

Lesson 57: THE TREE OF LIFE
Genesis 3; Revelation 22:2

INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION

What are some good things that we get from trees. (See if they think of all of the following, and maybe more: wood, paper, oxygen, shade and shelter because of the leaves, fruit and nuts, beauty to look at.) And who is it who made all these good things that we can use? (The Lord.)

[SKETCH A SIMPLE TREE ON THE BOARD AS YOU READ THE NEXT PARAGRAPH]

Did you know that a growing person is like a tree? Tell me the parts of a tree. (Trunk, branches, leaves, and on some trees, flowers and fruits.) In our minds, we are like a tree! When we're young, we learn a lot about the world around us. This is like the *branches* in our mind. Then we learn how to figure things out. This is like the *leaves* in our minds. We can then learn about spiritual things -- things about the Lord and heaven. This is like the *flowers* on a tree. And finally, we can take all that we've learned, and we can do good and kind things for the world and for other people. This is like the *fruit* on a tree.

And who does all this learning and knowing and doing really come from? (The Lord!) The Lord is the one who creates our minds so we can do these things.

There is a very special tree mentioned in two places in the Word: once in the very beginning, in the book of Genesis, and once at the very end, in the book of Revelation. Does anyone know what tree I'm talking about?

[SHOW A PICTURE OF THE TREE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN]

The Tree of Life! The most beautiful tree in the whole Garden of Eden. This tree was in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Do you know why? Because the Tree of Life represents something very, very important. It represents knowing that everything comes from the Lord, even our own lives and bodies. Do you think that's an important thing to know? It's actually the most important thing there is to know. It's something that needs to be in the middle of our minds, just like the Tree of Life was in the middle of the Garden of Eden.

So at first, Adam and Eve lived in this beautiful garden, with the Tree of Life in the center. But later in the story, another tree starts to be mentioned in the center of the garden. [IF POSSIBLE, SHOW A PICTURE OF THE SERPENT IN THE TREE] This tree is called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree represents *feeling* like life is our own, even if we know it's really from the Lord. This is a fine thing, *unless* we start to think that life *doesn't* come from the Lord, but is only our own. And that's what the rest of the story is about.

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Along into the story comes the serpent. Do you remember what the serpent told Eve to do? (To eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, even though God had told them not to.) God had told them not to eat from this tree, because that would mean they would start to think things really were just their own, instead of from the Lord. They would start to think they could think up ideas without God's help—and that their ideas might even be better than God's ideas!

[WOULD BE GOOD TO SHOW A PICTURE OF ADAM AND EVE LEAVING THE GARDEN]

So when Adam and Eve *did* eat from this second tree, they didn't believe that all things were right from the Lord, like they had before. That is why they couldn't stay in the heavenly Garden of Eden. Their minds just weren't thinking right to live there any more.

[TAKE AWAY THE PICTURE]

So the Tree of Life isn't mentioned any more throughout all the many, many stories in the Word—*until* the very end! That's because for so many thousands of years, most people just weren't thinking about the fact that everything really comes from the Lord. Many people tried to learn what the Lord wants, but many others just tried to do things their own way, without turning to the Lord. So things got very mixed up in the world, with a lot of pain and evil and suffering.

If only people could realize that we need to always turn to the Lord, and learn from Him. If only people could believe and remember that *everything* comes from God! Then the whole world would be a beautiful, peaceful place again, with no wars and no dangers.

Do you think that could ever happen? Well, you know what? At the end of the Word, in the book of Revelation, the Lord promises that that can happen again. When the disciple John was on the island of Patmos, the Lord showed him many amazing visions, and the last vision was the vision of the Holy City. Listen to this part, describing something inside the city:

[WOULD BE GOOD TO SHOW A PICTURE OF THE HOLY CITY, PARTICULARLY INSIDE, WITH THE TREE]

“In the middle of its street and the river, and on either side, was the Tree of Life, which bore twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:2

The Lord was promising that a happy, peaceful, beautiful life can come to anyone who turns to God, and who knows all good things that they do come from God, and who tries hard *not* to do or wish evil things.

If all people on the earth ever decide to do that, then the whole world will become a peaceful and safe place to live. But the Lord promises that, even if the world still has

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troubles and evil, each one of us can choose to live a peaceful, happy life in heaven. How do we choose to live in heaven? (By turning to the Lord to learn how to live, and by trying hard not to do or wish bad things.)

We can try to do this every day. Some days we won't do so well, but can we try again? The Lord says we can *always* try again, and then we'll keep getting better and better at it. If we keep practicing, eventually it will become easy to be kind to people, and to stop bad wishes and actions, and to remember that everything good we do and think comes from the Lord. Then the Lord Himself will be inside of us, in the center, and we can live in the heavenly peace of the Holy City, with the Tree of Life in the center.

We're going to make a picture of the Tree of Life, using real leaves to make rubbings for the leaves on our picture. You can make the leaves any color you want, because the good and helpful, healing thoughts that people have from the Lord can be of all different kinds.

What else did the Tree of Life have growing on it? (Twelve fruits) These fruits show all the good things people can do, because the Lord gives them the power. So these twelve fruits you can also make of any shape and color, to show how different all the good things the Lord can do through us are.

PROJECT: LEAF RUBBINGS

Supplies:

White paper (larger pieces, like 11"x17", would be best.)

A good supply of real leaves (medium to smaller sized would be best).

Crayons

Procedure:

The children can draw a trunk, and then create leaves for the tree by placing a leaf at a time underneath the paper and rubbing that area on top of the paper with the side of the crayon, to bring out the pattern of the leaf. When they have finished making leaves, they can add twelve fruits wherever they like.