



Devotional Introduction: January-February 2015

Trees grow around their edges. The green wood just below the bark is the living flesh of the tree. It's the layer that transports nutrients from root to branch and allows the tree to grow ever wider. The center of a tree is really just dead wood. It's good for keeping the tree strong and upright, but it doesn't grow. If a tree stump ever sprouts, it sprouts from the green edge, not the center—the center is dead.

So our cover image seems wrong—the sprout comes from center, which is dead. You would never see a tree sprout like this in nature. But that's what makes it a spiritual metaphor—we are dead in our sins, as lifeless as a dried up stump. But in Christ, all things are made new. Life is wrought from death by grace, not nature.

In January, we explore with Joel VandeWerken how God brings life from death, like a living shoot from a dead stump. God himself affirms his good creation, forgives our sins, and renews all things with new life in Christ.

Then in February, we'll study with Kurt Selles what the bible teaches us about Christ himself through the names and titles it uses to describe Jesus of Nazareth. What does it mean to call him our Lord and Savior and Good Shepherd?

May you be refreshed, refocused, and renewed in God's word!

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