

The Trellis and the Vine

The two images of the trellis and the vine are used to describe two aspects of Christian ministry. A trellis, of course, is a structure that is used to support, to hold up, a vine. In this metaphor the trellis refers to the administrative work within a church, church structure, programs. Vine work on the other hand, is working with people, drawing people into the kingdom through evangelism and then training them to grow in their knowledge of God and their obedience to Him. *“The basic work of any Christian ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God’s Spirit, and to see people converted, changed and grow to maturity in that gospel. That’s the work of planting, watering, fertilizing and tending the vine. However, just as some sort of framework is needed to help the vine grow, so Christian ministries also need some structure and support. It might not be much, but at very least we need somewhere to meet, some Bibles to read from, and some basic structures of leadership within our group.* (p. 8 The Trellis and The Vine)

The observation of the authors is that so often in our churches the trellis work takes over from the vine work. We get caught up in committees, structures, activities, fund raising, keeping the machinery going, such that we lose sight of the reason for the trellis; that is, to support the vine. The main point that can summarize the entire book is to build ministries around people instead of attempting to build people around ministries. In other words, we don’t use people to make the trellis look good, we use the trellis to support and enable people to produce more fruit. One approach to church life is for the church leaders to come together and decide on what ministries are essential to have and then to seek out members of the church who can fill in the needs as much as possible, and if there are some gaps remaining, the church will recruit some help from non-members so that these essential ministries can run in a smooth manner. Another approach is to find out what gifts are present among our existing members and move towards building ministries around the people that God has gifted us with. Instead of putting excessive energy into erecting and maintaining structures we put all the energy we possibly can into making disciples who make disciples. We focus on things like building people rather than running programs, training people rather than running events, growing people rather than using them, and training new workers rather than filling gaps. Every Christian is called to be a part of this vine work. Not everyone is gifted in the same way, but we are all called to the task of being and making disciples.

Jesus Christ is the head of His church.

- ***Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.***
- ***Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.***

This is important because the head of the body determines what the body will (and should) do. Everybody has a head. The head houses our brains, the center of our thoughts, actions, and words. Our heads direct every facet of our bodies and our lives. Jesus directs His body, the church, how He wants to. Just as my arm and my legs do not govern my body, they are subject to the direction of my head, so it is with Christ. This truth of Jesus being our head carries with it the truth that Jesus is the authority over us. We, as individual Christians, and as a local church, are subject to following the direction of Jesus Christ.

The church is not a human organization because it is an organism, a body. So, the way a church is run should not simply copy the way a human organization is run. Not only is the church an organism, but it is also not merely human, because its head is divine; the life He gives is supernatural life. Because we are believers, we are in the church, which is Christ’s body and He is the Head. This means that there is a living connection between you and Christ.

I think we often miss the magnitude of how literally Jesus views us as His body. You recall how before Paul was converted, as he was persecuting the church. Acts 9:1 says he was breathing out threats and murders against the disciples of the Lord. On his way to Damascus to capture and imprison Christians "a light from heaven flashed about him." **Acts 9:4 says, "And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"** Now Saul did not believe that Jesus was alive. He thought the whole thing was a delusion. But that was not the way the Son of God saw it. When the Son of God spoke, He said, "Why do you persecute me?" He is so identified with His followers that to persecute them is to persecute Him. When Christ was on the earth, Christ had one kind of body, a physical body like ours. And with it He suffered and died that we might live. Now He is raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of God; but on the earth He has another kind of body, namely, the church. Christ was united to His body when He was on the earth and felt the whips, the thorns, and the nails from His enemies. And He is united to His body now, the church, and He feels the persecution against the church, His body.

In Matthew 25 Jesus will say to His people at the final judgment, **"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me . . ."** (vv. 35–36). And they ask when this happened, since Jesus wasn't there; He was in heaven. And He answers, **"Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"** (v. 40). If you persecute the church, you persecute Jesus, and if you show love and affection to the church, you show love and affection to Jesus. The church is His body; it is the physical form of His presence on earth. Touch the church and you touch the body of Christ, which means you touch Christ.

- **Ephesians 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.**

Christ is God's gift to the Church. As Head over all things and as Head of the Church Jesus is a love gift of God the Father to the Church. This passage also tells us that in some way the church is the fullness of Jesus and that Jesus is filling all in all. I take "filling all in all" to mean that Jesus is filling all the universe with all His glory. Some of what this means is that He fills the church with His fullness so that the church can be His fullness. God means to fill the universe with the glory of His Son by putting the church on display as the embodiment of His Son. Christ fills the universe with His glory by showing the universe His body: how He chose her, how He destined her, how He came for her and taught her and suffered for her and died for her and rose for her and reigns for her, how He called her and justified her and cleansed her and kept her and will raise her and glorify her and satisfy her forever and ever with Himself.

How is the body, the church, connected to the head, Jesus?

The way we, the body, are connected to Jesus, the head, is primarily by the Holy Spirit. If we walk through a progression seen in a few scriptures I think we will see that to be the case.

- **"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.(Jesus is now the Head) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (There is the mission for the church, make disciples, fill the universe with the fullness of Jesus) And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.""** **Matthew 28:18-20 ESV**
- **"And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait (before they go out on the mission there is something they need) for the promise of the Father, which, he**

said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Acts 1:4-5 ESV

- ***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses (very clearly we see that what enables the church to be witnesses, to make disciples, is the Holy Spirit) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 ESV***
- ***"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:1-4 ESV***
- The day of Pentecost is the birth of the church. The church comes into existence when believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. I feel you could say that the day of Pentecost is the day God the Father gave God the Son to the church to be her head; and the way that uniting of Jesus to the church happens is by the Holy Spirit.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;" Colossians 4:2 NASB

1. Ask God how He desires you to use the gifts, talents, skills, resources He has given you for the growth of His Kingdom?
2. Ask God to give you spiritual gifts for the purpose of making Jesus known in all of the universe.
3. Pray that God would help you discern and use the Spiritual gifts He has given you.
4. Seek God for who He is calling to be part of the leadership team at Living Hope Ministries.
5. Pray that God will continue to guide and give wisdom to the leadership team as we grow and move forward as a local church.
6. Ask that God will help us "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV)