



# **TREE OF LIFE**

## **A Picture of the Christian Life**

Eliezer Gonzalez and Andrew Ranucci

# Tree of Life

A Picture of the Christian Life



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and  
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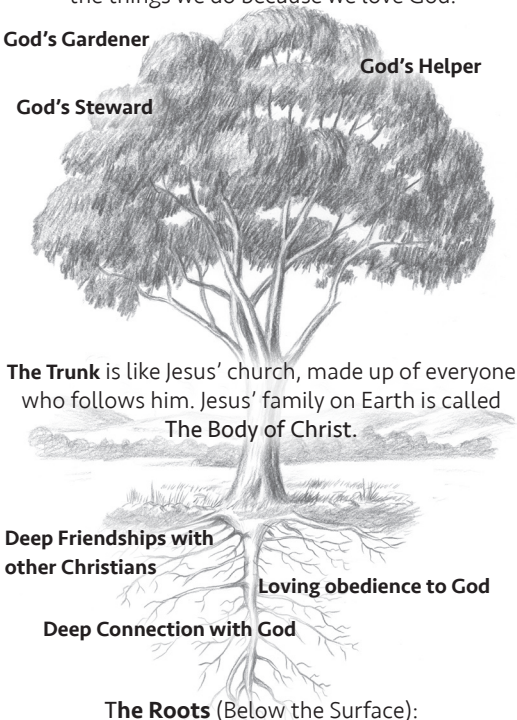
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**The Branches and fruit** (Above the Surface):  
our Christian Life seen by other people:  
the things we do because we love God.

**God's Gardener**

**God's Helper**

**God's Steward**



**The Trunk** is like Jesus' church, made up of everyone  
who follows him. Jesus' family on Earth is called  
**The Body of Christ.**

**Deep Friendships with  
other Christians**

**Loving obedience to God**

**Deep Connection with God**

**The Roots** (Below the Surface):  
As roots burrow deep into the soil to get food  
for the tree, so we need to grow closer to God to  
develop our relationship with him. We can't see  
this happening because it's on the inside.

# A Model for Discipleship

*The fruit of people who are right with God is a tree of life. (Proverbs 11:30)*

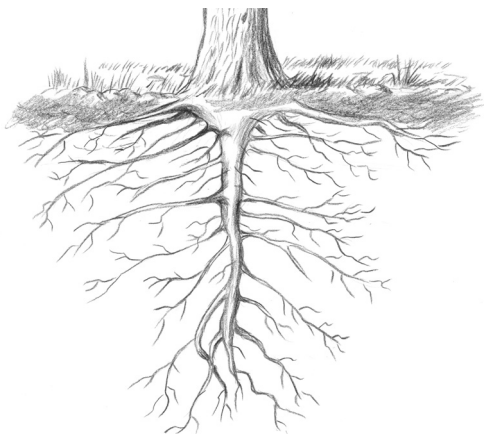
When Jesus lived on earth, he had twelve disciples who were his closest friends. All Christians can be Jesus' disciples. The Tree of Life is a symbol of how our Christian life works when we have been made right with God through Jesus. It helps us understand how we can be Jesus' disciples.

The roots of the tree are the symbol of our close friendship with God. The trunk of the tree is a symbol of Jesus' family on earth. It's sometimes called the Body of Christ. The branches, leaves and fruit help us understand how we can serve God.

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***The Tree of Life shows us how our Christian life works—on the inside and the outside, in our hearts and our actions.***

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Nothing  
is more important  
than deepening your friendship  
with God.

## Chapter 1

# The Roots [below the surface]

The Roots of the Tree of Life are found in the love that Jesus has for you.

*I pray that your life will be strong in love and be built on love. And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love—how wide, how long, how high, and how deep that love is. (Ephesians 3:17–18 ERV).*

Jesus has shown this love for us first and foremost because he died for our sins so that we can be accepted by God as his family — and as his beloved children.

*True love is God's love for us, not our love for God. He sent his Son as the way to take away our sins. (1 John 4:10 ERV).*

God shows us his love by offering us forgiveness and life as a free gift. We accept God's gift simply by believing in what Jesus has said — that it is a gift. By believing, we allow

	God shows us his love by offering us forgiveness and life as a free gift.	Jesus to be in charge of our lives.
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Everything in the Tree of Life comes from its roots — the love of God for us, and not from what we do ourselves. Everything in the tree of life — the trunk, the branches, the and the fruit — is simply our loving response, in God's strength, for what he has done for us.

