

Life as you know it may never be the same. No matter where you are in your faith walk, this curriculum will challenge you to take a step toward truth—about God, about faith, and about yourself.

It is for freedom that Christ set us free. That’s what Paul wrote in Galatians 5:1, and Jesus Himself said that He came to earth so that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Just imagine that: life abundant. Not barely surviving, but truly living. It means days that begin with gladness and nights that end in peaceful sleep. It means days filled with hope, joy, and purpose. This is the kind of life God always intended for you to have.

God wants a relationship with you and He sent his son, Jesus, to bridge the gap between earth and heaven so you could know Him. It may not be easy, but it will be rewarding. During this semester, you will be the one who decides how far you are willing to go to find freedom. Here is a promise from Jeremiah 29:13: If you seek Him with your whole heart, you will find Him.

The pursuit of Freedom begins today.

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT). The other translations used in these materials are New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), The Amplified Bible (AMP), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and The Message Bible (MSG).

2 WEEK 1 Another Gospel

Section 1 The Tree of Life

1

WEEK

Section One Video — Notes

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had

formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground— trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:8-9, 16-17, NIV)

The Choice

The TKGE says: Getting to God means I must
The TOL says: Receive the fact that Jesus has already

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40, NIV)

The TKGE: Keeps you trying to get
The TOL says: Receive the fact that He

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4 WEEK 1 Tree of Life

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, NIV)

The TKGE says:

The TOL says:

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.... He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:3, 12, NIV)

Four Responses

1. Fall in love

If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15, NIV)

2. Serve God through not

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17, NIV)

3. Respond to all sin with

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1, NIV)

4. Guard your from going back.

—What are you going to do to be godly? *(Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV) This day I call the heaven and the 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.*

LIFE videos can be viewed at
churchofthehighlands.com/life

Section 1 The Tree of Life

5 WEEK 1 Tree of Life

Journal What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

WEEK 2

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

“But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

–Genesis 2:16 -17

The Tree of Life is more than just a backdrop to a Bible story; it can be a way of life. To find out how, let's start at the beginning—Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In chapter 1, the first Scriptures tell us about the creation of our world and define God as the Creator and Ruler who has authority and dominion. The second story in the Bible tells us about Adam and Eve, the first sin, and the two trees in the Garden of Eden. It's the second story for a reason: Everything else in the Bible hinges on it. From it we learn humanity has to choose everyday between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (TKGE).

THE TWO TREES

Tree of the Knowledge [Let's look at some](#)

of Good and Evil [big ideas behind the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:](#)

[Tree of Life](#)

[Freedom](#) [Grace](#) [Eternal life](#) [God is good](#) [God is forgiving, not judgmental](#)

[Bondage](#) [The Law Leads to death](#) [God is only a judge](#) [We are condemned](#)

[Section 1 The Tree of Life](#)

8 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

When we study Scripture, it's always a good idea to find the first place our subject is mentioned. In our journey to walk in communion with God and freedom, we must find out why we may be separated from God and why we may be in bondage. The first place in the Bible that separation from God is mentioned is in Genesis 3. As we will see, a bad choice by the first people caused this separation (Romans 5:12).

Prior to Genesis 3, Adam and Eve walked with God and enjoyed His presence. The Bible says that God walked with Adam in the cool of the day. Can you imagine their conversations? God revealing His master plan to man—it must have been incredible— a real close-up-and-personal relationship. The Word tells us God made these two humans in His image and gave Adam dominion over everything He had created. God gave Adam authority through the relationship that He established. Without their relationship, there would have been no authority. When Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited this authority.

Through deception and rebellion, the serpent took the authority and dominion that God had given to man. The Bible tells us that satan’s desire was to exalt his throne above the stars of God (Isaiah 14:13). Until the fall of man, he lacked power and influence to set up rulership. Jesus called satan the ruler of this world (John 12:31).

Write out 1 John 5:19.

THINK ABOUT IT

Through Adam, sin entered the world, and caused death and separation.

Colossians 1:21 tells us that we were “once so far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions.” Sin separates, and this separation costs us our freedom and the authority over satan that God gives to His children (Luke 10:19).

Praise God that He made a way to end this separation! It was through Jesus that “God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of His (Jesus’) blood on the cross” (Colossians 1:20).

