



FREEDOM

LEADER GUIDE



CHAPTER ONE VIDEO GUIDE

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's 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 relationships 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 chapter one this week, encourage your participants to look for ways they might act and react based on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thinking. Ask them to be prepared to share some examples next week if they're comfortable.

PRAYER FOCUS

During your individual prayer time with group members, remember 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're ready to give their hearts 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 participants will 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.

VIDEO

Your group should have already watched the week one video from Chris Hodges. If anyone in your group missed the video, they can watch it at CalvaryFTL.org/FreedomVideos.



CHAPTER ONE: LEADER GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Tree of Life

Freedom; grace; eternal life; God is good; God is forgiving

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Bondage; the Law; leads to death; God is only a judge; we're condemned

After consuming the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve hid and 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.

TRUTHS ABOUT THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL:

- The fruit is knowledge. It's not wrong to have knowledge, but we must evaluate our motives to obtain it. Are we wanting to exalt ourselves or gain God's wisdom and understanding? Using godly wisdom allows us to become more like God as we emulate Him. Worldly wisdom leads us to sin, which alienates us from God.
- The fruit is deadly. The desire to know is in direct opposition to the desire to trust. Adam and Eve didn't die physically upon consuming the fruit; they died spiritually.
- The fruit is consumed. Ideas are ingested in our minds and then sin is conceived. The first sin came about when Eve talked to Adam about it. Through a conversation, they consumed the idea and began to process it. This progression tells us that sin doesn't begin with the act, it begins in our minds.
- The fruit causes separation. God didn't separate Himself from Adam and Eve; instead, they hid from Him after consuming the fruit. God searched for them because He loved them. When we see His heart for us, we'll run to Him instead of hiding from Him when we sin. We must get to the point where no matter what has happened in our lives, we take responsibility for our own lives. We can no longer blame anyone else for the quality of our relationship with God.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil produces shame and victimization. Shame causes us to separate ourselves from God. Victimization causes us to blame others, displacing our responsibility for the condition of our lives and souls.

The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus carried all our sin and our shame to the cross. Regardless of how many times we live in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the power of the cross speaks a better word over all our sin, shame, regret, and guilt. It doesn't matter who we are or what we've done, we're never too far from the love of Jesus.

APPLICATION

The lesson for chapter two goes more in depth on the Tree of Life. Encourage your participants to pay attention over the next week to how they might be acting and reacting based on Tree of Life thinking, and ask them to come prepared to share some examples next week.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Application from chapter one video: Ask participants to share examples of ways they acted and reacted out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil throughout the previous week.

- Are there things in your past that have caused you to want to hide from God?
- Have you used the knowledge of God as a basis of your relationship with Him?
- What are some ways you might have gotten caught up in religion and the Law versus the freedom and grace that result from a relationship with God?
- Have you ever been overcome by shame? The way to overcome shame is to start seeing ourselves the way God sees us. Throughout the semester, we'll cover ways to align our perspectives with God's and to let Him move in our hearts.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray any incorrect views of God will be revealed to your participants and that they'll be able to see Him as a loving Father who is searching for them.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas in which participants have operated out of shame and victimization.



CHAPTER TWO

THE TREE OF LIFE

OVERVIEW

THE FRUIT OF LIVING IN THE TREE OF LIFE:

- The tree of life results in fellowship with God. The only way to experience abundant life is truly knowing the living God. He asked us to love Him, but only after His lavish display of love for us through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Fellowship with God results in innocence—not the other way around. As we spend more time walking with God, listening to His voice, talking to Him, obeying Him, worshipping Him, and enjoying Him, we'll notice a transformation taking place, not only on the outside, but on the inside as well. We'll become transparent and unashamed before Him.
- Innocence is a conduit of God's power. As we seek God and submit our lives to Him, He equips us for every good work.
- Jesus gives us freedom. We'll sin and fall, but if we sin with the Tree of Life as our perspective, we can easily receive forgiveness and get back up.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Application from week one: Ask participants to share examples of ways they acted and reacted out of the Tree of Life thinking throughout the previous week.

- Do you feel completely innocent before God? What would it be like to have true fellowship with God?
- Do you live your life as a son or daughter or a servant?
- Do your daily responses and decisions bring life to others? In what tree do you find yourself living in the most?

