

## INTRODUCTION

I like the way Texans talk. Not long ago Bubba was driving home in his pickup and stopped to buy some Tyler Roses for his sweetie. A few minutes later he had a flat tire. He pulled over, but before he reached for his jack and spare, he took some of the roses and dropped them in front and behind his truck. His buddy Leroy saw him and stopped to help. He said, “Is everything okay?” Bubba said, “Yep, I’m just fixin’ this flat.” Leroy said, “I can see that, but why’d you put them roses beside your truck?” Bubba said, “Well I heard on the radio that if you have to pull your vehicle over to fix something, that you’re supposed to put flares beside your car. Good thing I had these flares!” Leroy rolled his eyes and said, “You dummy, not them kind of flares—you’re supposed to use wild-flares not store-bought flares!”

Communicating can be hard in the best of situations! Most of us use metaphors to describe something. A metaphor is an expression comparing one thought to another by using a verbal picture. When someone mixes up the picture, they use what is called a “mixed metaphor” and the results are often humorous. Here are some examples of actual mixed metaphors people have used:

1. You’re pulling my leg over my eyes.
2. You’ve hit the nail on the jackpot.
3. We’ll be there until the fat lady freezes over.
4. Once the toothpaste is out of the tube, it’s too late to close the barn door.
5. He’s not the brightest bulb in the knife drawer.
6. It’s as easy as falling off a piece of cake.
7. Keep your ear to the grindstone.
8. You’ve buttered your bread, now lie in it.
9. It’s like looking for a needle in a hayride.
10. Don’t count your chickens until you see the whites of their eyes.

And with apologies, here’s a bonus: Obi-Wan Kenobi suggests: “Metaphors be with you!”

A mixed metaphor is a verbal faux faux, but when the Apostle Paul wrote about the Christian life, he intentionally introduced a variety of powerful metaphors. See if you can pick up the different metaphors he employs. I call them powerful pictures of the Christian Life.

Colossians 2:6-10. “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

In this passage there are at least five powerful pictures to help us visualize the Christian life. The reason the Bible uses a variety of images to describe who we are in Christ, is because a single

picture can never exhaust the riches and depth of our relationship with Him.

## **1. A WALKER: STAY ON THE RIGHT TRACK!**

The NIV says, "live in Him" but the New King James Version correctly captures the meaning when it says, "As you have received Jesus as Lord, so WALK in him." (Colossians 2:6 NKJV ) The word is *peripateo*, from which we get our word "peripatetic." Whenever Paul used that word, it was meant to describe a person's lifestyle. It's like when we say, "You gotta walk the talk." We speak of "all walks of life." Our life is like a walk (and not always a walk in the park, either). We all start out walking in the wrong direction. Jesus tells us we are all walking down a wide road leading to destruction, but salvation is realizing the offer of eternal life, and we do an "about face." We turn around and start going in the opposite direction. That's what the Bible calls repentance.

In order to start walking on the salvation road, we must receive Jesus as our Lord—not merely as Savior. And then we keep on walking in faith. It's not always easy, but walking itself involves faith. When you think about it, walking is actually risky business. In order to walk you have to lean forward until you're beginning to fall, then in order to catch yourself, you place one of your feet forward to regain your balance; then you do it again. We've conditioned ourselves, but every step requires faith and action.

The idea of walking is to remind us we can't stand still. We must keep on progressing in the Christian life. Being born again is the first step, but then we must take the step of baptism, and the step of church membership, and the step of service, and the step of discipleship—the walk never ends until Jesus calls us home. The Christian life isn't like riding one of those people movers at some airports. You must continue to place one foot in front of the other and keep walking in faith and walking in the Spirit.

## **2. A TREE: DIG DEEP TO GROW TALL!**

There's an old proverb that says, "Don't change horses in the middle of the stream." But that's exactly what Paul does; he changes metaphors in the middle of this stream of thought. He goes from a walking metaphor to a horticultural metaphor, a tree. He writes, "You're deeply rooted in him." (Colossians 1:7 *The Message*) This sounds like contradiction doesn't it? In the first metaphor, we're told we should walk: That implies movement. But in the second we learn we must be rooted! As I've already said, no single metaphor can do justice to the richness and variety of the Christian life.

When Jesus told the parable of the sower, He spoke of some people whose lives are like plants growing in shallow soil, and when the heat of the sun beat down, (when trouble comes) the plants withered. For a plant to really thrive, it must have a strong, deep root system. That's why some people wither when adversity comes into their lives—they aren't deeply rooted in Jesus.

