

## **HAPPY TREES**

### **Abiding in a Place of Abundance**

A snippet from drjulieconnor.com:

“Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, believed many people possess a scarcity mentality. He explained, “they see life as having only so much, as though there were only one pie out there. And if someone were to get a big piece of that pie, that would mean less for everybody.”

John C Maxwell, motivation speaker and leadership expert, adds that those with a scarcity mentality fear losing what little they have and believe they must protect it. They find it difficult to share with others. They are often jealous or resentful when others experience success.

An abundance mentality flows from a deep sense of personal self-worth and security. Scarcity beliefs only manifest limitations and lack; an abundance mentality welcomes possibilities and new opportunities.”

### **Dancers who dance upon injustice**

### **People in Acts selling all their possession.**

### **Paul singing in prison.**

How? How is it, that when the world tries to take everything from us, we still have more to give?

John 7:37-38

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and called out in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said: ‘Streams of living water will flow from within him.’”

## Judges 9:8-15 Jotham's Parable

Once upon a time the trees decided to choose a king.

First, they said to the olive tree,

'Be our king!'

<sup>9</sup> But the olive tree refused, saying,

'Should I quit producing the olive oil

that blesses both God and people,

just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

<sup>10</sup> "Then they said to the fig tree,

'You be our king!'

<sup>11</sup> But the fig tree also refused, saying,

'Should I quit producing my sweet fruit

just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

<sup>12</sup> "Then they said to the grapevine,

'You be our king!'

<sup>13</sup> But the grapevine also refused, saying,

'Should I quit producing the wine

that cheers both God and people,

just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

<sup>14</sup> "Then all the trees finally turned to the thorn bush and said,

'Come, you be our king!'

<sup>15</sup> And the thorn bush replied to the trees,

'If you truly want to make me your king,

come and take shelter in my shade.

If not, let fire come out from me

and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"

- 1) I do not need to wait for the spotlight to be productive for the Kingdom
- 2) I do not need the spotlight to be significant
- 3) I have everything I need to bless God and man right here and right now

- 4) I will not be offended by people in the spotlight who make bad decisions
- 5) Because I do not depend on people in the spotlight to be productive
- 6) I am a better servant to my leaders because I do not have any need to claw my own way to the top

**Point One: I do not need to wait for the spotlight to be productive for the Kingdom**

Excuses: I'm not a pastor. I'm not a counselor. I'm not a famous speaker. Thank God there are pastors and counselors and famous speakers out there.

Truth: John 15:5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who **remain** in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

Truth: All you need to do is abide to be productive.

Truth: You can be a pastor or councilor or famous speaker and if you're not abiding, you're doing nothing!

Psalm 1:1-3

Oh, the joys of those who do not  
follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners,  
or join in with mockers.

2 But they **delight** in the law of the Lord,  
meditating on it **day and night**.

3 They are like trees **planted** along the riverbank,  
**bearing fruit** each season.

Their leaves never wither,

and they prosper in all they do.

3 Biblical examples of not waiting for the spotlight to be productive:

Acts 6:2

2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. 3 And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”

5 Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), and others.

8 Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. 9 But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. 10 None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

Stephen then preaches a sermon to his accusers and then this happens:

54 The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen’s accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. 56 And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!”

57 Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” And with that, he died.

How was he able to do this? He was not living in lack. He was abiding in abundance! He did not fear losing his life because he had eternal life. He didn’t need the favor of man; he had the favor of God.

He found a treasure worth more than all his possessions.

Matthew 13:44 “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

## 2nd Example

Jesus talks with the woman at the well. He reveals her sin. His disciples can’t believe he’s talking with her. And this happens:

John 4: 28

The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, 29 “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

She did not wait to graduate seminary. She drank from the well of Jesus and that was enough. She was instantly qualified and empowered to draw people to Jesus.

## 3rd Example

John 6:15

When Jesus saw that they were ready to force him to be their king, he slipped away into the hills by himself.

All of Jesus' satisfaction and purpose is wrapped up in abiding in the Father. He trusts the Father's goodness. The Father would raise him up at the right time. The Father will glorify him. Jesus did not need the praise of men.

Side note: He still doesn't! Don't think you're doing him a service by worshipping him. We praise because he's worthy of praise not because he needs it. We're the ones who benefit from praising God!

Those were 3 examples of not needing to *wait* for the spotlight to be productive for the Kingdom.

