

The Mighty Oak

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Welcome

Introduction of theme: The mighty oak – what the oak tree symbolizes.

“Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Ole Oak Tree”

*I'm comin' home, I've done my time,
Now I've got to know what is and isn't mine,
If you received my letter,
Tellin' you I'd soon be free,
Then you'll know just what to do,
If you still want me . . . If you still want me . . .*

Refrain:

*Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree,
It's been three long years,
Do you still want me ? (still want me ?)
If I don't see a ribbon 'round the ole oak tree,
I'll stay on the bus, forget about us,
Put the blame on me . . .*

If I don't see a yellow ribbon around the ole oak tree

*Bus driver please look for me,
'Cause I couldn't bear to see what I might see,
I'm really still in prison,
And my love, she holds the key,
Simple yella ribbon's what I need to set me free . . .*

Refrain

*Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree,
And now the whole darn bus is cheerin'
And I can't believe I see . . .
A hundred yellow ribbons 'round the ole . . .
The ole oak tree!*

(Tie a ribbon 'round the ole oak tree) 3x

Music by L. Russell Brown with lyrics by Irwin Levine , 1973



Readings: “The Mighty Oak”

Cultural significance

The oak tree is a common symbol of strength and endurance and has been chosen as the national tree of England, Estonia, France, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, the United States and Wales.

Mythology

In Celtic mythology, it is the tree of doors, believed to be a gateway between worlds, or a place where portals could be erected.

What a neat idea! The oak is the tree of doors: Jesus says He is the door. He also stands at the door, waiting to come in. Think of the famous picture of Jesus knocking – could it of been a door made of oak?

Folk Tale

Thor's Oak was a sacred tree of the Germanic Chatti tribe. In 723, St. Boniface felled the holy oak tree dedicated to Thor near the present-day town of Fritzlar in northern Hesse. He did this with the Prophet Elijah in mind.

Boniface called upon Thor to strike him down if he cut the “holy” tree. According to the legend, Boniface started to chop the oak down, when

suddenly a great wind, as if by miracle, blew the ancient oak over. When Thor did not strike him down, the people converted to Christianity. He built a chapel from its wood at the site where today stands the cathedral of Fritzlär.

The felling of Thor's Oak is commonly regarded as the beginning of German Christianization.

In the Bible

In the Bible, the oak tree at Shechem is the site where Jacob buries the foreign gods of his people (Genesis 35:4). In addition, Joshua erects a stone under an oak tree as the first covenant of the Lord (Joshua 24 25-7). There are several other references to oak trees in the Bible. So it seems the oak is a powerful symbol throughout the Bible.

**... on every high hill
and on all the mountaintops,
under every spreading tree
and every leafy oak**

Judges 6:11, 18 - Gideon

"The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.

Gideon went in, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak."

2 Samuel 18: 9 to 15 - Absalom

"Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going. When one of the men saw this, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree."

Joab said, "I'm not going to wait like this for you." So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree."

Ezekiel 6:13 Warning

"And they will know that I am the LORD, when their people lie slain among their idols around their altars, on every high hill and on all the mountaintops, under every spreading tree and every leafy oak—places where they offered fragrant incense to all their idols."

Isaiah 1:30 (KJV) Another Warning

"For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water."

Scripture: Psalm 1

Tree jokes

Did you hear the one about Arbor Day?

It'll leaf you laughing!

Did you hear the one about the oak tree?

It's a corny one!

Did you hear the one about the redwood?

It's tree-mendous!

Why was the pine tree sent to its room?

Because it was being knotty!

Why did you give the tree some aspirin?

Because I heard it was a sycamore!

What kind of tree is often found in the kitchen?

A pantry!

Why did you plant a board and nails on Arbor Day?

I was trying to grow a tree house!

What is your favourite type of tree?

A pastry!

Why was the tree drooling?

It was a dogwood.

How do you get an elephant to the top of an oak tree?

Plant an acorn under him and wait 50 years

Proverbs

"Mighty oaks from little acorns grow."

"Every majestic oak tree was once a nut who stood his ground."