I grew up in Alabama, and we don't have tumbleweeds there. I'll never forget the first time I saw a real Texas tumbleweed. I was driving a Green Acres van through West Texas on a youth ski trip. The terrain was flat and the wind was howling, I was following another church van, and

suddenly I saw a brown blur moving toward the highway. I had no idea what it was, but it was big and it was fast. It was a tumbleweed about half the size of the van! The wind blew it into the side of the van in front of me and collided so hard, it left a dent in the side of the van. Before that, I thought tumbleweeds were little and soft—not big and hard!

Sadly, too many Christians are like tumbleweeds, they face the danger Paul described in Ephesians 4 when he spoke of Christians who are “blown about by every wind of doctrine.” We’ve all known Christians who got sucked into every new fad and fashion that comes along. A tumbleweed can become a big plant, but it lacks deep roots. Deep roots in people, as well as plants, create stability and security.

Do you know what kind of trees have the deepest roots? Fig trees. There is a fig tree in South Africa with roots descending over 400 feet down into the bedrock. The only kind of trees that can survive drought and storms are trees with roots that tap down deep into the ground. These deep roots create strength and seek out nourishment. The only kind of Christian who can survive periods of personal storms and emotional droughts are those who have sunk deep roots into the nourishment and stability that Jesus gives.

The Psalmist described this kind of person when he wrote, “He is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:3) A walker pictures movement and progress—that’s us. A tree represents depth and stability—that’s us. The next time you look at a big oak tree remember an oak is just a little nut that refused to give up its ground. That’s the kind of perseverance and tenacity we need.

### **3. A STUDENT: APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED!**

Paul changes metaphors again to picture a student. Every Christian should be a student of God’s Word. Paul uses this metaphor when he wrote, “Now do what you’ve been taught! Quit just studying the subject and start living it!” (Colossians 2:7 *The Message*)

When you are a student in school, you may have many subjects and several textbooks, but for a Christian, we only need one textbook—the Word of God.

We prayerfully plan each Sunday morning worship experience, from the songs we sing to the message I preach, it’s my hope that each time you leave here on a Sunday morning you will hear and experience God’s truth, as revealed in Scripture. But did you know if we didn’t sing a single song or I didn’t preach a message, that the Word of God is literally surrounding you right now?

When we were building this new sanctuary six years ago, we invited the children and youth to come inside before we hung the drywall and laid the carpet and literally write their favorite scriptures on the concrete and the walls so God’s Word would permeate every inch of this structure. In fact, about forty feet directly below this pulpit is a Bible. When our contractor dug a deep hole for a concrete footing, I took my first preaching Bible, a Schofield Reference Bible, wrapped it in plastic and then tied a rope around it and lowered it into the bottom of the footing. Several of us stood there singing, “We are standing on Holy Ground.” We did it to symbolize that our church will always be built on the Word of God.

For some of you, it may have been a long time since you picked up your Bible and really read it, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s truth to you. It may be somewhere in the back of your car or on a shelf somewhere in your home. However, I can tell you right now from any seat in this room, you may be closer to the Word of God than you realize. God reminds us in Deuteronomy 30:14, “...the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.”

However, simply soaking in God’s Word once a week will not transform your life. We didn’t plant God’s word in the I-beams of this structure in hopes it would transfer to you by osmosis! It doesn’t work that way. God’s Word is near so you will obey it. The reason God wants you to be familiar with and learn about the Bible is so you will make the choice to obey it and put it to use in your daily life—at work, at home, and in your relationships.

Most people who watch the Superbowl enjoy the commercials more than the game. In 2003 FedEx ran a commercial spoofing the movie “Castaway.” In the film, Tom Hanks plays a FedEx executive who survived stranded on an uncharted desert island for years. The movie ends (and the commercial begins) with Hanks’ character delivering a dirty FedEx package that washed up on the island that he brought back with him. But the commercial goes a step further. After he delivers the package the castaway asked the recipient, “I always wondered what was in the package, can you tell me?”

“Nothing really,” says the recipient, opening the package. “Just a satellite phone, GPS locator, fishing rod, water purifier and some seeds. Just silly stuff.” Pretty funny: Everything he needed to be rescued was there all along!

