



Tree of Life Discipleship Series

Booklet 1

Roots

But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7, 8

Booklets:

- **Booklet 1 - Roots** – Make the basic truths clear.
- **Booklet 2 - Nutrients** – Study and use the trustworthy Bible.
- **Booklet 3 - Sap** – Receive and walk with the Holy Spirit.
- **Booklet 4 - Pollen** – You belong in the Church of Jesus.
- **Booklet 5 - Fruit** – Mature in the Fruits of the Spirit.
- **Booklet 6 - Seed** – Share Jesus and train disciples.

Booklet 1 – Roots

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Preface

The Tree of Life Discipleship Series moves a believer toward maturity in the Christian faith. The lessons can be used alone, with a mentor, or in a group.

The series has two goals: First, to grow the Christian to maturity. Second, to teach the skills necessary for continued growth.

Throughout the series, the student must answer questions about Bible passages. This format allows the Holy Spirit to be the teacher as the student thinks on the scriptures.

The Tree of Life Discipleship Series is biblical, non-denominational, and easily translated into other languages. The author encourages the booklets to be freely shared with others. All six booklets are combined into the e-book and print-on-demand versions. For permission to translate, or to receive free PDF files that allow you to make your own booklets, contact: donjgoulding@gmail.com

Introduction to the Series

Trees are used throughout the Bible to teach lessons. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, the tree of life was in the garden where God placed humans. Because mankind sinned, they were never allowed to eat the fruit of the tree of life.

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, the tree of life is talked about again. This time the tree is in the paradise of God. Christians will be able to eat of that tree because Jesus Christ made a way for us to enter the paradise of heaven by dying for our sins.

Trees are in the beginning of the Bible and at the end, but also in the middle. Jesus said:

“What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.” Luke 13:18 – 19 NIV

When the gospel truth is believed, we become like a seed planted in a garden. Through learning the ways of Jesus, we grow like a plant. Eventually we become a strong tree and help others find rest and safety, like the birds in the parable of Jesus.

While we wait to be completed in paradise, we are to grow like trees. Another word for this growth is discipleship. That is why this series is called Tree of Life Discipleship. Our job from God is to grow like the seed in the parable of Jesus until we become a tree of life.

This series uses the symbol of a tree. Beginning with the roots and ending with seeds, we will compare the Christian to the life of a tree.

Growing in Jesus is the most exciting part of life. Anyone can grow strong in Jesus. It does not matter what personal history brought

The way to be sure of our assurance of salvation is to keep our trust in Jesus Christ with humility and care.

See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life. 1 John 2:24 & 25

36) Look up Colossians 1:22, 23. What is the one condition necessary to maintain your forgiveness from Jesus?

Review of Lesson 5

- When your faith is in Jesus, you can be sure of your salvation.
- When you sin, your adopted status does not change. Simply confess and receive forgiveness.
- Because of the old nature, remain humble and cautious in your confidence.

Summary of Booklet 1 - Roots

- Jesus died to unite you with God.
- Baptism symbolizes union with Christ.
- Good works must flow from faith.
- Focus on the basic doctrines of salvation in Jesus and his lordship.
- When your faith is in Jesus, you can be sure of your salvation.

God's faithful promise. In a healthy family, we do not cease to be a member when we make mistakes. Likewise, we are often bad, disloyal, and sinful against God, but as long as we do not reject Jesus, God continues to call us his son or daughter.

While we are following Jesus we can be sure of our salvation. However, we should never become prideful or disrespectful about our relationship to Jesus. The old nature is still inside us and if we let it rule over our life there is a danger it could cause us to reject Jesus.

To understand how both the old nature and new Christ-like nature are in us, read this illustration from J. Oswald Sanders:

"I have in my hand a piece of lead. I hold it over a pool of water, and relax my grip. The lead is drawn irresistibly earthwards and sinks to the bottom of the pool. It has been mastered by the law of gravitation. I take the same piece of lead, attach it to a piece of wood and drop it into the pool. Now it floats. No change has taken place in the nature or tendency of the lead, nor has the law of gravitation ceased to function, but through its union with the wood, it has been mastered by a stronger law, the law governing floating bodies, and has been emancipated from the downward pull of gravitation."

