

Freedom Study 2 “Tree of Life”

What is going to be my approach to following God?

The spiritual journey you are on is important, but how you are doing that is journey is even more important.

We have a branding problem with Christianity.

Endure or Enjoy?

Romans 15:13 (NIV84) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We see these two approaches in the second story of the Bible in Genesis.

First story in the Bible...Creation

Second story in the Bible...Choice

Genesis 2:8–9 (NLT) Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the **tree of life** and the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**.

There are two approaches to God.

>>You can do it out of Tree of Life.

>>Or you can do it out of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

We can pursue good things out of mental knowledge, a reasoning approach, out of learned behavior, self-discipline, own educated opinions, what we think is logical, and out of sheer will power.

Or we can pursue good things out of transformation and Christ’s life.

Genesis 2:16–17 (NLT) But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— ¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

“Death!”

Not just a physical death, but a death, deterioration, and demoralizing of us emotionally, in your marriage, thought life, quality of all your living, relationships, finances, etc.

The Bible says we can be dead while we live. (1 Tim. 5:6)

Third Story in the Bible...temptation, lies, deception.

Genesis 3:1-7 (NLT) The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied.

³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.' "

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman.

⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.

⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Satan, the Serpent, offered them lies.

They didn't have to participate they believed the lies.

The fruit of the wrong tree produced SHAME.

They lost their innocence, they realized their nakedness, they felt vulnerable.

And later they were hiding from God when He came looking for them.

When we make decisions on our own, independent of God...the result will always be shame!

So the term "knowledge of good and evil" may sound like something good and desirable. But in this context it wasn't good. Satan made it about independence, self-effort, and selfishness.

Let me give you some practical differences in these two approaches to God.

Freedom is primarily about receiving truth. More about truth than demons.

1. Tree of Knowledge says....

Do more to get to God.

Tree of Life says.....

Receive the fact that Jesus has already done it.

Hebrews 10:14 (ESV) For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

2. Tree of Knowledge says.....

Keep trying to get God's approval.

Seeing God as inherently mad.

Your current view of God will determine your relationship with God.

Tree of Life says....

Receive the fact that He already loves you totally and completely.

Even on your worst day you are cherished and treasured.
He doesn't love what we do, but He separates those.

I love you and I'm proud of you. And if there ever comes a time that I'm not proud of you, I will always love you.

3. The Tree of Knowledge says....

Obey out of duty.

Tree of Life says.....

Obey out of your heart and your love.

- It's an honor and joy to serve the Lord and to know Him.
- It's not a sacrifice to follow Jesus.
- I don't give up anything worthwhile to follow Jesus.
- It's not a life drudgery –it's a life of joy, contentment, and confidence.

4. Tree of Knowledge says...

The way to be secure is to control everything and keep it safe.

Adam & Eve went into a mode of taking charge and controlling their lives.
So much pain comes in life when we attempt to control relationships and situations.
Control, anger, and fear run together like trio.

Tree of Life says...

The way to be secure is to trust the heart of God and spend time with Him.

The way to freedom and life is to trust the Lord with everything and pray about your life. Give people and their responses over to God. Walk in the liberty of releasing every concern to Father God.

Ways to Live Out of the Tree of Life

1. Fall in love with Jesus.

John 14:15 (ESV) “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

That verse can be read two different ways: out of the Tree of Knowledge or out of the Tree of Life.

- If you think you love me...you BETTER KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.
- Fall in love with me...and you will walk with me and you will know how to follow me.

In the Old Testament we had the written, prescribed Law, all 600 rules.

In the New Testament we have transformed hearts that live in the Spirit. The law of God is written in our hearts.

We don't have to be hard on ourselves and hard on others.

We don't have to be judgmental or exacting.

We don't have to be demanding or perfectionistic.

We are free, indeed!

When you strengthen your relationship with Jesus—you will strengthen your ability to walk in holiness.

Temptation is really a test of your relationship with God more than a test of your self-control.

Love Him, treasure Him, spend time with Him, worship Him, speak of Him. The more you love Him—the more freedom you will have.

How to love Jesus...

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Practical ways to increase your love for Jesus.

- o Remember Him
- o Depend on Him
- o Bring Him gifts of worship
- o Speak of Him and His faithfulness (testimonies)
- o Serve Him and His Kingdom
- o Surround yourself with others who love Jesus
- o Read His love letters (Word)
- o Talk to Him (prayer)
- o Admit and confess your sin...walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7)
- o Ask God for revelation of His love and nature

- o Make choices that endear your heart to Him, choose God-friendly moments

2. Respond to all personal sin and failure from the Tree of Life.

When you mess up, you have a choice.
Which tree will you live out of?

The tree of knowledge is all about condemnation and guilt.

Condemnation= you messed up and you are terrible
Conviction= you messed up and here's the way out

This has got to be true for us personally and for the way we deal with others. Giving grace and forgiveness is the Tree of Life.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3. Guard your heart from going back to the wrong tree.

There seems to be a tendency to want to swing over to the tree of knowledge, to live in our own opinions, feelings, and story. The temptation is to jump out of the Tree of Life and pursue other understandings and feelings.

Deuteronomy 30:19 (NIV84) This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

The two trees are a metaphor which helps us to see the choice we have.

The Tree of Life is a picture of:

- Walking and talking with God and loving Jesus
- Living in his provision, protection, friendship, and Lordship.
- Life in the Spirit
- Having a clean conscience and restored innocence.
- Surrendering our lives to God
- A healthy attitude and mindset, not being victims but overcomers
- Freedom indeed!