As followers of Jesus, everything you need to handle life is already in the Bible. It’s all there. But simply toting it around with you on Sunday mornings will not change you. You have to open it up and use it. Fullness in Christ is not about filling up your schedule with more Bible studies and sermons. Paul gives us the picture of a student who not only learns God’s Word, but also puts what he or she knows into action in everyday life.

#### **4. A FOUNTAIN: LET HIS LIFE OVERFLOW!**

The next picture is that of a fountain that overflows. Paul wrote, “and let your living spill over into thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2:7 *The Message*) One of the ways in which Jesus’ personality overflows our lives is by how we talk. Your mouth is a good indicator of the condition of your heart. Just as you can hear a fountain overflowing, you can identify an overflowing Christian by sound—listen to them.

Jesus said, “Out of the OVERFLOW of the heart, the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34) If your heart is full of anger, bitter, or filth, that’s what’s going to come out of your mouth. But if your heart is filled with Jesus, it will also come out in the way you talk as well.

Not only is a fountain pleasing to the eyes; it is pleasing to the ears. There’s just something soothing about the sound of water. We have two little fountains on our back porch and it’s great to sit in the swing and listen to the sound of rushing water. In the same way, a Christian who is

full of Jesus will be speaking in a way that sounds healing and soothing to others.

The message of Colossians is that we don't have to manufacture the Christian life; Jesus lives in us and we simply need to let His supernatural life overflow through us and spill out onto others—overflowing life.

If we try to live according to our own strength, we become depleted quickly. It's like this vase of water, once I pour all the water out, there's nothing else left inside. It's empty. That's a picture of a lot of people who have given of themselves so much, there's nothing left. But when you're full of Jesus, He gives you an unending supply of strength and grace. There's always more. When you think you're depleted, you discover there's more—Jesus just keeps giving and giving. What is impossible for us is easily possible with God! In fact, when you are full of Jesus you find He gives more than we can ever merely contain, and we can't help but overflow to others. When you surrender to Christ in you the Hope of Glory you truly understand what the Bible means when it says, “My cup runs over!” That's overflowing life.

In this context, the Bible says we should overflow with thankfulness. Do you have a thankful spirit? Are you humbly grateful, or grumbly and hateful? The Bible says in Ephesians 5:20 we should “give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

One of the greatest Bible commentators of all time was a Puritan named Matthew Henry. Once while on the way home from church, Matthew Henry was accosted by burglars who robbed him. Afterwards, this he wrote about that experience. “I am thankful that: (1) I have never been robbed before. (2) Although they took all I had, it wasn't much. (3) They took my money, and not my life. (4) It was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed!” That's what I call overflowing with thankfulness! See if you can find something to be thankful for in *every* situation!

## **5. A SOLDIER: DON'T GET AMBUSHED BY THE LIE!**

Paul switched to a military metaphor when he wrote, “See to it that no one takes you captive...” (Colossians 1:8) The word “captive” was a military term for a prisoner of war. This military metaphor is used quite often in the New Testament. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6 that we must put on the full armor of God. We're not fighting against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil.

A soldier captured by the enemy is no longer in the battle. Sadly, there are many believers who are no longer frontline warriors for God, because they have been ambushed by the lies Satan tells. Paul warned the believers about this danger when he wrote about:

### **(1) The distracting lie:**

“Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything.” (Colossians 2:8 *The Message*)

Deception has always been an effective military strategy. We've all heard the story of the Trojan

Horse, when the Greek soldiers hid inside a wooden horse the men of Troy mistook for a peace offering. This Memorial Weekend, as we honor our American soldiers who died, it would be good for us to remember a deceptive tactic that turned the tide in WWII. Nazi-occupied France had become part of Fortress Europe, and in order to win, the Allied forces had to invade Europe. Operation Overlord was the name of the battle plan that culminated with D-Day. On June 6, 1944, 155,000 Allied troops went ashore in the face of blistering resistance, and 5,000 of them (approximately the number of people who will gather here today) gave their lives in this attack. The casualties could have been much higher if there hadn't been an operation in place to fool the Nazis about where the attack would happen. This deception plan was called Operation Fortitude.

The Allies spent several months trying to convince the Nazis the attack would take place from Dover to Pas de Calais, the narrowest part of the English Channel. The Allies created radio traffic giving orders to a mythical 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Army Group under the command of General George Patton, because they knew the Germans were listening. To fool the German reconnaissance airplanes, hundreds of decoy tanks made of plywood and inflatable rubber were placed in a staging area near Dover. Real-looking aircraft replicas made of canvas were parked on runways. Plywood barracks were constructed. All this effort to persuade the Germans to keep their eyes on Pas de Calais instead of on Normandy.

