

Sunday, October 6, 2024

Series Title: Church Strong

Lesson Title: Harvest Life Church – A Place of Spiritual Growth

Key Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV)

Introduction

Harvest Life Church has always been and always will be a place of spiritual growth; the benefits of which also manifest in our natural growth – the way we lead, think, and function in our families, schools, community, and at work. We are a church known for moving people from sin to salvation, from salvation to stability; from stability to success and from success to significance, since the early days of the music room in Potomac High School – and the best is yet to come!

Today, we are reaping the blessings of this life-changing ministry. God is preparing us for greater – greater Kingdom work and global impact as we transition to our new worship center. He is preparing the building for us and us for the building! God desires for us to grow spiritually. His very intentional plan for Christians' spiritual growth and development is expressed in Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV):

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and

craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

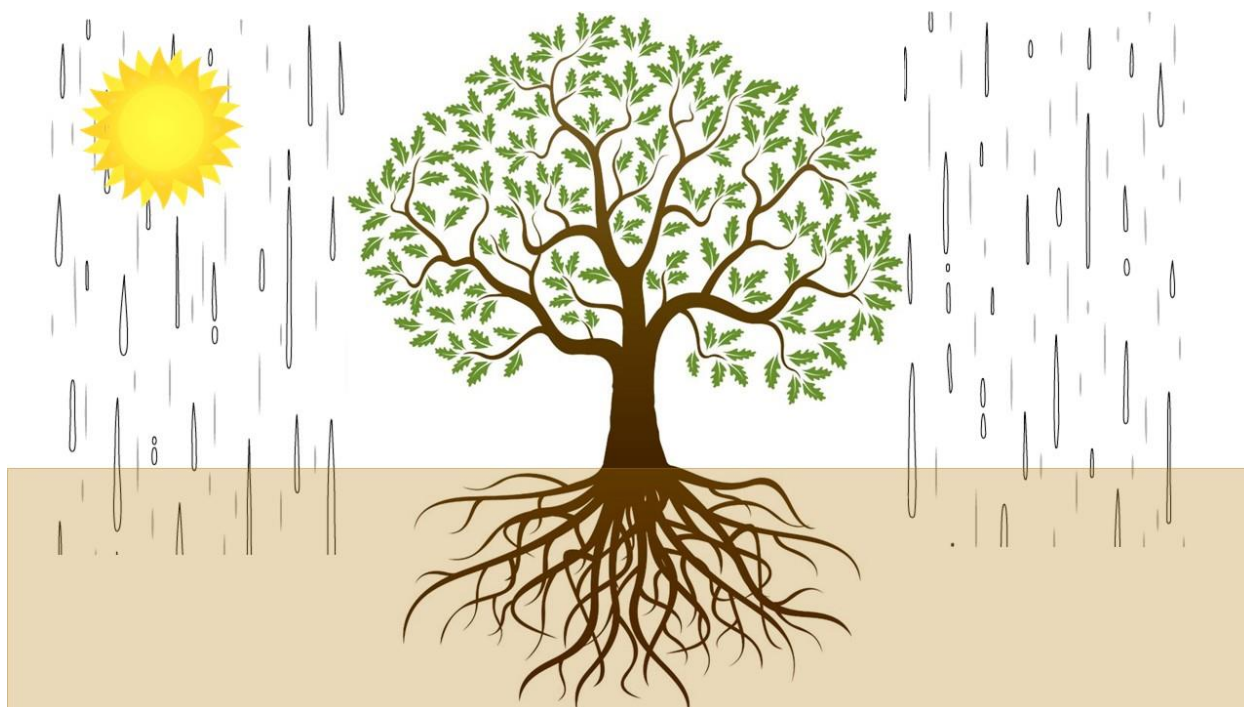
The Metaphor of a Tree

Today’s lesson uses the metaphor of a tree to examine key aspects of growing spiritually; both individually and collectively, as Harvest Life members.

Trees in the Bible have many symbolic meanings, including life, growth, and fertility. Trees symbolize the blessings God gives to creation and remind the people of God of His plan for us to thrive.

Growth – Natural and Spiritual Elements

Every living thing in nature grows – whether in size, age, knowledge, capability, or some other manner – growth is an active process. The pattern or rate of growth is unique to each person or thing within its category. Consider for example a tree. Trees come in different varieties, i.e. color, size/height, etc., and have different purposes. The common factor is that they are all trees. There are several essential elements necessary for trees to grow. The same is true for Christians. Let us examine a few.



