

## **A Trusted Mentor**

March 19, 2016

### Colossians 2: 6-9

*<sup>6</sup> You have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord. Now keep on following him. <sup>7</sup> Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life. Be strong in your faith, just as you were taught. And be grateful. <sup>8</sup> Don't let anyone fool you by using senseless arguments. These arguments may sound wise, but they are only human teachings. They come from the powers of this world and not from Christ. <sup>9</sup> God lives fully in Christ. <sup>10</sup> And you are fully grown because you belong to Christ, who is over every power and authority.*

#### **A Trusted Mentor**

Pastor John

Our scripture today and the focus of this week's Lenten study is the idea of having a trusted mentor. In the picture on the screen and on the cover of your bulletin,

we see the essence of what this relationship is. A trusted mentor is someone who you can come to in time of need or when you need advice or guidance. It is someone who has walked the road you are on and has wisdom and leadership to offer to you. In terms of our faith, we would say a trusted mentor is a fellow believer who is more mature in the faith, who exhibits the practices of faith that we would like to have ourselves, and is someone who will help us to be accountable in our faith. They will speak the tough truth into our lives that we all need to hear from time to time as well as offering words of support and encouragement and love in those times when this is what is needed. Throughout the course of my life, I have had people who have mentored me, people who have poured into my life.



They are very much the key to who I am today. I am grateful for each of these men and women who have given so much of themselves to me. In turn, people have crossed my path who I have tried to be intentional about mentoring, about helping along their journey of faith. As Christians, God intends our faith to be lived out in community, walking our journeys of faith together. This is who we are. This is who God created us to be.

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Over the course of the past few weeks, I have been meeting with the ninth-grade confirmation students one-on-one to work on their creeds, or personal statements of faith. One of the things we discuss is their personal journey of faith. The question about their faith asks, "What journey did you take to be the Christian you are today?" As this conversation unfolds, we usually get around to talking about who influenced their faith. Last Sunday, as I met with one of our Youth, I was blessed to hear her testimony. I asked her about her faith influences, and after a moment of thought, this young lady shared that she has become the believer she is today because of the faith she sees lived out in her two older sisters. Through how they follow Christ, they have led her to follow Christ in a meaningful and deep way in her life. The decisions she makes, the friends she chooses to associate with, the trust she has in her Lord – these are all ways she saw her sisters living out their faith and have led her to walk the path of faith that she is walking. Whether these two older sisters meant to or not, they were and are mentoring this faithful, young disciple. It is a beautiful thing to see and a blessing to hear how Christ is at work in this family.





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These two older sisters, and now this younger sister, have placed their trust in Jesus as they have accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. This is what we read about earlier in our scripture passage from Colossians. Verses six and seven read:

*<sup>6</sup> You have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord. Now keep on following him.*

*<sup>7</sup> Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life. Be strong in your faith, just as you were taught.*

Paul tells us that once we accept Christ as Lord, that we must follow Him. We know what that looked like for the disciples. They spent most of three years literally trailing along behind Jesus. They saw the miracles, they heard the parables and teachings, they witnessed the clashes with the Pharisees and other religious leaders, they felt the power of God that resided in Jesus. On occasions, they were sent out on their own, to literally be Jesus' hands and feet. They were sent out two by two to teach and to heal. So more than just observing Jesus, they experienced what it was like to heal someone and to help them to declare Jesus the Messiah. The disciples were Jesus' friends and his closest companions. But Jesus was also their mentor.

We cannot literally pull up stakes, leave Winner, and follow the real-life Jesus. So then, what does it look like to 'follow' Jesus in 2017 in Winner, South Dakota?



Heart  
Soul  
Mind  
Strength  
Love  
Neighbors  
Feeding  
Clothing  
Visiting  
Worship  
No other  
GOD

For us, it begins by reading the Word and following what it says. When the Bible says to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, it literally means we should love God with

all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. When the Bible says to love our neighbors, it literally means we should love our neighbors. When Jesus says that we are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the widows and prisoners, we should literally be feeding, clothing, and visiting. When the Bible says to worship no other God, we should obey this command too. That means placing God above all else – family, friends, work, hobbies, sports, and so on. It is a commitment. It is a re-prioritizing of our lives. It is choosing God over all else.



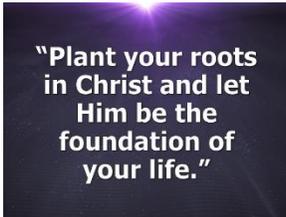
A Trusted  
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As our passage today stated, to grow and mature in our faith, we need to be rooted in Christ Jesus. When we choose to be rooted in Jesus, over time, He becomes our foundation.