The ruse worked, because long after June 6th, Hitler remained convinced the Normandy Landings were a diversionary tactic to induce him to move his troops away from the Pas-de-Calais, so a decisive attack could then be launched there. He therefore kept his best 18 divisions in readiness there, until the end of July, desperately scanning an empty horizon, while the fate of the war was decided in Normandy.

The devil is the master of misdirection. He is the sinister minister of deception. In John 8:44 Jesus revealed the true nature of Satan. He said, “He is a liar and the father of lies.” Satan smiles whenever he sees Christians arguing about doctrinal differences. Satan laughs every time he sees a church split over some difference in belief. He knows if he can keep Christians fussing with each other, they will never be effective soldiers.

But the Bible teaches the Christian life is not about a set of beliefs—it's about a Person. That leads us to discover:

## **(2) The liberating truth:**

“Everything of God gets expressed in Christ, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too.”  
(Colossians 2:9-10 *The Message*)

When we began this study, I shared with you that fullness is the theme of this book. Without Jesus Christ our lives are empty, but in Jesus we find the fullness of God—and we can experience this wonderful fullness.

One Sunday on their way home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said,

“Mommy, the preacher’s sermon this morning confused me.” The mother said, “Why is that?” The little girl replied, “Well, he said God is bigger than we are. Is that true?” The mother replied, “Yes, that’s true, honey.” “And he also said God lives in us? Is that true, mommy?” Again the mother replied, “Yes.” “Well,” said the little girl, “If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn’t He show through?” Bingo! When we are *full* of God, His life will show through!

## CONCLUSION

So, based upon this portion of God’s Word, we should keep on walking in faith, we should be like a tree and allow our roots to keep sinking deeper and deeper into Jesus; we are all students, we’ll never stop learning, but we need to be using what we’ve learned! We should all be like fountains of water, constantly overflowing with thankfulness. As soldiers of Christ, we must be on guard against the deception of the enemy. I love these pictures of the Christian life because they remind me of just how *exciting* it is to follow the Lord!

I read a cute poem not long ago that went:

*There was a very cautious man;  
Who never laughed or played.  
He never risked, he never tried;  
He never sang or prayed.  
And when he one day passed away;  
His insurance was denied.  
For since he never really lived,  
They claimed he never died.*

People who don’t understand the Bible often think being a Christian is boring—how wrong! It’s the most thrilling, exciting experience in the Universe. You don’t really start living until you meet Jesus. Jesus said, “I’ve come that they might have life and live it to the fullest!” (John 10:10)

When my daughter Jenni was in the first and second grade, I drove her to school most mornings. We started a little goodbye ritual I had heard while listening to a radio preacher named Marilyn Hickey. Jenni and I would say together: Today is the best day of my life, because Jesus Christ lives big in me today! But we would always emphasize the “BIG” so it was: Today is the best day of my life because Jesus Christ lives BIG in me today!

That’s what the Christian life is: Understanding that Jesus lives in you and wants to live His abundant life through you. That’s the most powerful picture of all!

## OUTLINE

### 1. A WALKER: STAY ON THE RIGHT TRACK!

"As you have received Jesus as Lord, so WALK in him." *Colossians 2:6 NKJV*

### 2. A TREE: DIG DEEP TO GROW TALL!

"You're deeply rooted in him." *Colossians 1:7 The Message*

### 3. A STUDENT: APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED!

"Now do what you've been taught! Quit just studying the subject and start living it! *Colossians 2:7 The Message*

### 4. A FOUNTAIN: LET HIS LIFE OVERFLOW!

"...and let your living spill over into thanksgiving." *Colossians 2:7 The Message*

"Jesus said, 'Out of the OVERFLOW of the heart, the mouth speaks.'" *Matthew 12:34*

### 5. A SOLDIER: DON'T GET AMBUSHED BY THE LIE!

"See to it that no one takes you captive..." *Colossians 2:8*

#### (1) The distracting lie:

"Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything." *Colossians 2:8 The Message*

#### (2) The liberating truth:

"Everything of God gets expressed in Christ, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too."  
*Colossians 2:9-10 The Message*





**DISCLAIMER:** These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes