

Stronger Together
THE TRELLIS AND THE VINE
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Introduction: The main purpose and structure of a church community is analogous to a trellis and a vine.

A. What is the main goal of a local church family (the vine) according to Ps. 80:8-11?

1. To be established in a local area (vs. 8-9)
2. To prosper through growth (vs. 10)
3. To extend into the land to reach others to lead them to God (vs. 11)

B. Looking through Ps. 80, what has happened to that main goal?

1. God has left them alone: *this expression of His anger* (3-4)
2. God is allowing them to suffer (vs. 4-5)
3. God is allowing the world to mock and laugh (vs. 6)
4. God is allowing the world to invade (vs. 12-13)
5. God is allowing it to be destroyed from within (vs. 16)

So: the goal hasn't been reached

C. What does the poet pray for in Ps. 80 to seek a reversal of this condition?

1. For God to shine forth and stir up His strength (vs. 1-2)
2. For God to turn us (vs. 3, 7)
3. For God to visit this vine (vs. 14)
4. For God to raise up 'the man of His right hand' (vs. 17)

D. The Definition of the Trellis and the Vine

1. Trellis is the *supporting structure of the vine*
 - a. Practically in our church that would be
 - *consistory – subcommittees (Mission) – evangelism programs (Creation Eve, Persecuted Church) – small Bible and Prayer groups in home/church – Youth Group – Boys/Girls' Group – Christian School (Boards)*
 - b. Dangers:
 - *too much trellis and far too little vine: some churches have more organization, procedures, regulations and officers than believers*
 - *too much vine without supporting trellis: the other extreme is not enough structure and leadership to give guidance and hold accountable*
2. Vine is the *living church growing & bearing fruit*
 - a. **aim at being a living church:** *young/old people regenerated to become a living member*
 - *greatest danger a church faces is not from outside but from inside: a hollowing out by decreasing commitment to God and His Word in our rising generation*
 - *Albert N. Martin: Every congregation, however soundly the Word may be preached there and*

however much spiritual life there may be, is only one generation removed from apostacy. Tis will happen when in a congregation a new generation emerges which no longer knows by experience what the power of Christ's blood and the operation of the Holy Spirit is.

b. aim at being a **Gospel growing – Grace community church**

- growth in numbers is not our first goal

- status quo is also not *our main goal*
 - times change and through outside influences and inward hollowing, we need to change to *stay on course*
 - a church that doesn't grow (spiritually) is losing and fossilizing
 - growth always includes *change* and change can at times be painful or fearful

- aim must be *Gospel growth* of young/old people
 - Gospel growth is *when we grow in the knowledge and joys of the Gospel lived out in a Christ-devoted and Spirit-filled life*

c. aim at **fruit bearing church**

- fruit bearing in *personal transformation as we display the 'fruit of the Spirit'*

- fruit bearing in *exporting the Gospel message to others*
 - fruit bearing is *Kingdom growth in every layer of our lives*

- fruit bearing church: *where members are disciples who seek to make other disciples of Christ*

E. What needs most concentration in our local church?

1. Strengthening the trellis or the vine?

a. the vine: *a healthy church is focused on growing the 'vine' and not the trellis*

- good structures don't grow the ministry as no trellis has ever grown a vine!

- therefore, all our concentration should be on the spiritual growth of the people so they all become laborers in the kingdom of God (Matthew. 9:37-38)

2. Organizing events or growing our people?

a. events to attract unbelievers doesn't work (doesn't even attract most of our own)

b. when we train up each other to be more vigilant in living the Gospel of Jesus, we become a force for the Kingdom

F. How do we grow so we may be a Gospel community?

1. Be proactive instead of reactive

- a. reactive is problem solving and waiting for next problem
- b. proactive is anticipating the problems and prepare for it

2. Be a Gospel community that nurtures others (derived from D. Tripp)

a. seed sown/planted: needs *watering – weeding – tending*

- weeding/watering/tending is *community project*

b. the secret of such a community is not a *plan* but the presence and power of a *Person*

- the nearer we draw each other to Jesus Christ, the more nurturing we become

3. Be a Gospel community that is humbly honest

a. hiding and ignoring sin is allowing 'beast to destroy us'

- dealing with sin is important and be open to admit sin is even more important

b. nothing destroys a church quicker than sin ignored

4. Be a Gospel community that is forgiving and restorative

- a. sin is inevitable when sinners live together
 - instead of gossiping – bad-mouthing -sharing we are to put it away thru forgiveness
- b. our tendency is to *separate from those who failed us, disagreed with us, or even opposed us*
- c. casualties in battle w/ sin/temptations should not be abandoned on the battlefield

5. Be a Gospel community that is encouraging

- a. life is warfare – tough – full of suffering – disappointments
- b. encouragement is *come along side and read/share Scripture and prayer*

6. Be a Gospel community that shares God's resources

- a. God views His Church as a body with different organs – limbs – functions – abilities
 - all are uniquely created!
 - G: *koinonia* for fellowship is *partnership* (see HCat. Q. 55)

G. Let's test our thinking: *True or False*

1. Communion of saints is the ideal Christian life

- a. False: in NT believers 'sharing' is **normal** Christian life – **it is the bottom line!**
 - refer to example of the partnership between Paul and Philippians

2. In NT we don't have *spectators and players*

- a. True: NT sees all believers 'players' and each plays distinct role
 - in the body each organ has a task to support the whole

3. To call people 'members of a church' is weakening the NT teaching

- a. True: in God's kingdom we are not *members* but *partners*
 - member: emphasizes that we *expect benefits*
 - partner: *communicates involvement in the work of the King*

4. We need only vine-workers and do without the trellis workers

- a. False: we need both.
 - in the NT we have *trellis workers* in apostles, pastors, elders, deacons etc.
 - they were foremen – organizers – guardians – mobilizers – models
 - yet they are also **partners** or **vine-worker** with special responsibility to care for and equip Others (Eph. 4:12)
- b. trellis workers also are to provide or nurture the best conditions under which the rest of the Gospel partners can get on with **vine work**