

Planting Trees

by Voddie Baucham

Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy.

Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..." Hebrews 10:24

Several years ago, my family had the privilege of building our first home. People warned us that the experience would be traumatic, but we went forward nonetheless. Several events surrounding that experience are burned indelibly in the forefront of my mind. One of the most poignant memories is the day I decided to plant some shade trees.

I had talked about planting shade trees in our backyard for weeks. I researched the different types of trees known to thrive in our part of the country. I looked into the type and amount of shade each would provide. I even estimated the amount of time it would take for each type of tree to reach maturity. In short, I did my homework. Finally, the day came and I went out and bought our trees. I bought a magnolia because it is one of my all-time favorites. I also bought a sweetgum, a red maple, and an oak tree. I had the trees delivered and planted them in strategic sections of our yard, paying particular attention to the course of the setting summer sun.

At last, after the last support stake was driven in the ground, my work was done. I stepped back, took in the glorious sight, and hurried off to collect Bridget and the kids. I had them all close their eyes as they walked through the back door. Then, after everyone was in perfect viewing position, I yelled, "Ta da!"

I wish I could say that everyone marveled at the grandeur of our new landscape. However, much to my dismay the children were actually quite disappointed. They looked at the trees, then back at me, then back at the trees, then back at me. Finally, after a few moments of silence, one of them said, "That's it?" "What do you mean?" I replied. "I thought you were planting *trees*," the let-down child added. "That's what I did," I said with a hint of frustration in my voice. Then, it dawned on me. They were expecting full-grown, thick-limbed, ready-to-climb trees! They couldn't understand why I was so excited about these glorified bushes. Fortunately, I recognized an incredible teaching moment.

I told the children that planting trees takes patience. We would have to wait for the trees to reach maturity. However, in five or ten years there would be more shade than they could imagine. At this point they looked at each other and shook their heads. "Dad, five or ten years is like forever," my daughter said as she folded her arms in disappointment. Here was another teachable moment. I looked at my children and told them something that I have since said to them no less than a hundred times. "Kids, you must seek to become the kind of people who plant shade trees for others to sit under." I went on to explain how people in the past had sacrificed in order for us to enjoy virtually everything we had. We talked about our Founding Fathers, about brave African slaves, about adventurers, and even about grandparents.

I'm not sure how much of that day's lesson sank in with the children. However, since

then I have been trying to teach the same lesson in myriad ways. We constantly talk about living lives in such a way that we plant spiritual shade trees for the benefit of others. We use phrases like multigenerational vision and legacy. As our children get older and anticipate their future, they are beginning to understand that life is about more than the here and now. They are beginning to catch the vision.

One area where this vision is taking hold is in our family's understanding of marriage, family, and manhood and womanhood. If we think multi-generationally, that has to impact the way we view marriage and family. Where do these multiple generations come from if not through marriage and the family?

Thus I can no longer view my role in raising sons and daughters merely as an eighteen-year sentence to be endured. If I have a multigenerational vision for my family, then my role in fathering my children is a lifelong partnership in kingdom expansion. These truths force us to adjust our thinking in regard to what we are teaching our daughters to expect and our sons to become in regard to biblical manhood.

Excerpted from the book, What He Must Be (if he wants to marry my daughter)