Our old nature is like the lead, it yields to the downward pull of sin. The new nature is symbolized by the floating piece of wood. It attaches to our old nature and overcomes the pull of sin. The power of Christ is stronger than the pull of sin and so we are able to float in obedience, even though we still have the old nature pulling inside us.

34) In Romans 7:21-25, what are the two parts of himself that Paul finds wrestling inside him?

35) Who does Paul say can win the battle for him?

you to Christ, or what status you hold, or what age, race, outward appearance, or education you have. Every Christian can grow to be beautiful to men, angels, and God himself. In fact, the rich and famous have more obstacles to Christian beauty than the poor.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. 1 Corinthians 1:27 – 29 NIV

As you commit yourself to discipleship growth, you will discover these are the most productive days of your life.



When you see this symbol in the booklets, stop and pray right then about what God is saying to you.



When you see this symbol it means there is a homework assignment to do.



When you see this symbol it means the subject is like a deep well and requires special thought.

How to Get the Most From the Lessons

Use discipline, but do not rush through the lessons. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in your heart as you think and pray over each lesson. If possible, use a Bible in your native language for the studies. Also, share what you are learning with other Christians. If the Lord shows you a change you need to make in your life, share it with someone who will help you, then put the change into practice.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22



Stop and pray right now. Ask God to honor the time you spend in this study to grow you into one who reflects the glory of Jesus.

Romans 10:9-11

John 6:40

Jesus is clear on the subject of salvation:

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5:24

Do not let Satan fool you. If you trust Jesus with an honest faith, then you are saved. The test of the sincerity of your faith is simple: does it result in a changed heart over time? Are you becoming more like Jesus? If your faith passes this simple test, then the blood of Jesus cleanses you from any and all sin and you are saved.

What happens when you sin in the future? We all sin every time we are not walking close enough to the Holy Spirit to obey his moment-by-moment direction. We do not lose salvation with each new sin. Rather we simply need to confess any sins directly to Jesus as they come to our attention.

32) Read 1 John 1:8-10 and 1 John 2:1, 2. This passage says if we claim we do not sin then we are _____. What does it say we should do when we sin?

33) According to John 1:12, 13, what is your relationship to God now that you follow Jesus?

When you said yes to Jesus you made God your Father, and he adopted you as a son or daughter. Your family bond is anchored by



Lesson 5 – Sure of Salvation

In this lesson you will learn:

- Why you can be sure of your salvation.
- What happens when you sin in the future.
- To stay humble and cautious in your confidence.

You have an enemy. Satan and his demons (fallen angels) are against your faith in Jesus.

29) According to Revelation 12:7-12, why is Satan filled with anger?

Among the many lies Satan will try is the lie that you are not saved. He will make you doubt the amazing grace found in the gospel. He will also suggest you are not worthy of salvation. On that point, he is right, none of us is worthy; however, our union with the Father is based on our honest acceptance of Jesus, and not on our righteousness.

When you enter times of doubt, base your beliefs on the promises found in the Bible, and not on how you feel at the moment. Emotions change, the word of God never changes.

30) Look at what the Bible says to make us sure of salvation. What does 1 John 5:11-13 tell you is required for eternal life?

31) According to the following passages, how do you receive Jesus so you know with confidence you 'have the Son'?
John 1:12



Lesson 1 - Confirm the Gospel

In this lesson you will learn:

- God loves you and created you for a purpose.
- Sin is actions, words, and thoughts that separate you from God.
- Jesus died to unite you with God.

The first thing a young tree does is to push down roots. It cannot make leaves or fruit until it is anchored in the soil and has established its food source. In the same way a Christian's first job is to be rooted in Jesus Christ who is the source of salvation.

You may already know the basic truths in this lesson, however, it is important you know them well. The gospel message is beautiful no matter how many times it is repeated.

Let's review the gospel you believed to become a Christian. The word gospel means good news. But this news begins good, turns bad, then ends very good.

Good News, God Loves You

1) The word genesis means beginning. Read Genesis chapter 1:1-5 & 26-31. What did you learn about the creation of life that you did not know before?

