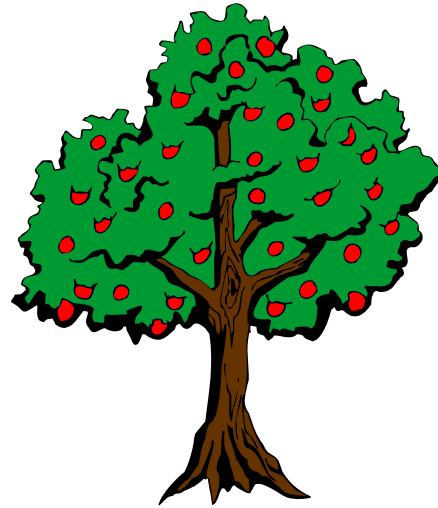


'Living Tree' an Example to All

I saw a short film about a "Living Tree." This apple tree loved the boy who lived there very much. They had lots of fun playing hide-and seek when the boy was small. Also, the boy loved to climb the tree and would daringly hang from its strong branches. He also ate the tree's apples, and often snoozed in its shade.



The boy grew older, and there were places to go and things to see and do. The tree would coax, "Come on, let's play." But the boy was now more interested in money than in trees. "Here, take my apples," urged the tree. "You can sell them and make some money." So the boy did, and the tree was happy.

Time went on, and the boy became involved in many things - and he didn't visit his friend, the tree, for a long time. However, every time he passed the tree would smile and wave its branches at him, hoping he would play. At this stage, the boy was grown and very interested in building himself a house. "I can help," offered the tree, "Cut off my branches and use them to build the house you want." The boy did, and once more the tree was happy.

Years passed. The tree saw hardly anything of the boy at all. When she saw him in the distance one day, she pleaded, "Come on, let's play!"

The boy had now grown into a man, a man who was very disenchanted with life. He told the tree he just wanted to get away from it all. This made the tree very sad. Then she suggested, "Cut me down. Make yourself a boat out of my large trunk." The man cut it down and constructed a boat from it, and sailed away. The tree was sad because her friend was gone, but happy because she had made him happy.

Years passed. The tree waited—and waited. At last its friend returned, but now he was an old man—too old to play or to be interested in seeking riches, building houses, or even sailing the seven seas. The tree was now only a stump. She had given her all to her friend, but she still wanted so much to help him. "I've a pretty good stump left," she told him. "Why don't you just sit down on me and rest?" The old man did so, and once again the tree was happy.

The beginning of a new year is an appropriate time to think about the tree that so much wanted to help. Someone suggested it is an ideal time "to stand in front of the full-length mirror of memory and study the scene, to trace the outlines of the past without the rude interruption of routine tasks." It would be well to ponder, am I more like the boy, or the tree? Do I most want to get—or to give?

As Charles Swindoll suggests, the New Year will be an excellent time to:

- Mend a quarrel
- Seek out a forgotten friend
- Dismiss suspicions
- Write a long overdue letter
- Tell someone "I love you"
- Forgive an enemy
- Be gentle and patient with an angry person
- Express appreciation
- Gladden the heart of a child
- Find the time to keep a promise
- Make or bake something for someone anonymously
- Release a grudge
- Listen
- Speak kindly to a stranger
- Enter into another's sorrow
- Smile and laugh a little. Laugh a little more
- Take a walk with a friend
- Kneel down and pet a dog
- Lessen your demands on others
- Apologize if you are wrong
- Treat someone to an ice cream cone
- Pray for someone who helped you when you hurt
- Give a soft answer even though you feel strongly
- Encourage an older person
- Offer to baby-sit for a weary mother

To summarize it all in just a few words: Be like the tree and do unto others as you'd have others do unto you.