

ROOT PROBLEMS

Years ago, a China-ball tree had to be removed from next to a church. A tree company was called. They used an electric saw to remove the tree below the surface and then covered up the indentation with dirt. The tree was no longer visible. However, time passed, and little trees began to sprout up all around. The tree was not visible, but the root was still present.

This incident is similar to how some Christians deal with their spiritual problems. They simply cut the tree down. The root is never removed! Prov. 28:13 says: *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.”* Though man looks on the outside, God looks on the inside.

Jesus’ stern warning to the Pharisees was that they were clean out-wardly, but were inwardly filled with dead men’s bones. If we take care of the inward, the outward will take care of itself. The root will take care of the fruit.

Job 19:28 says: *“But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?”*

Christian, you will begin seeing victory when you begin taking the blame for your sin. Like the song, “It’s me, It’s me, It’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer. Not my brother, not my sister, but it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.” If a tree is producing deformed or diseased fruit, you have to examine the root. The world’s philosophy preaches that if you clean up the fruit, all will be okay. The problem is not the fruit, but the root!

Look at these illustrations:

Surface fruit

Not smiling
Worldly clothing
Rock music
Bad posture
Pornography
Marriage problems
Nervousness

Underground root

No joy
Loving men’s praise
Rebellious heart
Laziness
Perverted mind
Selfishness
Prayerlessness

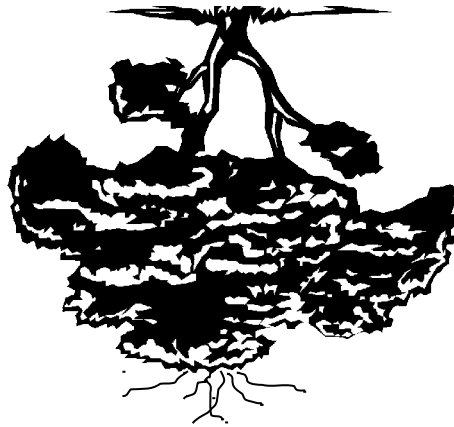
In San Francisco some time ago, a report was given about a “Bleach Man”, who was helping the city’s AIDS problem. He was giving out free bottles of bleach to drug users so they could sterilize their needles! He is chopping off branches - not pulling up roots.

The same error is found in sex-education in the public schools. Young girls, who are not married, are getting pregnant. The world’s answer is to educate them and give them free methods of birth control. God’s answer is to work on their heart, so it will be pure. Teach them self-control and the importance of virginity.

Notice some Bible characters' possible root problems:

<u>Character</u>	<u>Surface problem</u>	<u>Root cause</u>
Esau	Hungry	Impetuous
Peter	Talked too much	Pride
Judas	Thief	Unsaved
Demas	Forsook Paul	Worldliness
Absalom	Long hair	Rebellion

There are three basic root problems that can allow all other sins into the heart:



ROOT #1 - FEELINGS RULE THE LIFE (MORAL IMPURITY)

Matt. 5:28 says: *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

I Cor. 6:18 says: *“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is with-out the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”*

This is the person whose feelings rule their life. Samson, David, Absalom, and Amnon, to name just a few, had this root problem. Lust and love get very confused in this person's life.

<u>Lust</u>	vs.	<u>Love</u>
Wants now		Can wait
Is selfish		Is giving
Is physical		Is spiritual

REVEALED IN WORDS

Matt 15:18 says: *“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.”*

When a person uses filthy language it reveals an immoral lust. Dirty jokes and cursing do not just “slip” out of your mouth. It surfaces from the heart.

REVEALED IN THE MIND

God is concerned about what Christians think. The Bible speaks of “filthy dreamers”. Dreams are simply our mind unwinding at night. Fantasies of immorality reveal a wicked heart. When someone takes something dirty that was intended to be clean, it reveals an immoral root.

REVEALED IN CLOTHING

Isa. 47:1-5 says: *“Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.”*

God is very interested in Christians dressing modestly. The Bible defines nakedness on a woman as revealing the thigh. Miniskirts, shorts, slits above the knee, etc. reveal a root of immorality. Wearing a swimsuit where the opposite sex can see you is also nakedness. Though God sees our heart, man sees only the outside. It is important what we wear.

REVEALED IN LITERATURE

Pornography, romance novels, etc. reveal a heart that is not right in God’s eyes. Ps. 101:3 says: *“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.”* Both photographs and word pictures stay in our mind forever. Thoughts lead to actions.

REVEALED IN TELEVISION HABITS

The root of immorality is fertilized by watching soap operas and television shows that major on bedroom scenes, nudity, and passion. You cannot watch television without it affecting you. Jeremiah said, *“Mine eye affecteth mine heart...”* (Lam. 3:51) If you cannot control your television, it would be wise to discard it. Before viewing a show, ask yourself, “does it have any nudity in it? Who are the heroes? Does it contain any cursing? Are the commercials allowed to play? Did I intend to watch it?”