## **POINT TWO: I Do Not Need the Spotlight to Be Significant**

'Should I quit producing the olive oil  
that blesses both God and people,  
just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

'Should I quit producing my sweet fruit  
just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

'Should I quit producing the wine  
that cheers both God and people,  
just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

Not only can I be *productive* for the Kingdom without being in the spotlight but I am also *significant* with or without the spotlight.

John 15:15-16

I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told

me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit

Excuses: I'm too young. I'm too old. I'm just a stay at home mom. I'm not very smart. I'm not outgoing. I'm just not that special. Being special is for others.

Truth: You didn't choose a great destiny. He chose you for a great destiny! It's found in Him. In abiding in Him.

You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit

Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

You have 3 choices.

Choice#1: Ignore the significance Jesus prepared for you and paid for with His life!

Choice #2: You can attempt to pursue what *you think* is SIGNIFICANCE - what *you think* will glorify God. To do this, you will have to work hard and rely on your own strength and ability. By doing this, you ignore the significance He places on you through the shedding of His blood. In this case, you will be more like a slave trying to become anything other than a slave than a friend being confided in by a very special person.

Choice#3: Recognize HE chose you! Recognize He calls you friend. Recognize you have been **appointed** by God Himself!!!! To do what? That which naturally occurs by simply abiding in Him.

**POINT THREE: I Have Everything I Need to Bless God and Man Right Here and Right Now**

'Should I quit producing the wine

that cheers both God and people,  
just to wave back and forth over the trees?’

2 Peter 1:3-4

3His divine power has given us everything we need for **life** and **godliness** through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4Through these He has given us His precious and magnificent promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, now that you have escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Excuses: I can't keep the 10 commandments. I sin. I have done bad things in the past.

DUH!!!! Who hasn't?!

But did you know that even your current state, you have everything you need for life and godliness?

Romans 7:4

So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.

What is the law? The requirements of God. The list of good deeds you should do and the list of things you should avoid.

Dying to the law means we no longer have to rely on our righteousness. The result? Good deeds! Producing fruit. Producing a harvest!

He goes on in 7:24 to say

Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? 25 Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law,



but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

And then in 8:12

12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. 13 For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.

The scarcity mentality says, "I do not have enough righteousness to bless God or man".

The Abundance mentality says, "I do not have enough righteousness to bless God or man but I don't need it. I have Christ's righteousness. I have been raised with Him and He is producing fruit in me."

The scarcity mentality will tempt you to oblige your sinful nature because it will give you something you feel you will only get through sinful means. And you fear not having it.

The abundance mentality recognizes that I have so much I don't need whatever it is my flesh is saying I need. And we don't fear lack.

John C Maxwell says:

Fear isn't an emotion we can eradicate. It's impossible to eliminate it once and for all. The key is not to repress fear but to cultivate and express positive emotions that outweigh it. To the extent we allow faith, hope, and love into our hearts, we overwhelm fear overcome its discouraging influence.

How?

Abide! Like a tree by the water.

What happens to a tree by the water? It grows. What is it that we need to grow in in order to develop an abundance mindset and produce fruit?

2 Peter 1:3-4

3His divine power has given us everything we need for **life** and **godliness** through the **knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence.

### **Ephesians 1:17**

asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and **insight** so that you might **grow in** your **knowledge** of God.

### **Philippians 1:9**

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on **growing in knowledge** and understanding.

### **2 Peter 1:2**

May God give you more and more grace and peace as you **grow in** your **knowledge** of God and Jesus our Lord.

### **2 Peter 1:8**

The more you **grow** like this, the more productive and useful you will be **in** your **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **2 Peter 3:18**

Rather, you must **grow in** the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.

Why? Because through that you have everything you need for life and godliness.

Before we go on to the last 3 points, I want to ask  
Why are the trees asking the fruit producers to be King?

Because they are producing fruit!

They are not trusting God to fill them with all good things and so they are in lack. But they see that you are blessing God and man. You are a productive member of society.

Ever seen Extreme Makeover: Home Edition?

What Jotham's Parable is really about:

Gideon. Humble man. Obedient to God. Won great victories.

At this point in time, God did not want them to have a King but trust Him as their king.

However, they recognized the fruit in Gideon's life, and this happened:

Judges 8:22

22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Be our ruler! You and your son and your grandson will be our rulers, for you have rescued us from Midian."