Before we proceed any further, you should know that the starting point to a relationship with God and walking in freedom is accepting that you are a sinner and that Jesus has paid the penalty for your sin by shedding His blood and dying on a cross.

*Write out John
14:6.*

The Bible says that if you confess with your mouth and believe with your heart that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

*Write out Romans
10:13.*

been a time when I asked Jesus to come part and be my Savior? If not, below is a prayer that you can use to make sure that you for this life of freedom and enjoyment.

Ask Yourself:

*Dear
Jesus,*

Thank you for dying on the cross and making a way for me to come to God. I receive this extravagant gift and ask you to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. I give you all of me and ask you to turn my life around for the glory of God. Forgive me of my sin, fill me with Your Spirit, and help me to live the life You died to give me, in Jesus name, Amen.

This is the first step to your life of freedom!

Separation and the First Sin

“The Lord God planted all sorts of trees in the garden—beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden He placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil...But the Lord God gave him this warning: ‘You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die’” (Genesis 2:9, 16–17).

Read Genesis 3:1–8 and notice who is doing what. In verses 7 and 8, what did Adam and Eve do?

Read Genesis 3:9. What did God do?

Don't miss this part: Adam and Eve hid; God came looking for them. The Bible says God is seeking after sinful man. God is in love with sinful man and sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue people.

Ask Yourself:

my past that have caused
from God?

Section 1 The Tree of Life

11 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

Read James 4:8 and 2 Chronicles 15:2. What do these passages teach us about our relationship with God?

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit of a tree that was forbidden for them. This fruit was not just any fruit—it was the knowledge of good and evil. They mistakenly thought that this fruit would make them like God.

Learning the truth about this fruit will help us avoid making this mistake.

Ask Yourself:

Have I used knowledge of God as the basis of
my relationship?

Four truths about
the Knowledge

1. The fruit is knowledge.

Most of us think of this fruit as some sort of apple, but it's not. The fruit of this tree is just what the Bible says: knowledge (information, data, ideas, world view, thought patterns); knowledge of good and evil. God was basically saying to Adam and Eve, "If you change your way of thinking, it will

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12 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

create separation between us. If you change your world view, you won't be able to understand Me and relate to Me." Satan says, "It won't hurt you to think like that." Note that God didn't say it's wrong to have knowledge. In fact, God said to Israel through Hosea the prophet, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6, NKJV). Aren't we glad when the surgeon has knowledge to perform an operation or the mechanic knows how to repair an engine?

"We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Corinthians 8:1, NIV).

The issue isn't necessarily knowledge; rather, it's the motive behind its acquisition. In other words, why do we desire knowledge? Is it to gain God's wisdom and understanding, or is it to somehow exalt ourselves?

According to Colossians 2:3, what do we find hidden in Jesus?

2. The fruit is deadly.

The Lord God gave him this warning: “You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17).

Notice that God didn’t say that the fruit is bad, He said that it is deadly. Eating from the tree of knowledge, consuming knowledge, in your pursuit of godliness is deadly. Satan didn’t tempt Eve with blatant rebellion. He said, “Go ahead and eat this fruit. It will make you like God.” Satan tempted Eve with her desire to become like God. Often the desire to know is in direct opposition to the desire to trust. We can set out to gain all the information, all the ideas, and all the data needed to run our lives, and in a sense we will become like God. We can control our lives and be self-sufficient, but in the end we would lose our lives.

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13 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

[Read Genesis 3:22–24. Why were Adam and Eve driven from the Garden of Eden?](#)

Adam and Eve didn't die physically when they ate from the Tree of Knowledge; they died spiritually. Through Adam's disobedience, death entered the entire human race, and we are all born spiritually dead in need of resurrection. The good news is that, through Jesus, we have access to the Tree of Life. If we pursue Life Himself in our desire for godliness, we will become truly like Him.

3. The fruit is consumed.

"The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too." (Genesis 3:6) Eating is not just putting food in your mouth. It literally means to consume or ingest. Ideas are ingested in our minds and then sin is conceived. How did the first sin come about? Eve talked to Adam about it—they had a conversation and began working with the idea. Consume means to take something outside of you and put it into yourself.