REVEALED IN MUSIC

Ps. 40:3 says: *“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”*

God wants us to have a “new” song of praise to Him. Most rock groups and country singers major on immoral relationships. A rock star once said, “Rock music is 100% sex.” The phrase “rock-n-roll” is a term for immorality in itself. Most performers of the world’s music are addicts of perversion. Sensual, breathy, night clubbish music is wrong also.

REVEALED IN MENS EYES

Job 31:1 says: *“I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”*

A man was observed staring at an immodestly dressed woman while driving his automobile. He ran into the car in front of him. It would have been fun to see how he explained that to his wife! A man of God can control his eyes and look at a lady’s face instead of her body. Lust is a “ditch” sin; once into it, it is difficult to get out. Control your eyes!

ROOT #2 - CIRCUMSTANCES RULE THE LIFE (BITTERNESS)

Heb. 12:15 says: *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”*

There are usually two reasons people get bitter. One is because of their appearance. If you had the power to change any feature about your appearance, would you do it? All 50 Miss America contestants were once asked the same question, and all said that they were not satisfied with their appearance. Are you satisfied with your appearance? Are your ears too big? Teeth crooked? Too short?

Jer. 1:5 says: *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”*

Not being satisfied with the way that we look is actually bitterness toward God. It is saying that God made a mistake. He makes no mistakes!!! He designed exactly what you would look like even before you were born!

The second reason for bitterness is by being deeply hurt. Has anyone purposely or accidentally hurt you deeply? Perhaps they lied to you, gossiped about you, robbed you, owed you money or physically abused you. The underlying reason for bitterness is pride. We feel we deserve to be treated better than we were. If we all got what we deserved, we would be in hell forever! Forgiveness is the answer to overcoming bitterness.

ROOT #3 - THINGS RULE THE LIFE (TEMPORAL VALUES)

I Tim. 6:10 says: *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while come coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

Jesus spoke five times as much about money and possessions as He did about any other subject. He knew how much like “pack rats” we are. Instead of thing serving us, we are tempted to serve things. A car, clothing, money, a house, a

boat, a hobby, can all destroy our life if out of place in our lives.

Baruch had this problem. Jeremiah asked him this question in Jer. 45:5: *“And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.”*

Mark 5:13 says: *“And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.”* They loved the swine more than the maniac’s sanity.

Prov. 11:28 says: *“He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.”*

Most people spend their lives in discontentment, chasing after things.

VICTORY OVER ROOT PROBLEMS

The longer a root is in a life, the deeper it grows. The atheist says, “There is no root.” The liberal says, “Just saw the tree off so it is not visible.” The worldly person says, “Fertilize the root.” God tells us to remove the root! Why do not more Christians have victory over root problems in their lives? Simple. It takes less effort to just saw off the branches. It takes much effort and time to pull up the roots. How long would it take to mow your back yard? How long would it take to pull up all the grass in your backyard by hand? See the difference?

What is wrong with leaving root problems in your life? As long as those rotten roots are there, sin can come into your life and corrupt the fruit. The fruit of the spirit cannot grow like it wants. God wants our lives to be fruitful for him so lost people can notice our beautiful Christian fruit.

Do you want victory over root problems? Here are some steps:

1. Admit to God and yourself which root or roots are present in your life.
2. Look up and memorize specific scriptures that talk about your root problem. (Some are in this lesson. Use your concordance for others.)
3. Clean up. Get rid of everything you own that could keep the root growing.
4. Replace what you get rid of with a godly substitute.
5. Get help. Enlist a Christian who is having victory in their life to help you.
6. Bathe in the Bible and prayer. John 15 is an excellent chapter on how to get the proper fruit in your life.

SOURCES:

San Francisco Chronicle
KVON (S.F.) NEWS 4
Rock Music (The Peters Brothers)
Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts

REVIEW ROOT PROBLEMS - STEP 21

1. If the root is right the _____ will be right.
2. Give one illustration of a surface fruit and the underground root:

3. Name a Bible character's surface problem and root cause:

4. In the root of moral impurity, _____ rules the life.
5. Give one difference between lust and love:

6. List seven ways the root of moral impurity is revealed:

7. Is God concerned about our thoughts? _____
8. Give the scripture that defines modesty for a Christian woman:

9. Is God concerned about what we view on television? _____
10. Would Jesus watch all the shows you watch? _____
11. The term "rock-n-roll" is a term for _____
12. A man should learn to control his _____
13. In the root of bitterness, _____ rule the life.
14. List the two reasons people become bitter:

15. In the root of temporal values, _____ rule the life.
16. Explain why many people "saw off the branches" instead of pulling up the root.

17. List the six steps to victory:

18. Name the root problem(s) you may have noticed in your life:

19. Will you begin on the steps to victory today? _____

20. Is there someone you can share these steps to victory with the week?