Jesus wants us to enjoy this tree of life. He wants us to produce lots of fruit. Jesus says,

*Show that you are my followers by producing much fruit. This will bring honour to my Father. (John 15:8, ERV).*

Here are some ways by which we can understand and explore the love of God more, and in this way, make sure that we go deep into the roots of the Tree of Life.

## Deep Friendship with God

We become better servants of God when we learn more about Jesus. We grow closer to God when we follow Jesus' example. Jesus spent a lot of time talking with God in prayer. This is how we invite God's love into our lives and learn more about how he wants us to live.

The Gospel of Mark tells us: *Very early in the morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of town to a lonely place, where he prayed* (From Mark 1:35).

As Jesus' followers, we will also want to set aside time to pray and learn about God, and this will bring us closer to him. Developing regular habits of prayer and Bible study help us to live a life close to Jesus.

*"Great blessings belong to those who don't listen to evil advice, who don't live like sinners, and who don't join those who make fun of God. Instead, they love the Lord's teachings and think*

*about them day and night. So they grow strong, like a tree planted by a stream — a tree that produces fruit when it should and has leaves that never fall. Everything they do is successful (Psalm 1:1-3 ERV).*

Always put your friendship with God above everything else. Nothing is more important than deepening your friendship with God.

## **Loving Obedience to God**

When we have a friendship with God, we will what to please God. This is not because he will love us any more or any less based on what we do, but simply because the more that we make God our Friend, the more we will naturally want to be loving and kind like him. This is what 'loving obedience' is all about. The greatest thing that he asks us to do is to love one another:

*This is what I command you: Love each other as I have loved you. (John 15:12 ERV).*

It is by loving each other that other people



will know that you know that you are experiencing the Tree of Life.

As your friendship with God deepens, he will show you more about how you should obey him in love. Remember: you will never be able to obey God perfectly in this life and you will always be disappointed with yourself, but you will never be a disappointment to God if you accept his friendship.

If you love  
each other,  
everyone will  
know that  
you are my  
disciples.  
(John 13:35)

## Deep Friendships with Other Christians

We learn to serve God better through our friendships with other Christians. They help us stay true to God. They encourage us to overcome our faults and help us through difficult times. We all need people who can help us grow closer to God. He instructs us:

*I've commanded you to be strong  
and brave. Don't ever be afraid or*

*discouraged! I am the Lord your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9 CEV).*

Jesus had special friendships. He was closest to three of his disciples — Peter, James and John — and he often spent time with them away from everyone else. This helped to give him strength for his life. The Bible tells us:

*Two people are better than one. When two people work together, they get more work done. If one person falls, the other person can reach out to help. But those who are alone when they fall have no one to help them.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (ERV).*

You might decide to choose two or three other special people to form a small group to encourage each other in your Christian life. This helps you to follow Jesus more closely.

*An enemy might be able to defeat one person, but two people can stand back-to-back to defend each other. And three people are even stronger. They are like*

*a rope that has three parts wrapped together — it is very hard to break.  
(Ecclesiastes 4:12 ERV).*

When we become close friends with other believers, we understand more about God and his love for us. Other Christians can encourage us and help us grow closer to God. True Christian friends help us learn more about how to include God in every part of our lives.

Let us think about how to help each other be loving and kind. Let us get together to worship God and encourage each other, because Jesus will be returning soon. (from Hebrews 10:24-25).

The Christian missionary Paul wrote to his Christian friends in Rome:

*I want to see you so I can share some special gift of the Holy Spirit with you. It will make you strong. Both of us need help. I can help make your faith strong and you can do the same for me. We need each other Romans 1:11-12 (NLV).*

God made us to enjoy each other's company, not to be alone. In this way we 'belong to a community'.

Paul said: *Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other (Hebrews 10:25 CEV).* The Bible tells us that we also need good friends who will support our Christian lives.