APPLICATION

Encourage group members to take practical steps to see the fruit of the Tree of Life in their lives by beginning with fellowship with God. Emphasize the importance of daily time in worship, God's Word, and prayer.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray your participants understand it's a daily choice to live in the Tree of Life.
- Pray they're able to grasp the extravagant love of the Father and for them to begin extending that same love and grace in their relationships with others.



CHAPTER THREE

SPIRITUAL ORDER

OVERVIEW

God created us with three distinct parts: a spirit that must be redeemed, a soul that must be restored, and a body that must surrender. At the moment of salvation, our spirit is made alive in Christ and immediately put in right standing with God (Romans 3:24, 5:1). The Bible calls this event justification: “just-as-if I had never sinned.” However, the soul and body will require time and effort to be conformed to the image of Christ. This gradual process is called sanctification. God’s plan is that our spirits become the strongest part of our three-part design and be the “command center” of who we are and what we do.

Our souls are also made up of three parts: the mind, the will, and the emotions. The soul enables us to experience relationships, appreciate the beauty of our surroundings, and think, reason, and express emotions. God formed our bodies from the earth. The body acts as a temporary house or shell that contains our soul and spirit. Our bodies have appetites, both good and bad. The Bible says to be careful of any sin that leads to our flesh getting anything it wants. Keeping our flesh in submission to our soul and our soul in submission to our spirit allows us to live in spiritual order, in tune with the voice of God.

Spiritual order provides a framework for living in the Tree of Life. It allows us to live with our spirit united with God and our soul and body submitted to our spirit. Living in spiritual order brings with it incredible benefits, such as protection, spiritual growth, and power to overcome obstacles in our lives. Remember, if we fall short or give in to temptation, God convicts; He doesn’t condemn. Godly sorrow for sin will lead us to repentance, which means “to turn and go the other way.” To walk in spiritual order, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. He’s our counselor, our friend, our guide, and the One who reveals truth.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- How does knowing your spirit is redeemed and in right standing with the Father change the way you see yourself?
- Are your thoughts driven by emotions (soul)?
- Are your actions driven by your cravings (body)?
- What are you doing to feed your spirit (spirit)?
- Do you feed your body, soul, or spirit the most?
- What are some ways you can intentionally feed your spirit to stay in spiritual order?
- What are the benefits of walking in the spirit?

APPLICATION

Encourage your participants to be aware throughout this week of times when their soul and body are the strongest and times when their spirit is the strongest.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray the Lord will reveal and reconcile any areas not in spiritual order.
- Pray your participants develop a desire to know God more by spending time in His Word, in worship, and in prayer so they can live in spiritual order.

VIDEO HOMEWORK

The next chapter includes a video to watch before your next group meeting. Please remind your group to visit CalvaryFTL.org/FreedomVideos to watch the video.



CHAPTER FOUR

A LIFE OF SURRENDER

OVERVIEW

When it comes to life with Christ, the act of giving up control to Him is actually the beginning of our freedom. A life of surrender requires trust—and that trust is developed in the context of relationship. Jesus left heaven and came to the earth; He felt hunger, hurt, and rejection; He was beaten, crucified, and three days later rose from the grave all so He could prove His love, earn our trust, and be in relationship with us.

If we want to get to know God better, we need to do what we'd do when getting to know a friend: spend time with Him. This doesn't have to look a certain way. The key is to invite Him into our lives. The Lord will reveal Himself to us as we do things that feed our spirit, like studying the Word, seeking Him in prayer, and building relationships with like-minded friends. God's way of thinking is much different—and much greater—than ours. As a believer, the only way we can live the abundant life God has for us is to fully surrender our lives to Him and adopt His way of doing things.

God wants to make our lives smoother by being Lord over everything. It's only when He's in control that we can walk in spiritual order. Anything we decide to hold on to becomes our responsibility to maintain. However, if we surrender every area of our lives to Him, He'll partner with us on this journey and bring us safely to our final destination. When we surrender everything to Him, we'll find that His path to the fulfillment of our desires is better than we could have ever imagined on our own.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- What areas of your life have you not fully surrendered to God? Are you having a hard time trusting Him with those areas? Why do you think you're holding on to them?
- This week, we learned we worship what we value most. What are some of the things you might value more than your relationship with God? How do you think your life would change if you pursued God with all your heart rather than those things?
- Do you have any relationships you need to surrender to the Lord? If so, how have those relationships come between you and God? How do you think your life will change once you surrender those relationships?
- Which of the "Six Ways to Stay Unoffended" spoke to you the most and why? Have you surrendered your past, present, and future to God? Do you trust His way is better than your own? Why or why not?