Parents especially understand the importance of this. For example, we don't want our kids watching horror movies because we know that, through their eyes, they can get something inside their minds that can torment them for the rest of their lives. We don't want them reading certain types of ideologies because we know that if they become infected or polluted by reading the wrong kind of books, it could cause them to fall into ruin and despair. Ideas are important.

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Can you think of a personal example to illustrate the danger of consuming certain kinds of knowledge?

4. The fruit causes separation.

“The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the

Lord God among the trees of the garden”(Genesis 3:8, NASB).

Again, remember that it was man who hid from God. Many have been taught that Adam and Eve sinned and that God in His holiness and His righteousness turned His back on Adam and Eve because His holiness could not stand to be in the presence of sinful man. But that’s not what the Bible says. The Bible says Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened, they covered up, and then they hid. But God was walking in the garden, searching for them, and called out, “Where are you?” The truth is Adam and Eve made an incorrect judgment of God. He wasn’t waiting behind a tree watching for them to fail so that He could judge them. They actually judged Him! God is not on His throne holding an axe and waiting to cut us off. God

is love (1 John 4:8),

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and the Bible says that love covers a multitude of sin (1 Peter 4:8). When we see His heart for us, we will run to Him instead of hiding from Him when we sin.

From Romans 8:38–39, name all the things that cannot separate us from the love of God. Reasons

why the fruit is deadly

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Genesis 3:6, NIV).

The Bible says the fruit of this tree is good for food, it is a delight to the eyes, and it is desirable to make one wise.

How can that be so deadly?

Eve assumed that the fruit was good for food—in other words, it is very satisfying. What Eve thought would be good for her turned out to be deadly. Knowledge—even without love, wisdom, or understanding—can be satisfying. If we can figure out a system of right and wrong and do it right, we can be quite satisfied by doing the right things. Why is this deadly? Because God says we can come to Him only through grace, by faith—not by works. You can’t connect with God by simply doing more good things than bad things.

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On several occasions Jesus rebuked the spiritual leaders and Bible scholars of that day for getting it all wrong. “You do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves” (John 5:38–42 NASB).

It’s a delight to the eyes. This kind of Tree of Knowledge thinking usually leads us to live by a set of rules that make us look very good on the outside to other people. The fruit is deadly because we become consumed with what others think of us rather than what God thinks.

Look up Matthew 23:27. What does this verse mean to you?

Has there ever been a time in your life when all looked good on the outside, but you knew there was death on the inside? Describe that time here.

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17 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

The fruit is deadly because it is desirable to make one wise. But wisdom itself is not deadly. From the beginning, human beings have desired to be wise. God is actually pleased with this desire. In 1 Kings we have the account of God appearing to King Solomon in a dream at night and saying to him, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!” Solomon asked for only one thing: wisdom to govern the nation of Israel and the ability to discern good from evil. Read 1 Kings 3:10–13.

How did God respond to Solomon’s request?

Pure, peace-loving, gentle at all times, willing to yield to others, full of mercy and good deeds, shows no partiality, always sincere

Wisdom not from above:

Jealousy, selfishness, earthly, unspiritual, motivated by the devil

Wisdom from above:

When do we need wisdom? All the time! Constantly we are making decisions, and even the smallest ones can be made with wisdom from above. Using Godly wisdom produces the results listed above. James 1:5–8 says, “If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask Him, and He will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. But when you ask Him, be sure that you really expect Him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can’t make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.” Worldly wisdom leads us to decisions to sin and therefore alienate ourselves from God.

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18 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

Read James 1:13–15. What is the progression of sin?

This progression tells us that *sin does not begin with the act; it begins*

in our minds. Like a train on track, the more we entertain thoughts that don't line up with God's Word, the faster we go down a deadly track. If we don't stop the thoughts, we go racing into deadly territory and crash into an act that brings us harm. We can't see sin from the outside at the point that it becomes sin, so we must develop a hunger for God and His wisdom and keep that hunger stirred up by having our minds constantly renewed to the Word of God. Otherwise, we will find ourselves separated from Him before we even realize it.

The fruit produces shame and victimization.

