

Cultivate Deep Spiritual Roots With These 2 Practical Applications

“But other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up because they did not have deep soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched. And because they did not take root, they withered away” (Matt. 13:5-6).

As a youth pastor, it can be so painful to watch a volunteer or student that began serving Christ so brightly, quickly digress from all the growth that the Lord had begun in their life. Many times, our first reaction to such a situation is to become upset with these leaders or students. We often become exceptionally frustrated with their immaturity and lack of commitment. We berate their lack of total dedication to “the call” on their life to ministry. However, I believe Jesus provides us with a great leadership picture of how to develop deep roots in your leaders and students. First let’s take a look at what deep roots provide.

Roots Provide Stability in Storms

Storms are inevitable in our lives and the lives of those we lead. A deep root system is what keeps us grounded during these times.

I can remember as a senior in high school hiking in the forest of Scotland, where my parents were missionaries. In Scotland, many of the oceans winds would blow through the forest, sometimes at nearly 100 mph. These forests had trees which had been there for decades, and in that time had grown tall and strong. On one occasion, I came upon a tree that had recently fallen over because of the storm, and the crater left from the root system was at least 15 feet deep. This tree had stood for

nearly a century because it's root system was expansive.

We have all have had leaders who start so brightly, but when a gentle "life" breeze blows through, they collapse. As leaders, we must be more concerned about how deep the roots of our volunteers and students are than how pretty their leaves are.

Roots access deeper nutrients.

This may seem like an odd statement, but bear with me. Today I know I am closer to God than ever before, even though I don't "feel" like I am. I have been in ministry for nearly 15 years and I don't "feel" as close to God now, but I know I am. When I was younger I can remember going from moment to moment, living off of what I classified as a "God moment." However, my relationship with Jesus is much more consistent now, and the time between these "God moments" have grown farther and farther apart. I believe this is because I have put down deeper roots that have accessed something deeper. I have found something that God wants to speak and reveal to me, rather than what can, at times, be surface level experiences.

With those we lead we have to help them access deeper nutrients by driving their root system down. With those leaders who are up and down in their walks with God, it is our responsibility to guide them. We need to help them gain understanding that God has something deeper for their life. Yes, what is on the surface is easier to access, but what runs deep is longer lasting. The deeper your leader's roots go, the better fruit they will produce.

Roots access deeper water.

Every person has dry seasons, and it is usually the individual who has tapped into a deep water supply who is able to withstand the withering heat of life. If we think about this in agricultural terms, the farmer plants his crop in the spring, and harvests them at the end of summer. In between the planting and the harvest is a hot and dry season; However,

because the crop has a healthy root system, it is able to stay alive.

Yourself and those you lead are going to go through similar dry seasons. Through these times it will be your deep roots accessing the water of the Holy Spirit, which is deep below the surface, that will sustain you.

Practical application:

1. Remove the rocks to free up the roots.

Rocks block the progress of the roots and this is usually character issues that must either be broken or removed. Help your leaders identify these rocks and either remove them or break them.

2. Death creates good soil

The best soil is formed from the death of another organism. The best soil in our hearts and lives is created when we die to ourselves. This spiritual death creates fertile soil in our own lives, which results in deep roots and good fruit. Our job as leaders is to identify and lead people in this journey of death. The best way to demonstrate this way of life is by example, and it is the most life-giving path to walk.

*Reprinted with permission from Victory Church. **Pastor Eric Morris** oversees the youth ministry at Victory in Tulsa, Oklahoma.*