APPLICATION

Encourage your participants to think about the areas of their lives that need to be surrendered to the Lord. Have them pray about those areas this week, and encourage them to choose a Scripture to declare over each area.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray the Lord will reveal the areas your participants need to surrender to Him.
- Pray their hearts will be softened and that they'll understand that surrendering these things to the Lord and letting Him be in control will bring freedom and peace.



CHAPTER FIVE FORGIVENESS

OVERVIEW

Because we live in a fallen world, we face the realities of hurt and offense. Harboring unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting another person to die; it does much greater harm to us than the person we refuse to forgive. Offense is the bait the enemy uses to lure us into bondage, and it causes us to create walls. Walls may keep out the bad stuff, but they also keep out the good. With walls around our hearts, we not only protect ourselves from pain and rejection but from experiencing love and life-giving relationships. We think it's up to us to protect our hearts, but the truth is, God never meant for this to be our responsibility—it's His.

REASONS WE MAY STRUGGLE TO FORGIVE:

- We have the wrong idea of forgiveness. Remember, forgiveness is not minimizing the offense or forgetting what happened. Forgiveness doesn't necessarily bring reconciliation. Forgiveness is something that happens in our hearts, giving us freedom. Reconciliation is a two-way street and requires repentance, the desire for restitution, and rebuilding of trust from both parties.
- We don't think it's fair to let them off the hook. We reason in our hearts they don't deserve forgiveness, but God doesn't hand out forgiveness based on merit—and thank goodness, because none of us deserve forgiveness! Since we've been forgiven so very much, we should extend what we've received to others. The forgiven forgive!
- We don't think we can do it. In our own human power, we may not be strong enough to forgive the great wrongs done against us, but we're empowered by the supernatural strength of God. It's important to remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. It's a choice we have to make daily.

It's impossible to forgive others for their offenses until we receive forgiveness ourselves. If we struggle to forgive others, chances are we've not fully grasped what God has done for us. We've been given total forgiveness for past, present, and future sin. It's not that God forgets our sins, but rather, He chooses to remember our sin no more because He wants to be in relationship with us.

It's often difficult for us to receive God's forgiveness. The enemy loves to remind us of the mistakes we made in the past because guilt keeps us stuck and unable to move forward into the future God has planned for us. We feel we have to repent for our past over and over, but these thoughts come solely from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We don't have to earn forgiveness. It's a free gift we can receive by faith. When our past comes to mind, we can defeat the enemy by knowing and speaking truth from the Word of God. Forgiveness takes courage and strength, but it leads us to pathways of righteousness where we can live free from guilt and shame!

How do we keep our hearts pure and unoffended? We must recognize our own imperfections, focus on the real enemy (the devil, not people), and receive the forgiveness and love of God. Because it's a daily choice to forgive, remember the steps for walking out forgiveness with those who've offended you: pray for them, bless them, and do good to them.

WHEN WE ARE . . .

Betrayed – *by a best friend who lied, a spouse who didn't stay forever, a confidant who broke our trust, etc.*

Falsely Accused – *misunderstood, the subject of gossip and slander*

Rejected – *by a spouse, friend, trusted authority, or even a church*

Abused – *emotionally, physically, verbally, or sexually*

Humiliated – *haunted by an embarrassing moment, ashamed, disgraced*

REMEMBER JESUS WAS . . .

Betrayed – *by Judas, a trusted friend and one of His disciples*

Falsely Accused – *wrongly indicted in several courts*

Rejected – *by Peter, one of His disciples and closest companions*

Abused – *beaten, tortured, cursed, and crucified on a cross*

Humiliated – *crucified and disgraced in a public setting*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- What area did you pray about surrendering this week? Did you pick a Scripture to declare over the area?
- Did you have the wrong idea of forgiveness before reading through the curriculum this week? Are you harboring unforgiveness in any way?
- Have you received God's forgiveness for your past sins? If not, what do you think is holding you back?
- Think about this, in light of all the sin for which you've been forgiven, can you release those who have wronged you? Would you trade your forgiveness from God for the right to hold someone accountable for their offense?
- Are there people in your life who you've not released to the Lord? Do you think you might be trying to get revenge for their offense?

