



MONDAY MANNA

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ROOTED TOGETHER FOR STRENGTH

By Robert J. Tamasy

I have never seen firsthand the huge sequoia trees, also known as California redwoods, which grow in the western United States. However, I recently learned about a characteristic of these trees that contributes not only to their incredible height but also to their extraordinary longevity.

These trees have been known to grow well over 300 feet tall (not including their root system), up to 26 feet in diameter, and many have lived well beyond 1,000 years. To what do scientists attribute their amazing size, durability and lifespan? One of the most important factors, I discovered, is their root system. Sequoia trees intertwine their roots with other sequoias, enabling them to share strength and resources necessary for their growth and health. They are better equipped for enduring adversity as well.

What if we were to function more like sequoias in the business and professional world? There is a tendency to emphasize independence and individual achievement. We hear about the “rising star” in the office or company, the person that stands out for exceptional performance. There is nothing wrong with recognizing those that stand out, but a reality in nature and everyday life is in virtually every instance, we can accomplish more together than we can in operating by ourselves.

Despite mantras such as “it is all about me” and “I did it my way,” there is something very gratifying and rewarding about working together as a team, complementing one another with our respective strengths and abilities, and offsetting our weaknesses.

Every visionary leader needs good administrative and clerical people to accomplish their objectives. Idea people need skilled communicators to convey their ideas effectively. Accomplished sales people would be of no value without the capable staff poised to make the products they sell.

The Bible emphasizes this principle of pooling resources and mutual strength for a greater outcome. Here is a sampling of what it says about working together for the common good, much as huge sequoias merge their root systems to maximize their growth:

Joining together to provide needed support. We need each other. Isolation and insistence on operating independently can ultimately lead to discouragement and lack of motivation. *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another”* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Sharing resources for mutual benefit. In a competitive world we are tempted to seek our own advantage, at times at the expense of others. But short-term gains can result in long-term losses. Working together, sharing assets and strengths, can lead to substantially greater benefits for all. *“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”* (Hebrews 13:16).

Teaming up to achieve greater results. There is much to be said about the synergy of people working in concert, united around a common sense of mission, vision and values. They can accomplish great things together that they could only dream about independently. *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up?... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever personally seen sequoia trees or studied characteristics of their unique growth and longevity? What do you know about them?
2. Can you think of a time or situation in which the principle of being “rooted together” was clearly demonstrated in a project you were involved with at work? Describe the circumstances and the outcome.
3. When might it be better to insist on working independently, rather than as part of a team? Do you think the desire for personal gain and benefits could justify that approach at times? Why or why not?
4. How can working with others toward achieving a common mission enhance personal motivation, inspiration and strength? Give any examples that come to your mind.

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions from the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 20:18, 27:17; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10:1-7