Salvation - The Beginning of New Life

The tree begins life as a sapling. For Christians, salvation represents the beginning of a new life in Christ. It is important for all believers – especially those newly saved – to connect to a local church which represents the good ground in which they become planted and begin their growth and development journey. It is in the local church where the firm foundation of the Word of God comes to life through the preaching and teaching of biblical principles and standards. As believers, we are saved from eternal darkness and walk in the light and victory of Jesus' work on the cross for us. In John 8:12 Jesus tells us,

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

The Life System of the Local Church is like a Root of a Tree

The life system of the local church is like the root system of a tree which provides stability and continued growth. The services, ministries, events, fellowship opportunities, leadership, discipleship, etc., are components of

the life system of the local church that create a safe and spiritually fortifying place for growth.

For trees, roots are strengthened through engagement in the ground in which they are planted. They don't uproot themselves at will to move to another spot that looks sunnier. For believers, this requires growing in faith and resilience to stand not just when everything is going well. There is a strengthening through the storm because we have confidence in the God of the storm as Jesus reminds us in Mark 4:39

“And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

Living Water – The Water of His Word

In John 4, Jesus uses the metaphor of living water to teach the Samaritan woman at the well about the benefits of life in Him. It is important to not just accept Jesus as Savior; we must allow Him to be Lord over our lives.

Growing in our personal relationship with Jesus involves embracing the life-sustaining water of His Word, surrendering our will for His Will and walking in the ways of Christ. Spending time with Jesus in prayer and bible teaching as well as reading and hearing His Word increases our faith (Romans 10:17), helps us trust God with every aspect of our lives and strengthens our confidence in Him – knowing that He is the source of our strength. Knowing is growing! Romans 8:28 states,

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

In addition to growing, trees are productive. They carry out the purpose for which they were designed – whether it is to produce shade, shelter, fruit, nuts, pine cones, or wood, or help clean the air. Live trees have purpose. The same goes for us as Christians. We are saved with a Kingdom purpose and called to carry out our assignment here on earth.

Actively Participate in Your Growth Process

God desires that His children grow. Jeremiah 3:15 states, “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Bishop Dukes and Pastor Deborah are God’s provision for our spiritual growth and maturity. Spiritual growth however, is not a passive event. It requires action and engagement on our parts. Below are some of the key activities that should be a part of every believer’s growth process.

1. Get saved/rededicate your life to Christ; get baptized and connected to the local church.

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

2. Honor and respect our Senior Pastors’ leadership, guidance and instructions.

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

3. Consistently attend church services, Sunday School, Life Group and Churches United events.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

4. Join a ministry and/or be a worker in support of a special community or church event.

Luke 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

5. Give in tithes and offering, and become a recurring giver on one of our giving platforms.

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

6. Let go of worldly things that hinder your spiritual growth.

2 Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

7. Celebrate life in Christ and share your story with others

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

When we commit to our personal growth in Christ and join together with like-minded believers; speaking the same things, giving, and working together in unity, there is a synergistic effect that leads to greater life-changing impact. We understand that we can do more collectively than we can do on our own.

Conclusion

God blessed us with the BEST Senior Pastors – Bishop Dukes and Pastor Deborah, who lead this Life System called Harvest Life to bring the love, saving grace and message of Jesus Christ to the world! Harvest Life Church is a place for growth – from preschoolers to seniors – we are rooted and connected.

Through active attendance and participation in services and events we receive the spiritual nourishment that is key to our continued growth. We are being equipped to carry out our Kingdom assignment. The deeper the root, the greater the strength and ability to withstand the schemes of the enemy.

“Just like a tree planted by the water I [we] shall not be moved!”

We grow.

We are Harvest Life Church!

NAME: _____

SUNDAY SCHOOL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT
Lesson: We Grow

Lesson Introduction

1. **True or False (circle one):** God desires for us to grow spiritually.

Growth – Natural and Spiritual Elements

2. **Fill in the blanks.** For Christians, _____ represents the beginning of a new life in _____.
3. **Fill in the blanks.** It is in the _____ where the firm foundation of the _____ comes to life through preaching and teaching of biblical principles and standards.
4. **Where is this scripture found?:** Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
- a. John 1:7
 - b. John 12:8
 - c. John 3:16
 - d. John 8:12
5. **Answer the question.** Briefly describe how the life system of the local church provides for stability and continued growth as discussed in the lesson:

6. **Write the scripture:** Romans 8:28

Actively Participate in Your Growth Process

7. **True or False (circle one):** Spiritual growth is a passive event.

8. **Fill in the blanks.** Jeremiah 3:15 says “And I will give you _____ according to _____ _____, which shall feed you with _____ and _____.”

9. **Answer the question:** List 3 of the key activities for spiritual growth.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