Again, Paul wrote, *“Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life.”* Paul concludes these two

verses by encouraging us to be strong in our faith. These concepts tie so well together and work together to build us

up. We must sink our faith roots down deep in Jesus, so that He is our foundation. The building adage is true with our faith as well. We can only be as strong as our foundation. Only when our foundation is built upon Christ the Rock can we weather the storms of life and continue along on our daily journey of faith.



“Plant your roots  
in Christ and let  
Him be the  
foundation of  
your life.”

To illustrate this point, I ask you to turn your attention to the screens for this short video on being rooted in Christ. [Play video.]



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It is so important to be rooted in Christ because we know that in life we will be tested. We know that there will be times of doubt. In these moments, we must do just what the video says: stand strong, hold fast, trust in His promises. He is our refuge and fortress. We must stay rooted in His unfailing love. It is through trusting and standing strong, through holding fast and believing over and over, that we experience God being there over and over. God is faithful. It is by experiencing this again and again that our relationship with God gets stronger and stronger. Then we cannot be shaken.

Paul goes on in our passage from Colossians to also speak of the testing that will surely come. Our Lenten sermon series and our devotional study speak to this as well. The title of the series and study is Listen: Praying in a Noisy World. This ties directly to our concept of being rooted in Christ. Only when He is our foundation can we discern God's voice from all the other voices that call out to us and try to draw our attention away from our faith. In verse eight, Paul writes of the voices and arguments that come from the world:



LISTEN:  
Praying in a  
NOISY World

*<sup>8</sup> Don't let anyone fool you by using senseless arguments. These arguments may sound wise, but they are only human teachings. They come from the powers of this world and not from Christ.*



## A Trusted Mentor

On our own, at times we cannot discern these senseless arguments from the true teachings of Christ. At times, the voice of the world does seem wise and is often tempting. It cuts straight to the flesh that dwells within each of us and raises up the desires of the flesh. And some of the time, these voices can appear to be good. Sometimes we can think we are working for God to bring healing to the world, for example, but we are just trying to gain notoriety or accolades for ourselves. Our hearts can be in the wrong place even when we appear to be doing the right thing. In these moments, a trusted mentor is invaluable. When we are wavering or when we have gotten off the path, it is in these moments that we need someone to speak truth into our lives. It can be a mentor, it can be a friend, it can even be a song or the message on a Sunday morning that snaps us back into our daily walk with Jesus.

I would like to share a story with you that ties back in to the "Rooted" video we saw earlier. It also speaks of our need to steadily hold fast to our faith, continuing to trust in God - always. Like a good mentor who pours and pours into another, it takes time to develop and mature in our faith.

*There was once a farmer who went to town to purchase seeds for his farm. As he was returning home, one of the squash seeds he had purchased fell from his pocket onto the ground. It happened that within a few feet was another seed of a different type. The place where the two seeds lay was rather fertile, and miraculously they took root.*

*After about a week the squash seed showed signs of growth. The second seed showed none. After two weeks, the squash began to sprout leaves. The second seed showed none. After seven weeks, the squash began to show fruit. The second seed still showed no progress.*

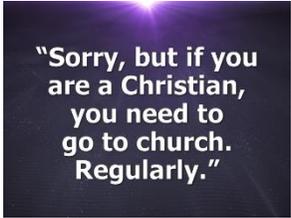
*Four more weeks came and gone. The squash plant reached the end of its life bearing much fruit in that time, but the other seed finally began to slowly grow. Many years later the squash was all but forgotten, but the other tiny seed, an acorn, had grown into a mighty oak tree.*

*Many people want their faith to be like the squash. They want to experience it all right now...rather than be rooted for life.*

This story of the farmer is the story of our faith as well. Our faith is like the slow but steady growth of the oak tree. It takes time to grow deep roots and to grow tall and to stand strong. The tree needs water and sunshine and wind and rain and good soil to grow tall and to stand strong. Our faith needs things too if it is going to have deep roots and to grow tall and stand strong. Our faith needs study and prayer and worship and trials and testing and the Word to have deep roots and to grow tall, to stand strong.

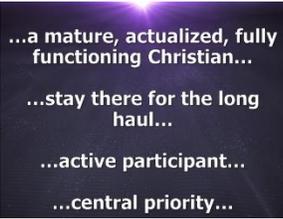
I happened to read an article on Monday evening that speaks to this idea of slow but steady growth. (I think it was God intervening to help me with this sermon.) It speaks of commitment and dedication to our faith. It speaks of the good soil

we find within our communities of faith. The article was titled: *"Sorry, but if you are a Christian, you need to go to church. Regularly."* Yes, I know some folks are uncomfortable where this might go - just hearing and seeing the title. It was actually my second favorite article that I read this week. My favorite was, *"How to Be a Good Christian with Minimal Effort."* It was dripping with satire. It was delightful. Very applicable as well, but perhaps a bit much for using in this sermon.



