



E-Worship 4:23

An online resource for officers and worship leaders in the 21st century

"A time is coming...when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." - John 4:23

A Tale of Two Trees

"Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And 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."

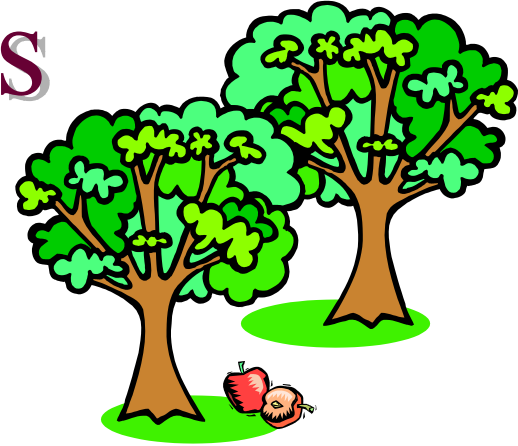
—Genesis 2:8,9

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

- Matthew 16:24

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

- Romans 12:1



The Hebrew word for "knowledge" in the above Genesis passage is "da'ath", a derivative of "yada", the Hebrew word meaning "to know". Yet this knowledge is not just a head knowledge, knowing facts and figures: "Yada" is knowledge from intimate acquaintance, from relational experience. Note that in Genesis 4:1 the King James Bible correctly translates the verse to say "And Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain." The word used here in Hebrew is, of course, "yada". From the context of the verse it is easy to conclude that Adam did not just have a "head knowledge" of his wife Eve!

In Eden Adam and Eve were daily faced with a choice between two trees. As long as they did not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they had full access to the tree of life. The day they chose to fully access (intimately know) the tree of knowledge, they lost access to the second tree, and were banished from the garden.

The two trees were a foundational premonition of all that was to come in the world: We still live in a world of two trees, and we face the choice of one or the other every day of our lives.

The world perceives that when God says "Don't!" He is being a spoil-sport, ruining all their fun. But like parents who constantly reiterate "Don't!" to their children, God recognizes that all our choices have only one of two consequences: the guilt-free contentment only found in the tree of life, or an intimate acquaintance with evil and its fruit of suffering, work, and brokenness.

What parent wants their child to experience pregnancy out of wedlock? What parent wants their child to know firsthand the consequences of drug addiction, or the experience of drunkenness? What parent wants their child to fail a school exam due to lack of study? Instead, as parents we often wish we could erase the consequences of our child's choices, and bear the pain of it for them. We say "don't" because we ourselves al-

ready intimately know what it means to choose the "tree of knowledge", and with breaking hearts are trying to protect them.

But God, being God, had a power we do not: With the heart of a loving parent He chose to bear upon Himself the consequences of our sin, and so He suffered and died on that other "tree of life", the cross of Calvary.

We have been brought up to believe that denying ourselves (eating of the tree of knowledge) and taking up the cross (the tree of life) is a burden and a sacrifice, bringing to us a consequence of pain and suffering, just as Christ bore pain because of the cross He carried.

What we do not realize is that Christ was offering us the exact opposite when He said "Take up your cross". When we choose the cross we are choosing the "tree of life". The cross is a place of innocence, of rest, of safety, and wholeness for us. It spares us from the consequences of our own indulgences. It is the promise found in Jeremiah: "to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future." The cross is God's best for our lives.

As we continue to look at the Old Testament Tabernacle and its blueprint for worship, remember this metaphor as it relates to the first piece of furniture found in the tabernacle: the altar of sacrifice.

Kim thanks Dr. Paul Thistle of Tyndale Bible College for inspiring this devotional message on "the two trees".

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