Aspens, redwoods, pine trees, people, what do these have in common?

Redwoods create the strength to **withstand powerful winds and floods** by extending their roots outwards, up to 100 feet wide from the trunk, and living in groves where their roots can intertwine.

Pines are similar. Their strength is due to several factors. For one, the pine tree’s **roots** are deep and wide enough to dig into the soil and provide the tree with a strong foundation. This makes it easier for the tree to stay upright in even the strongest winds. Additionally, the branches of the pine tree are flexible.

What about people?? Let’s see what Paul says. We will examine our passage under 5 simple headings : Alienation, Amalgamation, Relation, Salvation and Celebration.

I.  **ALIENATION (19)**

 A. Foreigners

 B. Strangers

**II. AMALGAMATION (19)**

 *No longer . . . But . . .*

 A. Citizens - *Fellow-citizens with the saints*

 B. Saints

 C. Sons - *Members of God’s household*

Annie Glenn’s death on May 19, 2020 sparked news reports all across the country. The centenarian (1920-2020) was married to John Glenn for 73 years (the first American to orbit the earth and long-time senator from Ohio). She was a remarkable advocate for those who stuttered as she did, and she ushered in enormous help for people with speech impediments. Her son David said, “Through all of her life, the most prominent characteristic that my mother embodied, as far as I’m concerned, was how she loved and cared about others.” Journalist Connie Schultz said of her friend, “Annie treated everyone as this amazing surprise standing in front of her.” Imagine what our culture might look like if we treated one another like an amazing surprise. *Houston Chronicle, 6/7/20, p.A17*

III. **RELATION**

 A. Spiritual (18) Vertical

 1. Father *to the Father*

 2. Son *through Him*  (Jesus)

 3. Spirit *access in one Spirit*

 B. Social Horizontal

In America, 45% of adults say they find it difficult to make new friends. And the average American hasn’t made a new friend in five years. Part of the problem may lie in the **effort** it requires. Research shows that it takes 50 hours to move from acquaintance to casual friend – then 90 hours to move from casual friend to friend. It requires more than 200 hours before someone becomes a close friend. Relationships are anything but easy, but they’re certainly **worth the time and effort**. *Daily Briefing, 5/15/19*

 1. Sinners Love them

 2. Saints Love them

 3. Ain’ts Love them

Dr. Brain Harbour responded to a student’s email at the end of the semester with a simple reply: “It has been a joy to have you in the class.” Just before hitting send, he caught a significant typo. Instead of writing “joy” he had typed “job.” Some relationships are a joy – some are a job. *SeminaryPLUS Newsletter, April 2014*

**IV. SALVATION**

 A. Meaning

On the grounds of the 9/11 Memorial is one Callery pear tree, known as the Survivor Tree. It was discovered among the wreckage with missing limbs and charred bark, but still bearing leaves. It was transported to a Bronx nursery where it was cared for by the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. New growth erupted from the gnarled stumps and it was replanted as part of the 9/11 Memorial in 2010. Hundreds of swamp oak trees fill the space dedicated to those lost on 9/11, but this solitary pear tree stands in their midst to symbolize resilience and new life. *911Memorial.org*

 B. Method

Stefan Thomas is a German-born computer programmer living in San Francisco. In 2011, he made an animated video called “What is Bitcoin?” and received 7,002 Bitcoin for his work (worth about $14,000 at the time). Today, a Bitcoin is worth over $30,000 (depending on the market), which translates to over $200 million…but it’s worthless to him. His treasure trove is secured with IronKey and he’s lost the password. He’s made 8 futile attempts, and if he enters 2 more wrong passwords, the Bitcoin will be permanently locked away. He has potential wealth, but it can only be accessed with one password. Similarly, Jesus is our only password to salvation & abundant life (John 14:6). *NYTimes.com, 1/12/21*

 V. **CELEBRATION**

Welles Crowther was a 24-year-old equities trader working on the 104th floor of the South Tower. The Boston College graduate’s dad was a banker who was also a volunteer fireman. Welles followed in his father’s footsteps and likewise worked as a volunteer firefighter. When American Flight 11 hit the North Tower, Welles called a friend and explained he was heading over there to help. But before he could make it down, United Flight 175 slammed into the South Tower. His training kicked in and he donned a red bandana over his nose and mouth to stave off the smoke. Around the age of 6, Welles received a red bandana from his dad. Jeff always carried a blue bandana in his pocket and Welles wanted to be just like his dad. Everywhere Welles went he had a red bandana, and anyone who knew him would smile about that constant companion. Welles found the only open staircase available to those trapped above the plane’s impact. He assisted people down the stairs and is known to have carried an injured woman down 17 flights to safety before heading back up to help more people. Multiple survivors talked about the man in the red bandana who aided their evacuation. One of his spare red bandanas is on display at the 9/11 Museum and a 4-minute video tells his story of courage and sacrifice. As noted in one video about Welles Crowther, it’s significant to notice not only the names at the memorial, but consider the names that are not written there…**the names of those who were saved** by people like “the man in the red bandana.” Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice with blood that stained the ground red so our names wouldn’t be identified as those who were lost.

 A. Attitude

 B. Actions

“Aspen trees are, in a lot of areas, a key species. The health of the aspen trees is really indicative of the health of the other animals and plants in the area,” specialists say. Not only do the aspens provide shelter and food for plants and animals, the tree creates a microhabitat, protecting developing organisms from harm.

Vegetation depends on the aspens for survival—but one lone aspen couldn’t possibly protect a growing habitat, which is why aspens share a root system. When looking at a forest, one may see several aspens grouped closely together. Those hundreds of trees are actually one organism. This connection not only provides shelter for flora and fauna; these connections are essential in the growth of baby aspens. Jones wanted to learn how much the interconnected root system affects the saplings’ development.

With his mentor, plant and wildlife sciences professor Samuel St Clair, Jones performed the necessary field work and measurement gathering, which involved severing root connections of four different-sized saplings, ranging from as small as fourteen inches tall to nearly ninety inches in height. St Clair and Jones repeated this process with six genetically different aspens to determine whether root-stunted growth was a species-specific phenomenon or an aspen-wide one. Over four seasons, the research team measured the severed saplings' growth, photosynthesis, and survival.

The results stunned them: severing the trees from their roots didn’t prevent them from growing. The integrated baby trees grew similarly to those that separated from the organism. But what caught Jones’ attention was the aspens’ **survival rate**.

“The ones that were connected were about 25% more likely to survive. So, 100% of the connected trees survive the growing season, while 25% of the disconnected trees died,” Jones says. This happened across all the four size classes and six species.

We are strong when we put down roots that are deep and wide. We must be firmly rooted in our relationship with the Lord.

We must be broadly related with those around us, the lost and the saints. Believers are family. We are united. We are ONE. We must nurture the unique and special bond between believers.

Like a mighty redwood, or an aspen, or a pine, we are not meant to stand alone. We thrive TOGETHER! Relationships are VITAL!