

Prologue for Section 2: “You Are Only the Branch”

This second section of “A Different Kind of Tree” is entitled: “You Are Only the Branch”. Section 1 dealt with the idea that “You Are the Tree”, the whole tree from root system, to the trunk, to the system of branches; we shift now to see us as a branch only. To know how this book relates its messages for life and living and becoming a Christian, we must now shift the metaphor to look to the tree branch as it is attached to the main tree trunk. We first must look at the structure of a tree branch, its make up of limbs and twigs, and how they all work together. A bad ugly tree trunk creates bad, ugly and dying branches, devoid of good form and produce, branches that will break in the storms of life. A good healthy tree trunk will produce healthy branches bearing good fruit, peaceful shade and strong wood.

As noted in the first two sentences of Prologue 1, a tree grows in two ways. Besides the lateral inward and outward growth discussed in Prologue 1, the other way is the upward growth at the ends of all the littlest branches. Let’s look at some foundational details for our metaphor.

Leaves are an amazing machine designed by God that provides food for the plant while transforming the air around it. The leaf will take in sunlight, water and carbon dioxide and generate food energy for the plant and then release oxygen as a beneficial by-product. It is a process called photosynthesis. The motor for this useful work is chlorophyll, which use chloroplasts as the light collectors. Few manufacturing processes are so well-designed to produce a necessary product using readily available resources, and then producing most useful by-products which are necessary for all.

Since the chloroplasts require exposure to the sunlight and available surface area for air to move through the leaf’s stomata, leaves have engaged a wonderful structural design which supports the leaf blade or lamina between a system of large and small braces. This system of bracing grows out of the leaf base, through a central stalk much like your backbone, and lateral

braces much like your rib-cage that supports and protects your chest.

The tree is productive and useful to others when the leaves are healthy and generating food energy. The leaf is the energy engine and storage system doing useful work for the whole tree. The leaves can do their work when they are well anchored and stay connected on the system of branches. Now, the productive benefit of the tree comes down to how healthy the system of small to large branches is, as each connection works its way down finally to the main tree trunk.

Dependence is key! The top and smallest branches depend on the branches below, and those branches depend on the yet larger branches below. So it goes all the way to the main trunk. What happens to the trunk impacts all the branches above. If a mighty wind blows and topples the tree, not only do all the branches topple but the root system is pulled out of the ground. So, we see that a good firm and mighty root system is necessary to support the tree. The roots depend on the leaves and the leaves depend on the roots; it all works together in a fantastic God-designed machine. You would do well to think about this “machine” the next time you reflect on a nearby tree; do it, people might think you are weird, but who cares. We are discussing and celebrating an absolutely amazing design by God.

For this second section, we will be looking at ourselves as the main branch that is connected to the trunk. Don't worry about the system of smaller and smaller branches; we will define your branch as made of everything above it, to the small twig and all the leaves. We would be pushing the metaphor too far for us to continue to look at branches connected to smaller branches, and then yet smaller branches. It is unnecessary anyway.

The main question may well be this: To what are you connected?