How much does your experience influence your beliefs?

I grew up in dry Eastern Colorado. Unless you lived near the river or an irrigation ditch, trees could be few and far between. My grandfather loved that part of Colorado for that reason. He grew up in Southern Illinois, all his free time as a child was spent digging stumps out of the fields that his dad was trying to establish for planting corn. He grew to dislike stumps and the trees that caused them so much that it was one of the reasons he said he loved SE Colorado, “you could see for miles and not see a single tree!”

Even though not many trees grew in our area they were desired in important places like shade for your house on the hot 100o summer days, or to provide a windbreak to stop the snow from drifting over the roads and livestock. So as a young man my life was very different than my Grandad’s as I spent a lot of time planting and caring for trees trying to get them to grow in the environment that was not very receptive to them. As we transplanted trees to the area we always tried to get as big a root ball as we could manage. I was always told the more roots you had the better chances of the tree surviving. Are you starting to see how upbringing affects you? Grandad hated roots and I did everything I could to preserve and nourish them.

In 1995, I joined CVM and moved to Uganda with my beautiful wife and 3 children. About a year after being there, I was helping people to establish citrus trees in their yards for food. There was a local Ugandan who raised and grafted the trees that you could buy and transplant. I was excited to help with this project and went to pick up a load of trees. I selected some 3-4 foot tall trees and he pulled out his shovel, dug them up, shook the dirt off the roots, trimmed the roots back to 4-6 inches long then turned the tree over, pruned off some of the branches, and pulled all the leaves off. I was horrified. I had grown up trying to get as big a root ball as possible and he just did the opposite. He told me how to plant the trees and said they would be just fine. I was afraid they all would die, so I talked him into going with me to plant them. We got them all planted, and he told me how to water each tree with one 20-liter jerrycan each day for 3 weeks. I did just as he described, and soon little buds appeared on the stems and leave started coming out. To my surprise, all the trees lived. I was amazed but realized the roots were given time to establish and then they started to put on new leaves that the tree could support. In the next year, we started to get oranges and grapefruit! My experiences changed my beliefs, I began to understand how important well-establish roots were to support healthy plant growth. Once the roots were established the tree flourished but being well-rooted was critical to the tree having life and producing fruit.

Paul in Ephesians 3:17 uses the metaphor of being rooted and grounded in love to explain the mystery (3:3,4) that is part of God’s eternal purpose (3:11) and that surpasses knowledge (3:19). Wow, this sounds very important. That mystery was being revealed in the church in Ephesus that every person (Jew and Gentile) derives their origin or name from God. All people were separated from God or dead in their trespasses (2:1) and through Christ were adopted (1:5) or chosen by God, and through Him, we are redeemed (1:7) or bought back to a relationship with God, through the forgiveness of our sins that were paid for with the blood of Christ (1:7). This was God choosing to redeem His “own possession, to the praise of His glory” (1:14). That even though we were dead or separated in...
our trespasses God, through His love, has made us alive in Christ (2:4-5). This reuniting with God was not something we earned but was a gift through faith that brings us back into fellowship with God (2:8-9).

How does this relate to being rooted and grounded in Christ’s love? Often as people, we focus on our outward actions or appearance as a way to earn favor or acceptance with God. For the early Jews, they had grown up trying to fulfill the law to earn righteousness. For us today, we may try to earn favor through good actions or spiritual disciplines. But Paul stresses in Ephesians 3 that if Christ dwells in our hearts through faith that our focus will be God’s love rather than our actions. By living in our spirit, Christ is the new source of our new life. Then we experience something so much greater: a love that comes from God and has no limits. Steve Walker, Canyon Hills Community Church Pastor explained God’s love in Ephesians 3:17-18 as:

- Wide enough to include all of us
- Long enough to last forever
- Deep enough to cover over my worst sins
- High enough to bring us to heaven

The greatest transforming experience we can have in life is to experience the redeeming love of Christ and the power of His Spirit in us that reunites us with God. As we are grounded or rooted in His love through faith we are filled up with the fullness of God. We no longer focus on our actions and behavior but His loving redemption. When Christ dwells in our heart our identity is based on what Christ did for us rather then what we do for ourselves. Then we are like a well-rooted tree that begins to flourish, drawing on the richness of God to produces leaves and fruit. This experience can surpass all we understand and fill us with the fullness of God.

“Now to Him who can do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.”

(Ephesians 3:20-21)

- Because God loves us what actions did He take to show His love in Ephesians 1?
- Based on the description of God’s love, is there anyone who could not experience it?
- How has your experience influenced your beliefs?
- Why does being rooted in love transform our actions and motivations?

Rooted in Christ,
Brad

A Note of Encouragement for Brad and Angela

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