**A Family Tree**

His family tree was interesting.

Let’s begin with Great, Great Grandpa Sequoyah, a larger than life character. But once you got beneath his rough exterior, he was softer than most in his dealings. That gene was probably passed on to the rest of the family.

Grandma Willow was a kind hearted soul, with flowing tresses that almost touched the ground. I guess everyone has their faults, and she was no different. She left a mess everywhere she went. When something dropped to the ground, there was never any effort on her part to pick up after herself. It was actually quite annoying to many. But the family learned to accept that it was just her way of doing things.

Aunt Olive never took a bath. You know how stringy and oily your hair gets when you go quite a time between washings? Aunt Olive was the poster child for that oily look.

Cousin Hazel could be described in one word. Her unpredictability and unique behavior convinced everyone that she was a nut, pure and simple.

Uncle Forrest had a habit of walking out into the trees and getting lost each time. No one is sure exactly why. Maybe it was because he blended into the background so well. He was almost impossible to see once he entered a grove of trees.

Great Uncle Woody was quite a character. Tough and hard, but one of the most willing to allow himself to be used for anything that he could do.

And no one could forget Aunt Magnolia. She always wore green. She wore a fragrant flower nearly every day through the Spring and Summertime. And perhaps it isn’t so polite to say, but everyone thought it. When she got older, she was huge!

We don’t have time to discuss Laurel and Linden in detail now, but suffice it to say, all of these characters succeeded in passing down their quirks and character. Few have such an interesting family tree as did the one we know as Pinocchio.

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He had promised them unequivocal success if they would but obey Him. All they had to do was walk in and claim the land—flowing with milk and honey, with houses they didn’t have to build, trees they didn’t have to plant, and crops already in the ground—absolutely free. They grew tired and complacent, not willing to trust God entirely.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, had requested that they be allowed to reside on the East side of the Jordan River. God permitted it, but do not think for a minute that it is what God would have preferred. He simply allowed them to live there, knowing full well that problems would lie ahead of them if they refused His perfect inheritance in the Promised Land. The two and one half tribes had committed themselves to cross over the Jordan with the rest of the nation and assist the other tribes as they conquered the land. Much time passed. Having kept their word, tired and worn, they wanted to go home. Joshua warned them explicitly to keep the commands of God, and never forget Him.

With permission to leave granted to them by Joshua, they headed for their inheritance. Upon reaching the Jordan River, they decided to build a very large, imposing altar to God. All of Israel heard of it and misinterpreted their actions. Thinking that the two and one half tribes had turned their backs on God, they prepared to go to war with their own brothers. Tempers flared until it was learned that the tribes that they had assumed to be rebellious weren’t wayward after all. The explanation given for their questionable behavior was this—they had fear and concern that someday, they would no longer be considered part of Israel because they lived on the East side of the Jordan. The dramatic altar was to be a witness to future generations that there was indeed a link between the two groups of people. The clarification calmed emotions, and everyone went their separate ways.

Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh called their altar “Ed”, which means “a witness”. On the surface, the building of this monument seems like an appropriate gesture. A more in-depth look at the altar named Ed exposes a few complications. First, the nation of Israel was to have one and only one altar, and God had mandated that it be located in front of the Tabernacle in Israel. Sacrifices were to be offered only there. Ed was a bloodless altar, and represents the theology of today that ignores the blood sacrifice of Jesus. The church today is a divided entity. There are those that hold to the fundamental truths of the Word, and others who define the Word down so far as to try to make it say what “their itching ears want to hear”. The actions of these errant Israelites were indicative of their true hearts. Many hundreds of years later, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and visited the Gadarenes. That visit was memorable. They were pig farmers, a ceremonially unclean animal under the Law. They had a problem with demonic possession, and upon seeing Jesus work miracles, they told Him, in no uncertain terms, to leave their land.

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