

# The Tree of Life: Intimacy With God

*Ruth shared this with our Kingdom Community:*

“Shame cuts us off from intimacy, vulnerability, and transparency. When humans' imperfections are exposed, our natural inclination isn't to step into the spotlight but to run away from it and hide. We cover ourselves and put on a mask.

But what's funny is, our first parents taught us about hiding.

Rewind back to the garden of Eden. God created this beautiful and amazing world and put image-bearing humans (Adam and Eve) there to care for it, create within it, and reflect him to it. He gives them one law: don't eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

As its name suggests, when the couple eats of that tree, they will know the difference between good and evil. This implies that before they eat it, they don't know good from evil. So as humans in the world tasked with a job, how are they to know? The only possible explanation is total dependency on God their creator. The only way for them to avoid an evil they wouldn't recognize is to be leaning on God so completely that he tells them. So eating the tree is actually saying no to dependency on and intimacy with God.

We don't need you; we don't want you; we can do this on our own.

In the West, this doesn't sound very offensive; our entire culture is built on autonomy and a pull-yourself-by-your-bootstraps mentality. But ultimately we have to admit there's something in us that tells us we were created to do this life thing alone, but such independence leads to exhaustion.

But in the garden, that command not to eat from the tree wasn't some arbitrary rule. I always thought it was the weirdest command, as if God were tempting us to sin. Like, God, if you didn't want us to eat from the tree, then why put it there?

But the tree wasn't a temptation to sin; it was an invitation to intimacy. It was God giving humans the choice to live with him or without him. We can lean into him for what's right and wrong, since we don't truthfully know, or we can "eat the fruit" and have our own standards, ways, and paths. One choice leads to life, and the other leads to destruction.

And so in Genesis 3:5, Eve and Adam believe the words of a serpent, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil," and grab for the throne. Instantly they knew good and evil. Something cracks. Something breaks. The fruit promised something it couldn't deliver and the mirage falls away. The text says, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Exposed. Uncovered. Shamed. Guilty. Out in the open...

Sin is less defined as smoking weed and stealing money from your boss and more defined simply as, I know. And whenever we say we know what's right and wrong, we become our own judge and God, and that can play out in all sorts of behavior that isn't the best for ourselves or human flourishing. Now, let me clarify that the issue isn't knowing right and wrong at all. The issue is where we find out right and wrong. Do we lean on God for what's right and wrong, or do we lean on ourselves? One creates life, one creates death. ”<sup>1</sup>

Kingdom Living Community

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