2) Read Colossians 1:15-17. This passage is talking about Jesus Christ. What additional knowledge does this scripture give you about how the universe was created?

3) Read Isaiah 43:7. Why did God create you?

4) Read Psalm 139:1-6. List some ways God knows you.

5) Read Matthew 10:29-31. What does this teach about your worth to God?

6) Read Romans 5:8. How does this prove God's love for you?

7) Read Jeremiah 31:3. What response do you have to God's love for you?

Bad News, Sin Separates You From God

8) In Matthew 5:21-22 & 28 does Jesus define sin as bad actions, words, thoughts, or all three?

9) According to Romans 3:23 who has sinned in the world?

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic (catholic means universal) and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

As you can see, the basic gospel is simple. However, the gospel's truth is also deep and full of spiritual mystery. We must allow the basic truths to go deeper into our hearts, rather than arguing non-important beliefs.



Review of Lesson 4

- Hold onto the basic truths of salvation in Jesus and his lordship, while showing grace to others on non-basic teachings.

26) What does Titus 3:9-11 warn you about?

While we are warned to stay out of non-important arguments, we are also warned to hold onto the basic truths with all our strength.

27) In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15, what words are used to encourage you to remain faithful to the gospel?

The 17th century German Lutheran Pastor Peter Meiderlin said:

“In essentials unity, in doubtful things liberty, but in all things love.”

28) Re-write this phrase in your own words.

The Christian who is humble will hold onto the basic truths of the gospel firmly. However, he will also allow others to believe differently on less important matters such as special days, the order of events in the last days of the world, and styles of worship.

In the fourth and fifth centuries church leaders from all over the world gathered to write a statement of basic beliefs. They wanted to agree on the truths necessary to the Christian faith. Here is the Nicene Creed they wrote:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

10) In Isaiah chapter 6, the prophet appears before God in a vision. Why does this righteous man know he is ruined in Isaiah 6:5?


God is love, however, he is also perfect holiness. He is so pure he cannot allow any sin in his presence. Therefore, because of our evil choices in actions, words, and thoughts, we were separated from God's love. All sin must be punished so we were headed for eternal hell.

Very Good News, Jesus Unites You With God

11) Read Romans 5:8 and Isaiah 53:5, 6 about Jesus. According to these verses, how was the punishment for sin paid so we can be united with God's love?

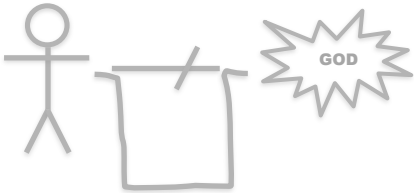
12) What does John 3:16 teach you about the purpose of the life of Christ?


13) Read Acts 2:38, 39. What action steps may a person follow to receive Jesus and the Holy Spirit?


 If you have not already done so, stop now and repent of your sin and ask God to forgive you. Claim the punishment that Jesus paid for you. Agree to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord of your life. If you have already done these things, thank God for what he has done for you.

Gospel Graphic

This picture shows man separated from God by a deep pit made by his sin. There is no way to jump across the pit. The only way is to use the bridge of the cross of Jesus. This simple picture can be drawn with pencil and paper or even marked in the dirt if necessary.




 Find an opportunity to explain the gospel to another person using the diagram above.

 Memorize key Bible verses that you can use to explain the gospel. Examples are: Romans 5:8, Romans 3:23, John 3:16, and John 14:6.

Review of Lesson 1

- God loves you and created you for a purpose.
- Sin is actions, words, and thoughts that separate you from God.
- Jesus died to unite you with God.

 The only proper response to God's gift of grace in Jesus is thankfulness that spills over to good deeds. Offer him thanks now for his amazing gift.

Review of Lesson 3

- Good works grow from faith, they don't earn salvation.



Lesson 4 – Hold Truth Tightly

In this lesson you will learn:

- To hold basic truths tightly, and non-basic truths loosely.

Human words make communicating truth difficult. The Bible is trustworthy and error free, however, because it must use our weak human words, misunderstandings often remove the power from this great book.

24) Look up 1 Corinthians 13:9-12. What does this passage tell you about our current ability to understand truth? What does it say about our ability in heaven?

