

Summary

This sermon explores the root of spiritual and emotional bondage by returning to the Garden of Eden, where God placed two trees before Adam and Eve: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These trees represent a choice that every person still faces today, the choice between existence sourced in God or existence sourced in self. When we choose self-reliance over dependence on God, we open the door to shame, condemnation, and patterns of bondage in our lives. The pastor identifies three key ways we begin "nibbling from the wrong tree": denying God's word, adding to or taking away from God's word, and believing that God is withholding something good from us. The path to freedom is not found in trying harder or managing behavior better, but in recognizing these patterns, encountering Jesus as our tree of life, and shifting from fearful self-management to genuine dependence on God. True freedom and abundant living come only through abiding in Christ.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with open hearts and willing spirits. We ask that You would quiet the noise around us and within us so that we can clearly hear what You want to speak to each of us today. Lord, we know that You are the source of all life, and we want to draw closer to You through this time together. Give us the courage to be honest with ourselves and with one another. Let Your Holy Spirit guide our conversation, and may everything we discuss today draw us deeper into relationship with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

If you could have any job or career in the world, completely different from what you do now, what would it be and why?

Key Verses

- Genesis 2:9
- Genesis 2:16
- Deuteronomy 30:19
- Exodus 15:26

- Hebrews 6:18
- Hebrews 13:5
- 1 Peter 5:7
- Philippians 4:19
- John 10:10
- John 15:5

Questions

- The sermon opened with a story about a boy raised as a farmer who was actually born to be an acrobat. In what ways do you think people live lives that are not the lives they were truly meant to live, spiritually or emotionally?
- The pastor described two trees as representing two ways of living: existence sourced in God and existence sourced in self. Which of those two ways of living do you find yourself defaulting to most often, and what tends to trigger that shift toward self-reliance?
- The sermon identified three "nibbles" from the wrong tree: denying God's word, adding to or taking away from God's word, and believing God is withholding something good from you. Which of these three do you find most tempting or most subtle in your own life?
- The pastor shared a personal story about delaying obedience to God's call for nearly ten months, and how God used his daughter to finally get His attention. Have you ever experienced a moment where God used an unexpected person or situation to redirect you? What happened?
- Deuteronomy 30:19 (ESV) says, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life." If the choice seems so clear, why do you think it is still so difficult for people, including believers, to consistently choose life?
- The sermon pointed out that a born-again person can still eat from the wrong tree, and that patterns of bondage are often the fruit of self-sourced living. What is one area of your life where you can see that connection between self-reliance and a pattern that has held you back?
- The pastor said, "Whatever is trying to identify you besides being a child of God is a false identity that the enemy is trying to put on you." What are some false identities, whether rooted in past trauma, accomplishments, or failures, that people commonly allow to define them?
- John 15:5 (ESV) says, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing." What does abiding in Christ practically look like in your daily life, and where do you feel the most disconnected from that source?

Life Application

This week, ask the Holy Spirit to show you one specific area of your life where you have been eating from the wrong tree, relying on yourself rather than trusting God. Write it down. Then spend time each day in God's word, allowing His truth to replace the lie that has been driving that pattern. Take one concrete step of obedience in that area, even if it feels uncomfortable or uncertain. Remember, freedom is not the result of trying harder. It is the result of staying connected to Jesus, the true tree of life.

Key Takeaways

- Every person faces the same fundamental choice that Adam and Eve faced: to live sourced in God (the tree of life) or sourced in self (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). The patterns of bondage in our lives are often the fruit of choosing self-sourced living.
- We begin nibbling from the wrong tree in three key ways: by denying God's word and His character, by adding to or taking away from what God has said, and by believing that God is withholding something good from us.
- Hearing God's voice through His word and responding with obedience are the foundational steps toward healing, Spirit, soul, and body. Delayed or partial obedience keeps us stuck in bondage even when we know what God is calling us to do.
- False identities rooted in past trauma, accomplishments, or failures can keep us from living as children of God. Whatever defines us apart from our relationship with Christ is a false identity the enemy uses to hold us back.
- True freedom and abundant life are not achieved through trying harder, knowing more, or managing behavior better. They come through abiding in Jesus Christ, who is our tree of life, and shifting from fearful self-management to genuine dependence on God.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You for this time together and for the truth of Your word. We confess that we have all, at one time or another, reached for the wrong tree. We have trusted ourselves more than we have trusted You, and we have allowed fear, shame, and false identities to define us. But today we choose life. We choose to abide in You. Holy Spirit, continue to reveal to each of us the places where we are living from self rather than from You. Give us the courage to be obedient, even when it is hard. Remind us that

You are our provider, our defender, and our healer. May we leave here today more rooted in You than when we arrived. In Jesus' name, amen.