Song: *As A Tree* to the tune of *By the Pathway of Duty* TB 448

*As a tree beside the water,
Has the Savior planted me;
All my fruit shall be in season,
I shall live eternally.
Though the tempest rage around me,
Through the storm my Lord I see,
Pointing upward to that haven,
Where my loved ones wait for me.*

*When by grief my heart is broken,
And the sunshine steals away,
Then His grace, in mercy given,
Changes darkness into day.
When at last I stand before Him,
Oh, what joy it will afford,
Just to see the sinner ransomed,
And behold my sovereign Lord.*

Song: SASB 28/TB 306 (note v.2) *For the Beauty of the Earth*

Devotion: Jesus at the Door

"One Door"

*One door and only one
And yet its sides are two
Inside and outside
On which side are you.*

*One Door and Only One
And yet its sides are two
I'm on the inside
On which side are you?*

Meditation

(From the NACR Daily Meditation site)

"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if

you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me."
(Revelations 3:20, NRSV)

Some people enter without knocking. It happens. Our boundaries have not always been respected. As a result, we have built some significant defenses. Our doors have multiple locks. When needed, they can be latched, barred, bolted, double bolted and sealed securely.

As we begin the healing (and maturing) process, however, we begin to experiment with allowing our defenses to come down. We unlatch one lock at a time.



Nothing is more helpful in this process than having people who respect our boundaries — people who will knock and wait patiently for an answer. So, this picture of Jesus is full of good news for us. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. It is pure invitation. God does not invade. God does not manipulate. God gently, persistently knocks. God says 'here I am, I would like to spend time with you'.

Recovery (which includes maturing as a person and as a Christian, in other words, "HOLINESS",) is a process of learning to trust God. Trust grows slowly. We can't do that all at once. But perhaps today we can listen carefully for a knock. Tomorrow we may be able to manage a "who is there?" And, with persistence, we will some day sit at table with God and enjoy God's loving presence.

Lord, thank You for knocking.
Thank You for respecting my boundaries.
And, thank You for knocking persistently.
It takes me a while to respond
because my doors have so many latches.
Give me courage this day
to open the doors of my life to you.
Amen.

Dale and Juanita Ryan - Copyright 2009



Devotion

A Yree – Rooted, but Reaching... The Secret of Beauty and Strength

"He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season . . ." (Psalm 1:3).

Long ago, a young man took his pastor aside at a camp conference. They stood together under a mighty oak and he said, "Pastor, I don't know what is the matter with me. I want to be a good Christian, and I try hard, but somehow I just never seem to make it. I'm always doing the wrong thing. I just can't live like a Christian."

The pastor said to him, "Well, there may be several reasons for that, but, first of all, let me ask you this: What about your private life with the Lord? How well do you know Him? How much do you delight in reading His Word and then spending time talking to Him? Because,

after all, it's not the time you spend in reading the Word that's important, but it's the time you spend in enjoying the presence of God that strengthens you."

He hung his head and said, "Well, I admit I don't do very much of that."

Just then the phrase from the Psalms flashed into the pastor's mind: *"He is like a tree planted by streams of water."* The pastor stepped back and said to him, "Look at this tree we're under. What does it remind you of? What are the qualities this tree suggests to you?"

He looked at the huge oak, towering up heavens above them, and said, "Well, the first thing is, it's strong."

"Yes, anything else?"

"Well," he said, "it's beautiful."

"Exactly! Beauty and strength. Those are the two things you admire about this tree. And those are exactly the two things you want in your own life, aren't they? Beauty and strength?"

He said, "Right."

"Well," said the pastor, "tell me this: What makes this tree beautiful and strong? Where does it get its beauty and its strength?"

He stopped for a moment and looked at the tree. Then he said, "Well, from the roots, I guess."

The pastor asked him, "Can you see the roots?"

"No," he said, "you can't." Then he said, "I get it! That is the hidden part of life, but it is the secret of this tree's beauty and strength, isn't it?"

That is exactly what this psalmist is saying. Those who are godly have learned, in the hidden inner parts of their life, to draw upon the grace and glory and strength of God. Their roots run deep into rich and moist soil, and this is what makes them beautiful and strong.