"Sorry, but if you are a Christian, you need to go to church. Regularly."

In this article from author Paul Prather, he makes this statement in his opening paragraphs:



...a mature, actualized, fully functioning Christian...  
...stay there for the long haul...  
...active participant...  
...central priority...

*Yes, you have to go to church. That is, if you want to progress in your faith — if you hope to become a mature, actualized, fully functioning Christian. You must join a congregation, stay there for the long haul and become an active participant. You must not only attend but get involved. Church must become a central priority in your life.*

Take a minute. Think about how these ideas have been lived out in your faith journey. Think about the benefits you have experienced when you have lived out these concepts. Perhaps some or all of these ideas are not yet a part of your faith journey. If so, I encourage you to read the whole article and to consider what your faith could become. I posted a link this morning on Facebook.

In the body of the article, Prather begins by writing about how Christianity is a team sport, about how the Bible commands that we gather together, and about how we all have gifts to offer one another. All are very true. But for me, it was the next three points that hit home. They are the 'why' we must go to church regularly. The first point I would like to share is: *"Your fellow parishioners, including your pastor, will make you mad, hurt your feelings and get on your last nerve."*

"Your fellow parishioners, including your pastor, will make you mad, hurt your feelings and get on your last nerve."

Prather explains his rationale for his point this way: *"This is exactly what's supposed to happen. Finding ourselves offended and disappointed lets us see just how shallow and petty we are. It sands down our rough edges. We discover that, by gosh, we're no better than all those other hymn-warbling yahoos! Also, watching God work miracles through the smelly, imperfect, hypocritical men and women who make up a congregation reveals to us the unfathomable depths of God's grace and love. It renews our faith. We realize he can use anybody — even us."* We are all sinners saved by grace, all equally in need of God's refining and pruning. We are all in need of experiencing the depths of God's love. We are all needed in the building of God's kingdom here on earth.

The second point I would like to share is this: *"Your fellow Christians will reveal aspects of the Lord you've never seen."* Prather explains why this way: *"As we get to know our fellow pilgrims, as we hear them tell and retell their sordid stories while they're bumbling along, we find they've experienced God in ways we haven't. They've seen revelations we've never imagined. Over time, all*

"Your fellow Christians will reveal aspects of the Lord you've never seen."

*these very different visions merge into a greater portrait of him than we'd ever otherwise behold."* We grow better together. We learn from each other. We gain insights as a group that we would not have on our own. Together we paint a better picture of Jesus and, therefore, come to know Him better.

And the last, but not least, point that I want to share this morning is this: "*Your fellow churchgoers will inspire and comfort you.*" Prather explains his point this way: "*Sure, some Christians will let you down, because they're human and that's what humans do.*

**"Your fellow churchgoers will inspire and comfort you."**

*But you'll also find disciples who'll sit beside you in court when your kid's up on drug charges, and who'll hold your hand when your spouse is lying in a coffin, and who'll bring you soup when you're sick with the flu. When everything's going wrong, they'll assure you it's going to be OK in the end, because they — and God — have your back."* Yes, we are each fallible and will fail at times. But, more often than not, when we are well connected to each other, when we spend time in fellowship and worship and study and prayer with one another, then we will experience support and comfort and presence and love and grace with each other as well as with God.

**A Trusted Mentor**

The idea of this being a community of faith to which we each belong is one I highly value. The idea of our individual commitment to this community of faith being one of high priority and worth is one I highly value. The idea of having trusted mentors in our lives is one I highly value from both being mentored and mentoring others.

The identities of community and commitment, of belonging and helping one another along, is the heart of this Lenten season. It is my hope and prayer that each of us values these ideals - community, commitment, belonging, helping one another – and that they are the essence of who and what this body of Christ is for each of us.

In the hope of fostering and developing these identities of community, commitment, belonging, and helping one another within our wider community, I invite you to look next to where the Bibles are in each pew to find a sticky note. Please take a sticky note and get something to write with. If we are short on either, please let me know and I will provide. On this note, I invite you to write the names of three people you personally know that you could invite into this community of faith, into this place of belonging, into this place of love and care. Think of those in your world here in Winner who do not have a community of faith to call home. It could be a spouse, it could be a brother, it could be a neighbor, it could be a co-worker or classmate. I will give you a moment to write three names down on the sticky note you have in your hands... Let us pray.



Link to full article: <http://www.kentucky.com/living/religion/paul-prather/article137730183.html>

**GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve**

- 1) Think about your mentor relationships. Do you need to seek one out? Are you at a place to mentor others? Pray for God's guidance and direction.
- 2) How is your commitment and connection to the body of Christ? What could you do to make it stronger? How could you help others do so?
- 3) Spend some time each day praying over the three names you wrote down.