

FREEDOM

Small Group Leader Guide

WEEK ONE



SECTION ONE

THE TREE OF LIFE



WEEK ONE

VIDEO NOTES: THE TREE OF LIFE

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... 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 2:8-9, 16-17 NIV

WEEK ONE LEADER GUIDE

You will watch the Section One Video as a group this week.

Videos are available for streaming and download at freedom.churchofthehighlands.com/resources.

Getting Your Group Started

- Give an overview of the semester and let your group know what to expect. Each section of the curriculum is designed to be read the week before it is discussed, and there are opportunities for response and reflection each week. Encourage your participants to go all in with the curriculum. They will get out of it what they put into it!
- Explain to your group what each meeting will look like. Let them know you want to respect their time and will start and end on time every week. Participants appreciate structure and knowing exactly what to expect.
- Share the dates of the Freedom Conference and encourage everyone to mark their calendars and make plans to be there.

Group Structure

- Play one worship song to help people settle their hearts and their minds.

- Facilitate discussion to help group members continue to process and get the most out of that week's teaching. Discussion questions are provided for you each week.
- Set aside time for prayer. This can happen corporately (as a whole group), in smaller groups, and individually. Be sensitive of the needs of your group in this area, and remember individual prayer is an important part of preparing your participants for the conference.

Tip: You may also offer for participants to share prayer requests on index cards. Not only does it provide a private way for participants to share requests, it also is a great way for you to remember how to pray for your group during the week.

Overview

The second story in the Bible describes two trees from the Garden of Eden: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. It is the second story because everything in our Christian lives is filtered through the idea of the two trees. God gave Adam and Eve the choice between the two trees. We have the choice to filter our lives through one tree or the other. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil says, "You must do more to get to God." It keeps us stuck trying to get God's approval. The Tree of Life says, "Receive the fact that Jesus already loves you." Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thinking causes us to obey out of duty rather than obeying out of delight as we do in Tree of Life thinking.

There are four responses that will help us filter our lives through the Tree of Life:

1. Fall in love with Jesus.
2. Serve God through relationship not rules.
3. Respond to all sin with life.
4. Guard your heart from going back.

Discussion Guide

- Which tree do you think you live in and filter your life through the most?
- Do you find yourself “doing more” to get to God and earn His approval? If so, how?
- Discuss religion versus relationship. Do you feel like you obey God out of duty or delight?
- What are some practical ways you can choose life in your relationship with God and with other people?

Application

As they read the lesson for Week 2 this week, encourage your participants to look for ways they might act and react based on Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thinking. Ask them to be prepared to share some examples next week if they are comfortable.

Prayer Focus

- During your individual prayer time with group members, remember that some of your participants might not have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This could be their first introduction to the message of Jesus, or they may have only experienced religion rather than a relationship with God. Cover the topic of salvation with each of your participants during individual prayer, and if they are ready to give their heart to Jesus, pray the prayer of salvation with them.

Prayer of Salvation:

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 Your glory. Fill me with Your Spirit, and help me live the life You died to give me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

- During your daily prayer over your group during the week, pray for good, healthy relationships to be formed within the group and that the participants feel the group is a safe place and are transparent in discussion. Pray for your participants to go all in and experience all God has for them.