And they are fruitful: *"He ... yields its fruit in season."* That is probably a reference to the fruit of the Spirit, which is described for us in the New Testament. It is the character of God, and that is always the same in either the Old or the New Testament: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and the rest of the qualities listed in Galatians 5:22.

Father, I cannot read these words without asking myself the question: Am I allowing this marvelous provision for producing godlikeness to bear work in me? Or does a great deal of my life still consist of ungodliness so that we are like the chaff that the wind drives away?

Adapted from Ray Stedman site – I changed his “I” to “the pastor” or “her”. Taken from Women’s World Magazine, January 20, 2004 Compiled by Gabrielle Lichtermann. Psychologist Jonathan Rich, PhD of Irvine, California administers the “Draw-a-Tree” test; the expert comments are his.

Get more out of life

Psychological studies show that how you draw something as simple as a tree reveals dozens of insights into your personality. Take a minute to draw a tree. Then answer these questions...

How tall is your tree?

- More than ½ the height of the paper = a desire to aim high in life; generous with money; thorough with tasks, double-checking your work.
- Less than ½ the height of the paper = content with life as it is; thrifty; highly efficient.

What kind of trunk does your tree have?

Trunk represents emotional strengths.

- Wide = unflappable, calm, strong in convictions
- Slim = flexible, open to other points of view, sensitive, empathetic of others’ problems
- Forked at the top = torn between 2 choices in your life right now

Does your tree have branches?

- Yes = left-brain oriented: logical, analytical, rational, rarely lose temper
- No = (only drew basic outline of a tree) = ruled by left-brain intuitiveness, instinctiveness

Did you draw roots?

- Yes = appreciate family history and traditions, old recipes and heirlooms handed down, etc.
- No = focused on the future, independent, enjoy creating new traditions



***Their roots run deep
into rich and moist soil,
and this is what makes them
beautiful and strong***

Which way is your tree leaning?

- Left = hold back what you’re thinking; conservative attitudes; introversion; don’t like to rock the boat
- Right = action-oriented; forward movement; extroversion, you say what you’re thinking
- Straight = the middle road; you choose your battles, only speak up if issue is important to you

Where is your tree?

- in the ground = you crave security and stability; enjoy family life; prefer a job you can stay at for years
- in a pot = you’re on the go, love to travel; adventurous; love to learn about new people and places
- on top of a hill = you crave attention, comfortable in the spotlight; natural entertainer, great communicator
- floating in mid-air = impulsive and spontaneous; easily excited
- on an island = need a lot of time alone to re-energize and solve problems



- no = you tend to see the world in black and white; not easily distracted; more action-oriented

Did you draw something other than a tree?

These extras reveal what makes you happy.

- fruit or nuts = you like to see results of a job well done
- grass under tree = you like to have a welcoming home for family and friends
- flowers = you are happiest surrounded by beauty
- birds, animals or people = expressing love for family and friends give you your biggest glow
- swing on the tree = you like to take time out to have fun!

Credits for Mighty Oak

Song: As a tree beside the water. Words & Music: Alfred H. Ackley, 1906. Found on cyber-hymnal site. Used tune and chorus of By the pathway of duty.

The Power of His Presence

Daily Devotions. From the writings of Ray Stedman. October 1,

“The Secret of Beauty and Strength”

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Information about Oak Trees from the Wikipedia site.

Devotion “Rooted in God’s Love” by Dale and Juanita Ryan (CreateSpace, 2009).

Refreshments/Benediction

Where is your tree on the page?

- in the middle = you’re practical and down to earth; like to be prepared for anything
- low = you prefer to research before making a decision; “grounded approach to life”
- high = you see the silver lining in almost any experience; even when things don’t go your way, you see it as a learning experience

Does your tree have leaves?

- yes = you’re a deep thinker; leaves represent thoughts – leaf-drawers are always mulling something over; reflective, introspective, careful decision-maker



*“Let me look upward into the branches of the flowering oak
and know that it grew great and strong because it grew slowly and well.”*

Wilfred Peterson