



# Weeks One and Two — From the First Tree to the Cross

Freedom Group, printed pages 1–23

## How we will read these two weeks

Genesis 2–3 is history. Two real trees stood in a real garden. A real command was given. A real lie was believed. A real act brought shame, hiding, and death. When this course uses those trees as a way of talking about daily life, we will treat that as a picture — an allegory.

If we keep the picture of two trees, Scripture itself already names the second one. The first tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The second tree is the cross of Christ.

*“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” — 1 Peter 2:24*

The aim of both weeks is the same: come to Jesus. Life is a Person. His name is Jesus. The truth sets free because the truth is Him (John 8:32; 14:6).

## Two trees

| The first tree<br>The knowledge of good and evil | The second tree<br>The cross of Christ           |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| A real tree in Eden (Genesis 2:16–17)            | A real cross, called a tree (1 Peter 2:24)       |
| “You will be like God.” (Genesis 3:5)            | “Not my will, but yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42)  |
| We reach for life on our own terms               | Christ gives His life in our place               |
| Shame, hiding, blame, death                      | Forgiveness, access, resurrection life           |
| Knowledge that puffs up                          | Love that builds up, and wisdom hidden in Christ |
| The fruit cannot change the heart                | His blood makes peace (Colossians 1:20)          |

## Week One — Video notes: The Tree of Life (pp. 1–5)

The course opens with the garden itself (Genesis 2:8–9, 16–17). God planted. God placed. God gave freedom to eat from every tree but one. The warning was plain: eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil meant death.

### The choice (p. 2)

John 5:39–40 is the key of the video notes. You can study the Scriptures and still refuse Jesus, the very One those Scriptures point to. Eternal life is not stored in information. You receive it by coming to Jesus.

*“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” — John 5:39–40*



Romans 5:8 holds the other half of the choice. We do not climb to God. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 1 John 5:3, 12 adds the same line: His commands are not a burden, and whoever has the Son has life.

### Four responses (p. 3)

1. Fall in love with Him. “If you love me, keep my commands” (John 14:15). Obedience grows out of love already given.
2. Serve from what He has fulfilled, not from trying to finish what only He could finish. “I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17).
3. Meet sin with the cross, not with condemnation. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Confession is welcome. Shame is not the last word.
4. Guard the heart from going back to self-salvation. Deuteronomy 30:19 set life and death before Israel. In Christ the life we choose already has a name. Whoever has Jesus, the Son, has life.

***Week One Encouragement: It is for freedom that Christ set us free (Galatians 5:1). He came that we may have life to the full (John 10:10). “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).***

## Week Two — The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (pp. 7–23)

### Why this story stands where it stands (pp. 7–9)

Everything else in Scripture deals with what happened in Genesis 3. Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin (Romans 5:12). Before that, Adam and Eve walked with God. God made them in His image. After they chose to sin, they forfeited the life and fellowship God had given them.

The serpent’s old desire is still the same: to take the place that belongs to God (Isaiah 14:13). Jesus called him “the prince of this world” (John 12:31). “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). That is the darkness into which the first tree led.

The book then rightly turns to the second tree. We were alienated from God and enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior (Colossians 1:21). God made peace through Christ’s blood on the cross (Colossians 1:20). The starting point of freedom is this: we are sinners, and Jesus paid the penalty by shedding His blood.

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” — John 14:6

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” — Romans 10:13

### Separation and the first sin (pp. 11–12)

Read Genesis 3:1–8 slowly. Notice who does what. The serpent questions. The woman takes. The man eats. Their eyes open. They cover. They hide. Then read Genesis 3:9. God comes looking. “Where are you?”

They hid. He sought. That is the gospel in seed form. God loves sinners and sent His Son to rescue them. James 4:8 and 2 Chronicles 15:2 say the same movement from our side: draw near, and He is found by those who seek Him.



## Truths about the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (pp. 13–17)

1. The fruit is knowledge of good and evil — the desire to become like God on our own terms (Genesis 3:5–6). Knowledge itself is not the enemy. “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). The question is motive. “Knowledge puffs up while love builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (Colossians 2:3).