APPLICATION

Encourage the group to write down names of any individuals they need to forgive. Challenge them to pray for each person by name every day this week.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray your participants truly receive the Lord's forgiveness for themselves so they can freely forgive those who've offended them.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show your participants who they need to forgive and give them the strength to do so.
- Pray the Lord will heal every wound in their lives and allow them to live a truly unoffended life.
- If they express they're constantly reminding themselves of past failures and are bothered by the sin of their past even though they've asked for forgiveness, pray specifically over these areas.



CHAPTER SIX

THE POWER OF WORDS

OVERVIEW

Proverbs 18:21 (NIV) says, “The tongue has the power of life and death.” The words we speak are a spiritual gauge, showing how much of our soul we’ve surrendered to God. A life surrendered to God and filled with the Holy Spirit will produce speech full of grace, mercy, love, and power.

With words, God spoke the entire universe into being. Words and language were His idea, and His words are literally life to us. Our words can either tear others down or build them up. God desires for us to speak words of life that build up, bring healing, and offer encouragement.

In Luke 6:45 (NIV), Jesus said, “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” To be able to speak words of life, we need to regularly plant our hearts in the Word of God, the Bible. Sometimes engaging with the Bible can feel more like a chore than a delight. If at some point we feel the Word of God has lost its power, it’s not because the Bible has changed, it’s because we’ve stopped mixing the Word with faith. If we want to fall in love with Jesus, we must look for Him as we read the Bible and make engaging with the Bible a priority in our lives. If we want more power, we need to consume more of His Word.

We need the Spirit of God in order for the Word to come alive, and when it does, it’ll genuinely change our lives. “Rhema” is the Greek word for “word,” and it means “revealed word.” When the Word becomes revealed to us, no word God speaks will be void of the power for its fulfillment.

We must activate the Word of God in our lives by making God’s Word a priority, believing what we read and meditating on Scripture. One of the great ways to meditate on the Word of God is to speak God’s Word out loud. We need to find promises in Scripture to speak out loud that will remind us that God loves us and is with us. We need to bring our world and God’s world together and make them one. We can start by choosing a verse, studying it throughout the day, and then applying it by living it out in our everyday lives. Things will change when we walk in obedience to His Word.

If someone has been on the receiving end of destructive words, they can truly be healed and set free from the effects of those words.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- How has your relationship with the Lord and your perspective changed as you prayed for the people you needed to forgive this past week?
- What does your day-to-day conversation say about your spiritual condition? Do your words reflect a heart changed by Jesus?
- Do you say things about yourself, or others, that you quickly regret? What steps are you taking to be more careful with your words?
- Can you remember a time when you experienced the rhema Word of God—a time when God’s Word came alive in a situation in your life?
- If group members feel comfortable sharing, ask: What are some of the words of death and cursing that have been spoken to you by others? What are some of the words of death and cursing that you have spoken to yourself? Have you spoken words of death and cursing to others?
- Are you regularly consuming the Word of God and letting its truth replace your old way of thinking? If not, what’s holding you back from engaging with God’s Word? What are some practical ways you can get more of God’s Word in your life?
- Do you think you read the Bible out of duty or out of a desire to know God?

APPLICATION

Using the SOAP method, have your group pick a chapter of the Bible to study this week. Another idea is to have participants select a Bible verse that speaks to them and write that Scripture on an index card to memorize or read during times of discouragement. If your group needs help picking a Bible verse, the Appendix has a list of Bible verses to choose from. In this moment, either close in prayer as a whole group or with individual prayer.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray participants will understand the power of their words.
- Pray and break off any words of death that have been spoken over each participant.
- Ask the Lord to create a hunger in your participants’ hearts for God’s Word, and pray God’s Word would bring revelation to each participant.

VIDEO HOMEWORK

The next chapter includes a video to watch before your next group meeting. Please remind your group to visit CalvaryFTL.org/FreedomVideos to watch the video.



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LIFE OF A WORSHIPER

OVERVIEW

Every person is at a different place in his or her walk with Christ. No two stories are the same! The gospel shows us we can't cleanse ourselves, only Jesus can cleanse us. It's His work inside of us! If you're unsatisfied with where you are in the process, God's eager to take you to the next level. He's the One who prepares us, refines us, and makes us holy. Though you may not feel very special or pure at this moment, God still sees you this way because the holiness of Jesus has been placed on you. You're not defined or limited by your past. He says in His Word that He makes all things brand new (2 Corinthians 5:17) and He wants to help you become a new creation.

