

Giant Redwoods

The giant redwood sequoias on the United States' west coast are an amazing sight to behold. Muir Woods, located just across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco, is one of many places in California where visitors can enjoy and study these trees. Visitors can walk through the forest, see these majestic trees and marvel at their massive size and height as well as at the realization that these trees are extremely old. The tallest redwood measured **367.87 feet**, and the average tree life is **500-700 years** with **1,500-year-old specimens** having been found. The oldest living sequoia is said to be **3,300 years** old!

Why have these trees endured for so many years, often through storms and fires? Because of the prolong summer dry season in which these trees live, they must develop an **extensive root system** early in their lives in order to survive. Once their root systems are developed, they are able to survive in a wide-range of conditions. The strength of their root system lies in the lateral development of the roots just below the surface of the soil. Roots of larger trees can extend 100-150 feet and often extend to 200 feet, meaning their root system can cover 4 square acres of forest land.

Another interesting aspect of the sequoias root system is that it does not drain the soil in which it grows. Instead, **it lives in a symbiotic state**. A stable and long-term environment is created with the soil that allows the trees to flourish without depleting the soil itself. In other words, the sequoia not only grows a strong root system, **it creates an environment in which it can continue to flourish and grow**. The trees depend on the good soil for their survival, but they also help to make sure that soil remains as they need it to be.

Sequoias also never stop growing over their long lifetimes. The trunk of the sequoia actually grows and increases its trunk volume more than any other tree. One tree, the General Sherman Tree, is calculated to be the world's largest and possibly even the fastest growing tree in the world. The diameter of the tree has increased about 3 inches since 1931. This does not sound like much until one considers that the tree is 272 feet high and more than 30 feet in diameter (over 100 feet in circumference), which means that during the last 40 years the tree has added enough new wood each year to construct a five or six room house.

Because of the strong root system, the symbiotic relationship with the surrounding soil and its continual growth, **the giant sequoia could theoretically continue living and growing forever**. In fact, "death comes to them only by means of fire or through some other external physical event such as undermining erosion or overthrow by the wind." Even beyond the fact that they are a mere marvel to behold, the redwoods certainly provide us with **valuable spiritual lessons** that are only further emphasized by their enormous beauty.

First, an extensive root system is crucial to our survival as Christ followers. In Ephesians 3:16-18 Paul is encouraging the people in the church at Ephesus to be *"strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and ground in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled up to all*

the fullness of God." Paul is saying that when the focus – or root – of our love is Christ, we are able to discover more of the enormous vastness of Christ's love.

When we root our love on Christ, we are *"filled up to all the fullness of God."* That means we can live full lives beyond what we can ever imagine or comprehend. Through our union with Christ and through the empowering of His Holy Spirit, we are complete and have God's fullness in us. Through prayer and daily living for him, His Holy Spirit fills every aspect of our lives. To grasp what this might mean for you, imagine any area of your life where you feel the least bit incomplete or empty. Now imagine what you think needs to happen to feel complete and full in that area. With your love rooted in Christ, whatever you just imagined will pale in comparison to what the fullness of God can do in that area.

Second, the **symbiotic state** in which the trees exist provides an amazing example of how we must be rooted in Christ. A symbiotic state is one in which there are two different organisms, and one is dependent upon the other for its survival. An infant's dependence upon its mother is one such example. As we seek to establish a strong root system, we must be sure that our roots are secure in rich soil that will allow us to grow and mature. Christ is that soil, and His Holy Spirit as well as His Word are the nutrients we need to mature and be strong. While the sequoia helps create the healthy soil in which it is rooted, our soil – Christ – already has everything we need to be healthy. However, he does ask us to play a part in our growth, and to that end our relationship is much like that of the redwoods to the soil in which they grow.

Finally, we can learn a lesson to never stop growing from the giant redwood trees. When we are extensively rooted in Christ, the possibilities are endless because He is all-powerful. He promises us an eternal future absent of death.

Do you have an extensive root system? If you do, make sure it connects you to the One who promises an eternity that goes beyond theory and into reality.

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