Because of mankind's current weaknesses, we must accept the truths plainly taught in the Bible and avoid those that are unclear and come from human ideas. Humility and gentleness must hold the hands of doctrine.

25) What does Mark 10:14, 15 tell you about the kind of faith necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven?



Donkey cart pulling the gift of salvation

God paid the full price on the cross for our punishment, and now he requires that we not handle his gift carelessly. Only a donkey pulling a cart shows our respect for the cost of salvation. A cart of deeds does nothing, because good works will never remove the sin that holds us apart from God. Likewise, a donkey of belief kicking about with no deeds is so disrespectful that it is pointless. We need a donkey pulling a cart, we need faith in the blood of Jesus that is reflected in our deeds.

22) Jesus said: "...a tree is recognized by its fruit." Matthew 12:33. List some examples of fruit, or good deeds.



It is not right to think of God's justice as a balancing scale. God does not let us into heaven if our good deeds outweigh our sins. God's perfect holiness cannot allow any sin into his presence. The only way to be restored to God is for all our sin to be removed from the scale.

23) What is the only way to remove all sin? (If you need help with this question, read John 14:6 & 1 Peter 3:18.)



Lesson 2 – Baptism

In this lesson you will learn:

- How baptism is commanded and what it symbolizes.

Baptism is the most holy and beautiful ceremony given to man. The word baptism means to dip under. In the New Testament people were dipped under water to symbolize burial of the old self, and raised up to symbolize a new life in Jesus.

Baptism is like the marriage ceremony between a believer and Jesus Christ. It is a way to publicly declare you will follow Jesus. In allowing yourself to be lowered under and raised from the water, without any work on your part, you are symbolizing that only the work of Jesus can save you. There is nothing you can do to erase sin, you are trusting Jesus to do the work for you.

Many people are not baptized because their pride makes them embarrassed of public dipping. We must submit our pride to Jesus to be accepted by him.

There is no special method or words given in the Bible for baptism. Any believer may baptize another believer. If you were baptized by sprinkling, you may ask to be baptized again by dipping. If you were baptized by dipping but later stopped following Jesus, or if you have doubts of your understanding at the first baptism, you may ask to be baptized again. The Bible shows that baptism is for those who are old enough to understand the symbolism and choose Jesus for themselves.

14) What were those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah (Promised Savior of the world) told to do in Acts 2:38, 39?


15) Matthew 3:13-17 tells of the baptism of Jesus. What is one of the first ways you can copy the life of Jesus?

16) In Mark 16:15, 16 who is commanding baptism?

17) Read Acts 8:26-40 about the Ethiopian who was baptized. Why did the Ethiopian ask for baptism? How long did he wait?

18) What does Romans 6:3, 4 tell you about the symbolism in baptism?

19) In baptism, the water has no special power, however, the union with Jesus that is symbolized has power to raise you from the dead. In 1 Peter 3:21, 22 the power in baptism to save is not by physically washing _____ from the body, but by the power of the _____ of Jesus.

 If you have not already done so, go to another believer and ask to be baptized before witnesses.

Review of Lesson 2

- Baptism is commanded by Jesus and the Bible.
- Baptism symbolizes union with Christ before witnesses.



Lesson 3 - Grace and Deeds

In this lesson you will learn:

- The relationship between grace and good deeds.

The Bible teaches about faith and good deeds (also called works). Both are important; however, the Bible also says good deeds can never erase even the smallest of our sins. Therefore, no amount of good deeds can remove our separation from God, as we learned in Lesson 1.

Only faith in Jesus and his work on the cross can remove sin and save us from eternal punishment.

20) According to Ephesians 2:8, 9, what saves you?

21) The Bible also teaches not all faith is the same. For example, according to James 2:19, do the demons believe in God?

Even demons have faith, however, their faith does not save them because it does not result in good deeds. Good deeds do not save us, but they are necessary to show we have the kind of faith that saves.

Let us symbolize this lesson with a donkey cart. Faith is the donkey and deeds are the cart. Both are necessary to carry the gift of salvation; however, the donkey must pull the cart—the cart cannot pull the donkey.