“Adam replied, ‘I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.’ ‘Who told you that you were naked?’ the LORD God asked. ‘Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?’ ‘Yes,’ Adam admitted, ‘but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.’ Then the LORD God asked the woman, ‘How could you do such a thing?’ ‘The serpent tricked me,’ she replied. ‘That’s why I ate it.’” (Genesis 3:10–12)

Imagine a young teenage boy who has always been a delight to his parents. He's been bright-eyed and innocent. There's been no hesitation about him until one day when his mother notices a change. He becomes serious and angry and begins to come home with droopy shoulders, his head hung, and the sparkle has left his eyes. He barely speaks to his parents and goes straight to his room. One day while cleaning his room, his mother notices pornographic magazines under his mattress. She begins to understand: Her innocent, wonderful, bright, lively son has darkness and death inside of him. He has been polluted; he is no longer a little boy. All the things he saw in the magazine were true—the issue is that he didn't need to know. Because of what's inside him now, he can't relate to his parents the same anymore. He has become shameful. His parents haven't changed; it's he who has changed as he spent time looking at those pictures. His innocence has been polluted.

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19 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

Shame causes us to separate ourselves from God so that we cannot operate in the freedom that Christ has for us. Shame is a veil that comes between God and us. It covers us completely, even our eyes, so that we can see only dimly who and

where God is. God said to Adam and Eve, “Who told you that you were naked?” His tone was most likely like that of the mother in the story above, with great sadness and angst, “Who gave you those magazines? You really shouldn’t know that.” God said, “Who told you that you were naked? You’ve eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, and it has polluted you.”

Shame causes us to do all sorts of things that keep us from connecting with God. Shame is when we want to hide. Prior to eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). Afterwards they came up with the idea of sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves, and then tried to hide from God’s presence in the trees of the garden.

THE RESULTS OF SHAME

—Covering up with religion and becoming works focused.

—Lying, deception, false pride.

—Making promises we can’t keep.

—Getting our self-worth from the things that we do.

— An inability to come to a place of honesty with God because we believe we have no true value.

—Concentrating on our sin instead of concentrating on our Savior.

Why is shame so deadly? Because it strips us of the power to change. It keeps us from receiving the provision God made for our sin through the blood of Jesus. There is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is about what we have done, but shame is about who we are. With guilt we can always get a fresh start. With shame we are caught in a noose, because the problem stays with us. In fact, with shame we are the problem. *The solution to getting rid of shame is to see*

ourselves as God sees us.

Section 1 The Tree of Life

20 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

Read Psalm 103:11–13 and 1 John 1:9. When are we to have shame and why?

ie by shame?
o remove the
e?

Ask Yourself:

Victimization is a natural response to our sin: “The devil made me do it; the woman you gave me made me do it.” We blame others by displacing responsibility, and we point the finger saying, “You’re not good enough.” Or we blame ourselves and get into condemnation thinking, “I’m not good enough.” In blaming others, we look at everything in terms of right and wrong. We say, “If my husband would just treat me right, I wouldn’t be so unhappy and manipulative. If my family wasn’t so backbiting, I wouldn’t be so hurt. If everybody would just live like they are supposed to, everything would work right.”

THE RESULTS OF VICTIMIZATION

—We notice other’s sins, but not our own.

— We blame ourselves by saying, “I’ve just always been this way.

I'll never change. I'll never be good enough."

—We feel rejected.

Whether we blame others or ourselves with victimization, we are powerless to change! That's why victimization is so deadly!

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21 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

Are there any areas of your life—perhaps with your parents, others of your past, in your marriage, at work, with friends, or even at church—where you have taken on a “victim mentality?” How should you change your way of thinking regarding that situation?

The TKGE is

With shame and victimization, we're either the Pharisee or counterfeit to a relationship with God. Your identity is not based on your own efforts,

the woman caught in adultery (John 8). We're saying either “You're not good enough” or “I'm not good enough”—basing

our relationship with God and others on good works and bad works. That's just not the way He set it up. That's TKGE but on the finished work of Jesus.

thinking, and it keeps us from changing and connecting with God. A reality we must understand is that the devil does not want us to change.

We must get to a point where, no matter what happens, we take responsibility for our own lives. We can no longer blame anyone else for our level of relationship with God!

The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil lacks the power to transform the heart. It can provide facts and information, but it is powerless to give you Life.

Section 1 The Tree of Life

22 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

“Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, ‘I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you

won't have to walk in darkness,
because you will have the light
that leads to life.'" (John 8:12)

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23 WEEK 2 The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil

Journal What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