Solomon asked for a discerning heart to distinguish good from evil, and God was pleased (1 Kings 3:9–13). That is wisdom received, not wisdom seized. “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God” (James 1:5). The wisdom from heaven is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17).

2. The fruit is deadly. “When you eat from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:17). They did not fall down that afternoon. They died toward God. Spiritual death spread. They were sent from the garden so they would not eat from the tree of life in that condition (Genesis 3:22–24). The good news is resurrection. Through Jesus we are made alive.

3. The fruit is consumed. Genesis 3:6 is desire, then taking, then sharing. Sin is conceived in the mind before it becomes an act. What we take in — images, conversations, ideas — shapes the heart. Guard the gate. The second tree, the cross, asks us to receive, for free, a crucified and risen Lord.

4. The fruit causes separation. They hid among the trees (Genesis 3:8). God is love (1 John 4:8). He called to them. Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8) — and at the cross that covering is blood. Nothing can separate those who are in Christ from the love of God (Romans 8:38–39). When we sin now, we run to Him, not away from Him.

## Shame and blame (pp. 18–22)

After the first tree they were no longer naked and unashamed (Genesis 2:25). Shame makes us cover and hide. It concentrates on our sin instead of our Savior. Guilt says, “I have done wrong.” The cross answers that with forgiveness. Shame says, “I am the wrong.” The cross answers that with a new name: child, heir, beloved.

Adam blamed the woman. Eve blamed the serpent. The old reflex is still with us: if others would change, I would be well. The woman caught in adultery heard a different word. “Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11). That is the second tree, the cross: no condemnation, and a new walk.

We do take responsibility for our own lives before God. No one else sins for us. No one else can believe for us. And no one else can be our righteousness. Facts cannot raise the dead. Jesus can.

*“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” — John 8:12*

## A parting thought

Week One and Week Two ask one thing. Do not stand at the first tree trying to become like God. Come to the Tree of Life, / the Cross, where God, as a man, bore our sin. Seek Him with your whole heart. You will find Him.



## Appendix — Scriptures in NIV

Where the notes speak of the cross as a “tree,” that follows the Greek word xylon in Acts 5:30, Galatians 3:13, and 1 Peter 2:24. The NIV often renders that word “cross” or “pole.”

### Old Testament

#### Genesis 2:8-9

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

#### Genesis 2:16-17

*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 from it you will certainly die.”*

#### Genesis 2:25

*Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

#### Genesis 3:1-13

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 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. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

#### Genesis 3:6

*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 3:9

*But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”*

#### Genesis 3:22-24

*And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*



### **Deuteronomy 30:19**

*This day I call the heavens 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*

### **2 Chronicles 15:2**

*He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.*

### **1 Kings 3:9-13**

*So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.*

### **Psalms 37:23-24**

*The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.*

### **Isaiah 14:13**

*You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.*

### **Jeremiah 29:13**

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

### **Hosea 4:6**

*my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.*

## **Gospels and Acts**

### **Matthew 5:17**

*"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 11:28-30**

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

### **Luke 10:19**

*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*

### **Luke 22:42**

*"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*

### **John 5:39-40**

*You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*



### **John 8:10-12**

*Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”* **Dispute Over Jesus’ Testimony** When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

### **John 8:32**

*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

### **John 10:10**

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

### **John 12:31**

*Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*

### **John 14:6**

*Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

### **John 14:15**

*“If you love me, keep my commands.*

### **John 15:5**

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

## **Paul**

### **Romans 3:23**

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

### **Romans 5:12**

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—*

### **Romans 6:23**

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **Romans 8:38-39**

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **Romans 10:9-13**

*If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*



### 1 Corinthians 8:1

*We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.*

### Colossians 1:19-20

*For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

### Colossians 1:21

*Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.*

### Colossians 2:2-3

*My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

### Galatians 5:1

*Freedom in Christ! It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

## General letters

### James 1:5

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

### James 3:17

*But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

### James 4:8

*Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

### 1 Peter 2:24

*“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”*

### 1 Peter 4:8

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

### 1 John 4:8

*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

### 1 John 5:3

*In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,*

### 1 John 5:12

*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

### 1 John 5:19

*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

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