apostle Paul often refers to his co-laborers in the gospel. We all need co-laborers who stand with us, pray with us, and encourage us.

I'm fortunate to have a group of pastors from other PCA churches in this area and we've been meeting for several months. A recent module for us is dealing with “cultural awareness”. Do we understand what people are going through and how they are defining and engaging in a “spiritual journey”?

“Coincidentally”, the last assignment fit perfectly with this topic today as given in Col 4

EX: Cohort – spiritual interviews – guys I met beginning in 2016

We will never be salty or speak words seasoned with salt if we don't understand where people are coming from.

Col 4 is quite specific with some steps we can take:

- Pray – be devoted to it, with thanksgiving (it keeps your soul from wasting away)
- Pray for open doors so that the word may go forth. (isn't that just for preachers or Linda Summer?) NO. Paul asked it for himself, but it's a great prayer for us as well. If you pray that way and are looking for open doors you won't be bored. **OPENING THE DOOR IS God'S JOB. Being ready to go through is ours.**
- Pray that we would be clear – that may take some effort in terms of read some helpful books or meeting with others to know how to respond.
- Pray for wisdom in conduct and a willingness to be used – Don't Waste the moment v. 5
- Pray that our speech would be gracious, seasoned with SALT v. 6

Here are two helpful resources...

Becky Pippert – “Out of the Salt Shaker and into the World” i.e. salty believers engaging with those who are looking in the wrong places to quench their thirst.

Doug Pollack <http://godsgps.com/intro/> speaks of this engagement with “outsiders” as creating God Space in our lives.

God Space is Where . . .

... God’s love is demonstrated in practical, doable, and authentic ways.

... the natural gives way to the supernatural

... seeds of faith are cultivated, planted, watered, and nurtured

... gentleness and respect are present, and judgment is absent

... the invisible principles of God’s kingdom are made visible in tangible ways people can see, touch, and feel

... safe space is created for cynics, sceptics, and spiritually curious people to raise their questions, express their doubts, and vent their frustrations

... Christianity becomes credible, relevant, plausible, and believable.

Jesus was ATTRACTED AND ATTRACTIVE TO THE LOST. Are WE??

Imagine what could happen if God’s people were equipped to create “God Space” in their Monday through Saturday worlds.

In the 20th Century, the church spent a lot of time and money on getting our neighbors to come to church. In the 21st Century, we need to spend a lot of time and money on getting the church to go to their neighbors. Our “come and see” game plan needs a “go and be” overhaul if the church is going to live out its mandate to engage this ever-changing world with God’s never-changing message.

Doug raises some good questions that challenge me personally. Here are questions that we need to consider in our families, in our small groups and in our church as a whole.

How do we add more “away games” to our busy church calendar?

How do we turn inwardly focused Christians into outwardly focused Christ followers?

How do we engage a culture that is increasingly saying “no thanks” to our traditional “God Spaces”?

Practically, what does it look like or sound like? . We have different styles, experiences, questions, and fears about even engaging in such conversations. Some are more outgoing. Some find it a huge obstacle to even think about this kind of conversation.

That is why Col 4 says to begin with PRAYER.

If we are praying, and if we are willing and preparing for God to move us out of our comfort zone into a “salty zone”, then expect to see your spiritual life enriched. Your prayer life and your faith will grow when you pray and prepare for God to give you open doors to speak forth the mystery of Christ.

It won’t sound alike for everyone, but here is a possible way to break the ice in the conversation

“We’ve known each other for a while but there’s an area that we’ve never talked about. Would you mind helping me out as I seek to learn how people approach their own spiritual journey – however they define that idea. My role is to just ask some questions and listen. It’s not a debate. Can I buy you lunch or coffee one day and listen to your story?”

They may say, “I’m not really into that, or I don’t have a faith journey.”

RESPONSE: “That’s ok. There are no right or wrong answers because it is your story.”

If they say “yes”, great. If they say “no”, then no problem. We are praying for OPEN DOORS and that is God’s job. But WE NEED TO KNOCK to see if it opens.

The spiritual journey interview will be posted at the end of these sermon notes. It’s not an interview where you sit and write down the answers. It’s a tool that helps create God Space as you ask questions, then listen – don’t argue, correct or shove Jesus down their throats. The first step is to learn to listen and learn where people are.

What would it do to this community if we as a church were filled with people who lived salty lives and are creating God Space in our relationships?

Two Illustrations:

Be a “Gospel Salt Lick” (in all that implies).

We want to see people come to faith. If not, then we should close the doors of the church.

There’s a scene from a TV show where a character is talking about being in a movie. His line is, “These pretzels are making me thirsty.”

They’ll do that, right.

Be a pretzel for Jesus –

Go into your daily life as salt and light so that God may use you bring thirst to needy people.

## The Journey

### Spiritual Journey Survey

The purposes of this survey is to understand another person's story and beliefs and to encourage them in their spiritual journey. The purpose at this time is NOT to share what you believe or to correct their beliefs but to get to know them and to create a safe space to have further spiritual conversation. "Listen to hear" instead of "listening to respond." For follow up questions, feel free to use the bullet ones or your own. Take your time and enjoy your spiritual journey together.

Please communicate the following to the participant prior to the survey: (Feel free to read)

This is your journey so there are NO "RIGHT OR WRONG" ANSWERS

- Thank you for agreeing to do this survey with me and please feel free to be completely honest.
  - The purpose of this survey is to understand people's beliefs and spiritual journeys.
  - And for me to practice "hearing" instead of talking.
  - If this survey piques your interest and you would like to discuss spiritual things more after we are done, there is an opportunity that I will share with you at that time.
1. What is your story?
    - (i.e. Where were you born & raised? How is your relationship with your Father? Mother?)
  2. Where do you believe the world came from?
  3. ARE THINGS THE WAY THEY OUGHT TO BE? Why do you think there are so many problems in the world?
    - (i.e. The news, our families, etc.)
  4. What is the hope for our world?
    - (i.e. Is there any hope of it getting better? If so, how or what?)
  5. What do you believe about God? WHY?
    - (i.e. Does He exists? What is He like? Can we know Him?)
  6. What do you believe about Jesus? WHY?
    - (i.e. Is He real? Why did He die on the cross? Is He alive now?)
  7. What do you believe about life after death? WHY?
    - (Potential follow up question if the person believes in heaven). *"If you stood before God and He asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you say?"*)
  8. What do you believe the purpose of life is?
  9. (suppose God exists) If you could ask God one question what would it be?
  10. Would you say that you've done things that you expect others not to do?
  11. How do you deal with your guilt?
  12. How do you deal with the guilt of others?

#### Post Survey:

- Thank them for their sharing and honesty.
- Offer follow up opportunity. "I shared with you before the survey that there is a follow up opportunity. Would you have any interest in walking with me, on a 4-week spiritual journey, to see how the Bible seeks to answer some legitimate thorny questions that most people bump against as they consider faith issues?"
- Is the Bible reliable? Do non-Christian really deserve punishment? How can Christians say that Jesus is the only way to God? What is required for eternal life?
  - Further Description: It would be a journey of learning together from the material and from each other. The material is very short, pamphlet size, and we would meet four times to go through it together. Would you be interested in considering the questions over a period of 4 meetings?

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