

## “More about Oaks and Acorns”

### ACORNS AND THE MULTIPLICATION PRINCIPAL

Were you ever asked this pair of rhetorical questions?

“How many acorns are on a oak tree? How many oak trees are in an acorn?”

The first question consumers and census-takers ask. These are people who care about counting things that exist now and adding them together. The second question an investor or strategic planner asks. They care what happens in the long term after numbers are multiplied or generations pass.

A mature oak tree is impressive. Early pioneers especially prized the white oak trees we love in Indiana. Oak wood made great barrel staves. Today, climate professors might value the oxygen it emits. And a little girl wearing a woven crown of orange oak leaves in the fall is really cute! But the acorns interest us the most, because only an acorn can become a new tree.

According to Robert Rogers<sup>1</sup>, the white oak tree doesn't reach maturity and produce acorns until after at least 50 years. Acorn crops vary dramatically depending on the weather during spring pollination or insect damage over the summer. But left alone for the next 100-150 years, one tree will bear an average of 10,000 acorns per year, more than a million in its lifetime. The white oaks in just one hectare (2.5 acres) of forest can deliver half a million acorns to the food chain. Just about every bird, rodent or mammal welcomes an acorn, especially a white oak acorn, given the chance.

So how many trees does one find in an acorn? Each tiny acorn with the spark of life passes it on from one tree to the next. Over thousands of years one acorn could contain whole forests of trees.

### OAK TREES AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Acorns as potential oak trees remind us how important it is to continually develop new **leaders**. Acorns turn into oak trees when planted in the right soil and given enough time, water, air and sunlight. New leaders also require patience, care and resources over time to grow into their role.

By creating shade and shelter oaks become homes for birds and animals -- a small community. Once leaders are planted and do their work, **community grows** – networks of relationships and mutual benefits. This “*shalom* principle” as described in the Bible should be at work among Christians too. When a community of *shalom* exists harmful conflict is absent and abundant blessing is present.

Trees like oaks are self-propagating when the environment is right. We want to encourage communities to grow using the right persons and local conditions. Planting an alien tree can be destructive to a forest in the long run just as transplanting the culture of a community that grows well in its native environment can ruin a community located somewhere else. That's why we work to develop national leaders and local ministry forms that spread the gospel well under local conditions.

Leading Edge might help to “plow the ground” or “water the soil”, but the seed we start with has to be local and the life in it must originate from faith in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics\\_manual/volume\\_2/quercus/alba.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/quercus/alba.htm) Robert Rogers. *Quercus alba* L.