

## Be Like a Banana Tree

Within the work of Dignity, we often describe people as being like trees. We take the example from Isaiah 61:3 in the Bible where Isaiah speaks of people being like strong trees of righteousness. So if people are like trees, there is a simple question to ask ourselves: what type of tree are we?

A missionary who worked in Asia\* said that people or groups of people can be like a Banyan Tree or a Banana Tree.

A Banyan Tree is found in Asia. It takes over a whole area of countryside or 'bush'. It plants strong roots and dominates the area. It takes up all the light and water so that nothing can grow underneath it. The Banyan Tree takes all the life.

Banana trees are very different. As they mature banana trees create shoots of new 'baby' banana trees next to them. The main plant supports the new 'babies' until they are able to grow alone. The mature banana tree then dies. It gives its life so that the young banana plants can grow and bear their own fruit.

With that in mind., what type of tree are you? What type of Life Group or Church are you part of? Sometimes Life Groups end up existing simply for themselves. They meet, have a good time and learn together. These are good things to do but in the end what type of tree are they being like? Are they only making themselves stronger like a banyan tree or are they helping give life to others like a banana tree? Some Life Groups, whilst existing for and helping themselves, also decide to start new 'baby' groups in different places. They take time to nurture these groups until they are strong enough to meet and grow on their own. They prioritise helping others.

Philippians 2 says that, "Jesus who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant." Jesus, just like a banana tree, did not hold his own life to himself. He gave it away. In so doing, he created new life elsewhere. He gives his life for ours. The banana tree reminds us of this. What a fantastic reality and example to follow!

\*HIEBERT, PG, Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues, Baker Books, 1994

### Put it into Action!

Your Life Group, in fact any group, has the ability to reproduce and plant another group. You could start to pray and look at how you can do this together. Think about the different people you know in different communities. You may nominate 1 or 2 of you to organise the new group with the support of others. You may decide to train people who can start even more groups. In this way your group will like a banana tree who gives its life for others.

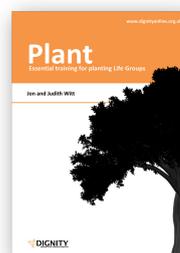
### Pray that:

- 1) God will take the gift you give and multiply it to bless those you give to.
- 2) As you give you will discover overflowing joy!



Enock has learnt how to plant Life Groups. He started 2 groups near where he lives. These 2 groups have each planted another Life Group. There are now 4 Life Groups, meaning about 80 people can now be part of communities where they can learn about Jesus together and share his love with their wider communities!

**- Enock, Mwinilunga, Zambia**



This lesson is inspired by "The Banana Tree" a lesson from Plant.

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