Remember, justification is an event that takes place when we're saved. When Jesus becomes our Savior, at that very moment, every sin of our past is wiped clean. Sanctification; however, is not an event—it's a process. It's a journey through which God molds and transforms our character.

There are three steps we can take to see more of God's sanctifying work in our lives: offer our bodies, renew our minds, and surrender our wills. God desires us to bring our whole selves to Him. We might sin by saying something with our mouths, looking at something with our eyes, or touching something with our hands. When we surrender every area of our lives to God, He begins His restorative work in making us a new creation. As we surrender our will to God, His perfect will becomes the motivation of our lives.

When we truly embrace the love God has for us, we begin to trust Him and, as our relationship with Him grows, we develop a great love for Him as well. What we once saw as duty has now become devotion. It's our delight to know Him and follow His commands. Worship is a natural response when we fall in love with Jesus. It's also an act of warfare against Satan and demonic forces! Psalm 149:6 (NLT) says, "Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands."

In Ezekiel 47:1-12, we find a vision of a river, which symbolizes the presence of God. As we venture forward in our relationship with God, we have a tendency to want to keep our toes on the ground, ensuring our head stays above water and we're in control of our lives. But God's inviting us to trust Him, to go deeper, to experience the fullness of His presence. As we surrender control to God, we'll be swept away by His love and freely enjoy our journey with Him. When we see God is worthy of our trust, we'll more easily give up control and live in spiritual order.

WAYS TO BE A TRUE WORSHIPPER:

1. GIVE GOD YOUR AFFECTION.

God wants to be in a covenant relationship with you that involves much more than signing songs. He wants you to desire and enjoy His presence. Worship Him out of the overflow of your heart because He's worthy of the best you can offer Him.

2. COMMIT TO UNCONDITIONAL WORSHIP.

True worship means praising God even when we don't feel like it. It's common for us to take a conditional approach to worshipping God. We praise Him when our lives are going well, but disengage and withdraw when things get difficult. The truth is, God is worthy of our worship in good times and bad. We must make a commitment that whatever comes in our lives, we'll continue to posture ourselves to worship God.

3. INCLUDE GOD IN YOUR DAILY LIFE.

When our everyday world looks different from our "church world," we compartmentalize our lives and limit God's access to our hearts. Including God in all areas of our lives reveals our level of surrender to Him. As we invite Him to be a part of everything we do, we'll have moments of worship every day.

4. BE OBEDIENT.

The greatest sacrifice we can give to God is a heart of humility willing to serve Him with unconditional obedience. This kind of worship moves the heart of God toward us.

5. SHOW REVERENCE.

Our God is like no other—almighty, awesome, and beyond comprehension. It's only appropriate to approach Him with awe and reverence. True worship requires that we fear the Lord. When we both fear God and love Him, we feel safe in the shelter of His immense greatness.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Are you satisfied with where you are with God? How do you want your life to be different?
- Review justification and sanctification. Make sure your participants understand that justification is an event and sanctification is the process that allows us to become vessels of honor.
- If your group members feel comfortable sharing, ask: What areas of your life might need to be confronted and cleaned up by the Holy Spirit?
- What are some of the lies the enemy tells you about your ability to be used by God?

- What are some of the areas in your life in which Satan tends to have a foothold (areas might include rejection, abuse, self-hatred/unworthiness, depression, pride, unforgiveness, greed, guilt/shame, lust/sexual impurity, control, anger, fear, etc.)? Remind your participants to use the prayer outline provided to repent and cast off the enemy's hold in these areas so they can walk in freedom.
- Are you living the life of a worshipper? What are you doing to create an atmosphere of worship in your daily life?
- Looking at the four levels of worship, at what level are you currently? What steps can you take to move to the next level? Is worship coming from a genuine place in your heart?
- What are some practical things you can do to worship the Lord throughout the day? What are some ways you can renew your mind to the Word of God?

APPLICATION

This will be your last small group meeting before the Freedom Encounter. Set a date for your group to meet afterwards. This meeting will give participants an opportunity to share what the Lord has done in their lives this semester and at the Freedom Encounter. Try to plan the meeting on the same day and time your group has met throughout the semester.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray your participants' eyes are opened to any footholds of the enemy and that they'll be bold in standing up to the enemy regarding these areas.
- Pray for each participant to live a life of genuine worship.
- Bind the enemy from stealing spiritual progress that has been made this semester.
- Pray the Lord works out all of the details for them to attend the Freedom Encounter and experience all God has for them.

