

GOD LOVES TREES

God loves trees. In the first three chapters of Genesis he mentions trees 13 times. They are meant to bear types of fruit according to their kinds - Gen.1:12. Every tree with fruit from seeds was meant to be food for mankind - Gen.1:29. There was no rain in the early creation as the trees were watered from streams, rivers and dew from the ground. - Gen. 2:6-10.

Trees are an important part of man's past, present and future. Fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not meant for mankind. People were designed to depend solely on God for their information. God had given mankind all kinds of fruit trees, including the tree of life, which would cause them to live forever. The sleuthing serpent enticed the first couple to eat fruit from the forbidden tree. Death entered the creation and passed on through a disease I call A.I.D.S. (Adam Inherited Death Syndrome - Romans 5:12). God, who is all knowing, already had a plan in place for a cure. It would begin with an **olive tree** - Romans 11:17,24. God would use the nation of Israel to prepare the way for the coming Messiah and liberator. The cure for A.I.D.S. would come from the perfect blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Where did it take place? Where else but on a tree! The first Adam had brought all of mankind down into disgrace with his disobedience at a forbidden tree. The second Adam would bring mankind into grace with his willing sacrifice on a tree, prophesied over 800 years before in Isaiah 53. The apostle Peter quoted from it in his letter.

He (Jesus) himself bore our sins in his body **on the tree**, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed - 1 Peter 1:24

The Romans cut down trees to make their favorite instrument of punishment...crosses. Multitudes of criminals would be put to death on them. Little did they know that one of those 'criminals' would turn one of their trees of death into a tree of life. When Jesus, the perfect one, died on that tree, it was just the beginning of a movement that would one day overpower the mighty Roman Empire with a force much greater than all of its military might. It was the force of God's mighty love! Many Roman soldiers were converted to Christ when they saw Christians who were full of love for God and man, even as they were being thrown to the lions or being turned into human lamps of fire at an emperor's garden party (Nero had Christians set on fire). These believers had roots that went deep into the living waters and love of Jesus Christ. They were like those sturdy oak trees mentioned in Isaiah 61:3 who displayed the oil of joy and wore a garment of praise.

When God has a special work planned in our lives, he must first uproot all the things in our lives that hinder real growth. We see that in the message of John the Baptist in Matthew 3. **God uproots before he out pours.** I went through several years of a dry period in my spiritual life where I was not bearing much fruit in the kingdom. By late 2013 I sensed a small spiritual fire stirring in me. During that winter I regularly watched *It's Supernatural* hosted by Sid Roth and my hunger for God began to increase. After spending the winter in Florida I returned to my home area in rural western N.Y. state and began to attend a newly formed weekly prayer group that met at a small country church each Tuesday evening for two hours, but often lasted much longer. It was led by the Spirit with plenty of spontaneity. It had been started and was led by Ryan, a 23 year old whose faith in Christ had been ignited in the previous year. After just a

couple of weeks, I had this thought go through my mind for two days....*disciple Ryan*. At the end of the next Tuesday prayer meeting, I mentioned to one of my pastors that I thought I was supposed to disciple Ryan. They mentioned that they had been praying with the other pastor that God would raise up somebody to mentor Ryan.

In a short while Ryan and I got together for the first time to have breakfast. Our Saturday meeting lasted from 7 am to nearly 11am! Ryan was hungry for God and I was excited to once again be involved with one to one discipleship, something I had done a lot of as a missionary while in London. It was about that time in June 2014 when God 'downloaded' to me these two words... *'Write and Disciple'*. That would be my assignment for the remaining years of my life. During that summer Ryan and I spent most Saturday mornings in discipleship and prayer. Most times we were outside on a hilltop, enjoying the beautiful rural valley below.

During that summer God was doing some pruning and digging around in my life so that I would be more fruitful for him - John 15:2, Luke 13:8. It all came to a climax the first two weeks of August. For several years I had wasted too much time following my favorite sports teams and listening to talk radio. The apostle John summed up his first letter to the church with these words:

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols - 1 John 5:21.

Idolatry: Religious worship of physical idols or **excessive** reverence or **devotion to something**. - Webster's Dictionary

That was me, excessive devotion to sports and news. By mid-August God had taken away those desires and placed in me a hunger to devote more time with him. There were a couple of scriptures that captured my attention at this time.

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. - Psalm 27:4

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15 the

During this time I found myself meditating more on scripture. One of our prayer group said that Psalm 1 described me.

....on God's law he **meditates** day and night. He is like a **tree** planted by streams of water, which yields its **fruit** in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers - Psalm 1:2-3.

More than once that August I was overwhelmed by what God was doing in my life. While at work painting someone's dining room, I fell to my knees and cried profusely. God had restored my first love and given me a fresh desire to see revival in his church. While I was on my knees I thought of the theme from the Welsh Revival of 1906...*Bend the church, save the world*.

Those two first weeks of August were the most spiritually intense I had experienced in a very long time. It was as if God was giving birth to something new in my life. Later that month I shared with our prayer group that I spent my winters in Florida. Although many of them were around 40 years younger than me, we had become bonded in love. Prayer produces intimacy, not

only with God but with the ones we are praying with. The group was disappointed that I would be leaving them, even if just for the winter season. I thought to myself, 'Perhaps I can write letters of encouragement to them when I get to Florida in November.' However, just a few days later God seemed to say to me...*why don't you start writing now?*

I was sitting at my computer looking at my e-mails when I glanced over to the left column and saw the word SPAM. Instantly, the words *Special Prayer Agent Message* came to my mind. God had conceived something special that very moment. By early September, I began writing weekly prayer agent messages. By October I had this thought come to my mind, perhaps these weekly messages could be turned into a book. Later that morning at church, one reader of our letters remarked to me that these weekly messages could be turned into a devotional book.

The book you are now reading is partially based on one series of Prayer Agent Messages that I wrote during 2016. All of this has taken place because of what took place in 2014 in what I called...*the summer of love*. Our prayer meeting was a place of intimacy with God and we all know what happens when there is intimacy...conception and later births.

God has brought forth much fruit since then because Jesus also did some pruning in my life - John 15:1-3. God loves trees and he wants us to be fruitful to display his glory to the world. It all begins when we remember what Jesus did for us on a tree at Calvary. Forever we will be reminded of this when we see the scars on his body when we step into eternity. It is there that we will finally partake of the tree of life and enjoy the benefits God had designed for us all along.

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