

ROOTING AROUND

Over the last few days, we've meditated upon different aspects of roots. We've talked about how deep roots keep our souls healthy even in seasons of hardship. We've discussed steps necessary to maintain healthy roots, like allowing God's living water to pour through us as we serve others. And we've discussed maintaining healthy roots by guarding against earthly wisdom. Only by continually nourishing our roots with Godly wisdom can we remain healthy and deeply rooted.

Since we are on the topic, I decided to dig a little more deeply to see what other spiritual truths God might teach us through roots. (The devotional series is called *Rooted & Flourishing*, after all!) As I began to research, I learned that roots are even more fascinating than I'd thought. The function of roots extends beyond the basic tasks of delivering water and nutrients to plants. Some scientists go so far as to identify the root system as the brain of a plant.

Roots are like a brain in that they sense the environment around them. (They even look a bit like a brain if you remove the soil.) They detect water and nutrients and move toward those sources. Many plants and trees can survive drought because the roots are able to seek out distant sources of water. Some desert-dwelling trees, such as the Shepherd's Tree in Africa and the Texas Mesquite can grow roots 200 feet deep!

Recent research convincingly suggests that trees can communicate with one another through their roots. Root filaments connect through underground fungal networks to share nutrients and resources. Most fascinating of all "trees send chemical, hormonal and slow-pulsing electrical signals, which scientists are just beginning to decipher."¹ What are the trees saying to one another? We don't yet know, but we hope to find out!

So, what spiritual lessons can we appropriate from our newly-learned facts about roots? Allow me to suggest a few. First, deep, healthy roots will help us find sources of nourishment. They don't simply sustain us through seasons of hardship, they help us maintain a trajectory of health and growth. Second, our roots are more than just spiritual intuition. Healthy roots are like a spiritual brain, helping us discern between Godly wisdom and worldly wisdom. Third, our roots are the means by which we communicate with our Father. As we share our thoughts and emotions with him, he helps us think clearly and make wise decisions. As Peter says, "You already know these things, dear friends. So be on guard; then you will not be carried away . . . and lose your own secure footing [or healthy roots]. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 3:17). Like the spiritual ecosystem we discussed several days ago, caring for our roots involves a healthy balance of wisdom, knowledge, virtue, and faith in God. Let's grow our roots more deeply into Jesus every day.

Lord, thank you for giving me the capacity to learn and grow. Help me to diligently pursue a greater knowledge of you and a greater faith in your promises. I repent of ignoring my own growth and health. Equip me to discern between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom as I seek to grow stronger in the foundations of my faith. Teach me to seek your presence and guidance so that I can

¹ Richard Grant, "Do Trees Talk to Each Other?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084>. See also *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* by Peter Wohlleben (Greystone Books, 2016).

think clearly and continue to grow even in seasons of hardship and spiritual drought. Show me areas in which my roots are weak or in which my spiritual ecosystem is unbalanced. Grow me healthier in every area of my life so that I can bring greater glory and honor to your Name. Amen.

Personal Reflection

Meditate on the idea of your spiritual roots as the brain of your soul. How can you extend your roots more deeply into the Lord by growing in your knowledge of him or your communication with him? Do you need to spend more time conversing with your Father and seeking his guidance in prayer? Do you need to be more intentional about your study of Scripture and your knowledge of the Bible? Or are your roots lacking depth in some other area? Determine one action step you can take this week to grow your roots more deeply in God.