23 But Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The Lord will rule over you!

33 As soon as Gideon died, the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshiping the images of Baal, making Baal-berith their god. 34 They forgot the Lord their God, who had rescued them from all their enemies surrounding them. 35 Nor did they show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-baal (that is, Gideon), despite all the good he had done for Israel.

One day Gideon's[a] son Abimelech went to Shechem to visit his uncles—his mother's brothers. He said to them and to the rest of his mother's

family, 2 “Ask the leading citizens of Shechem whether they want to be ruled by all seventy of Gideon’s sons or by one man. And remember that I am your own flesh and blood!”

4 They gave him seventy silver coins from the temple of Baal-berith, which he used to hire some reckless troublemakers who agreed to follow him. 5 He went to his father’s home at Ophrah, and there, on one stone, they killed all seventy of his half-brothers, the sons of Gideon. But the youngest brother, Jotham, escaped and hid.

6 Then all the leading citizens of Shechem and Beth-millo called a meeting under the oak beside the pillar at Shechem and made Abimelech their king.

7 When Jotham heard about this, he climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted,

“Listen to me, citizens of Shechem!

Listen to me if you want God to listen to you!

8 Once upon a time the trees decided to choose a king.

Those who were abiding were producing fruit. People wanted to make them king. While others recognized their lack but tried to fulfill it by their own means.

The point is that you can pour yourself for society and never run dry if you abide in abundance. Abide in Christ.

## **POINT FOUR: I Will Not be Offended by People in the Spotlight Who Make Bad Decisions**

<sup>14</sup> “Then all the trees finally turned to the thornbush and said,  
‘Come, you be our king!’  
<sup>15</sup> And the thornbush replied to the trees,  
‘If you truly want to make me your king,  
come and take shelter in my shade.  
If not, let fire come out from me  
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’”

They guy they picked to be in the spotlight was a total jerk!

“I’ll be your man - and if you got a problem with that, I’ll kill you.”

Ever been disappointed in a pastor, a celebrity, a famous preacher, a singer, a president?

Have you ever let it become an offence in your heart?

Have you ever shared that offense in conversation or social media?

Did you know that Satan is called the Accuser of the Brethren?

While John 2:1 says

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One”

So who you are going to help? Satan or Jesus? Whose work are you going to do?

Furthermore, if this offensive person in the spotlight happens to be your authority, be careful. Scripture is clear that God has given them power. You don't have to approve of them but do have to respect them.

Look at David.

Look at the parable of Jotham. This is the word of God about what was about to happen.

'If you truly want to make me your king,  
come and take shelter in my shade.  
If not, let fire come out from me  
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"

Abimelech became their king against God's will. Even so, God wanted his structure of respect of authority to be headed. Disregard of God and disrespect of authority led to the mutual destruction of the people and their king.

Point four was I will not be offended by people in the spotlight who make bad decisions

Point five is

**POINT FIVE:...Because I Do Not Depend on People in the Spotlight to be Productive**

'Should I quit producing the olive oil  
that blesses both God and people,  
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‘Should I quit producing the wine  
that cheers both God and people,  
just to wave back and forth over the trees?’

Because I am productive and fulfilling my purpose in life, I do not need you to be productive for me. Therefore, I will not be offended with your lack.

Because I have everything I need for life and godliness, I do not need to be threatened when others fail. Their failure is not my failure.

I do not need to put them down so that I could lifted high because I’m happy where I am, trusting God.

Apollos

Acts 18:24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, [d]an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

## **POINT SIX: I Am a Better Servant to My Leaders Because I Do Not Have to Claw My Own Way to the Top**

Joseph, David, Daniel, Nehemiah

These men had poor leaders but with a servant's heart, they made the world a better place

How? They were abiding in a place of abundance.

Acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord is not enough to live a productive life. Sounds heretical but it's bible.

John 15

4 Remain in me, and I will **remain** in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

6 Anyone who does not **remain** in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

Jesus requires you acknowledge Christ as Lord AND abide. Remain.

Why? Because God is relational. Because God is Love.

Because Love demands constant connection.

Also, abiding keeps our eyes open the abundance we have in Jesus.

As soon as we let ourselves get distracted, forget how much we have.



When we began to develop a scarcity mindset, we drain the world instead of produce for the world.

Abiding leads to recognition of abundance which leads to pouring ourselves out and never running dry.

A verse about the power of recognizing what we have:

Philemon 1:6

That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.