It's important to make friends with other

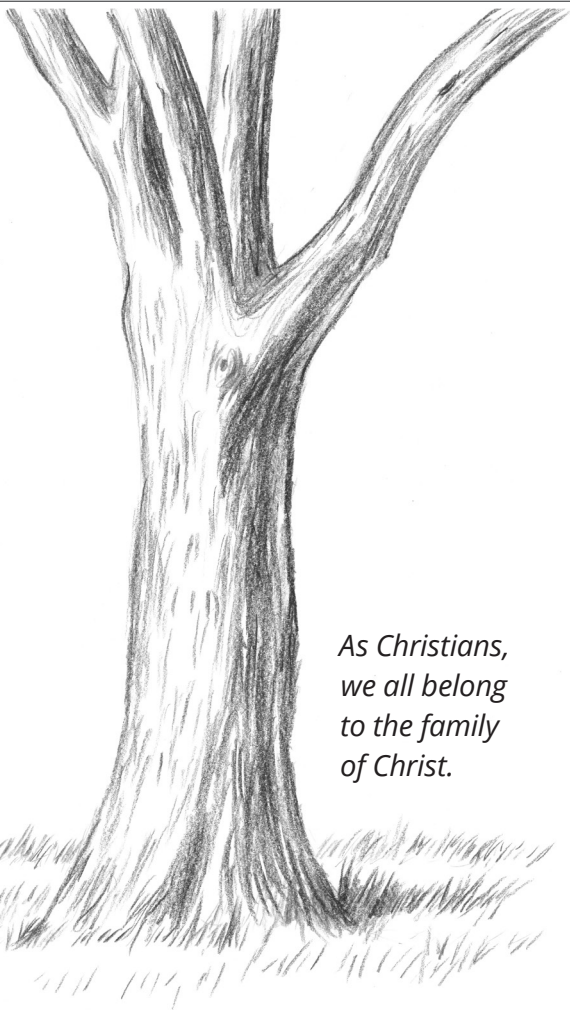
**Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16).**

Christians. You can find special Christian friends when you meet together in churches and fellowships.

You can encourage each other and learn more about God together. Other people will see that your Christian life is special, and they will want to know more about God. In this way, you can show Jesus' love to your family and friends and encourage them to accept the Gospel for themselves.

*The believers... spent much of their time together in the Temple area. They also ate together in their homes. They were happy to share their food and ate with joyful hearts. The believers praised God and were respected by all the people. More and more people were being saved every day, and the Lord was adding them to their group (Acts 2:46,47 ERV).*





*As Christians,  
we all belong  
to the family  
of Christ.*

## Chapter Two

# The Trunk

## The Body of Christ — Jesus' Family on Earth

When we commit our lives to Jesus and become Christians, we become part of Jesus' family on earth.

*All of you together are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of that body (1 Corinthians 12:27 ERV).*

As Christians, we all belong to the family of Christ. If we belong to a local Christian fellowship or church, this is our Christian home. It is where we have our closest friends and where we can worship together.

Each part of our body does something different. It's the same with the Christian church. We all belong to Jesus but every one of us can do different things to serve God.



*Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others. (From Romans 12:4-5.)*

God leads us to churches and groups of other Christians. These groups become our spiritual family. This is the place where we belong and where we receive encouragement and instruction in the Christian life. Our spiritual family encourages us to serve God in the best way we can.

*We all have different gifts that God has given to us... We must use them. If someone has the gift of preaching the Good News, he should preach. He should use the faith God has given him. If someone has the gift of helping others, then he should help. If someone has the gift of teaching, he should teach. If someone has the gift of*

*speaking words of comfort and help, he should speak. If someone has the gift of sharing what he has, he should give from a willing heart. If someone has the gift of leading other people, he should lead them. If someone has the gift of showing kindness to others, he should be happy as he does it (Romans 12:6-8 NLV).*



### *Chapter Three*

## **The Branches [above the surface]**

### **God's Steward: Looking After What belongs to God**

A steward is someone who looks after property or money for another person. Everything you have comes from God. God asks you to take care of it and use it all to serve him.

When God created Adam and Eve, he made them stewards of the world around them, to look after it all for him. But they were disobedient to God. Because of sin, people have stopped being good stewards. They want to take as much for themselves as they can. They think that having lots of 'things' makes them important and



valuable. They have forgotten that they are caretakers of God's world. But this is not the way God works. The Bible says:

*More than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well (Matthew 6:33).*

God gives us many things that he wants us to care for. He gives us our time.

He gives us our family and friends. He gives us clothes and

food, homes and money. He also gives us the ability to think, and do things. We can use everything God gives us to help other people.

There's a story in the Bible about a rich young man who came to Jesus and asked him: "What must I do to live forever in heaven with God?" Jesus told him: "Sell everything you have and give away all the money, and then you will be rich in God's



eyes" (Matthew 19:16-26), The young man went away sadly because he didn't want to give away everything he had.

Everything we have been given in this life really belongs to God, and we should use it in his service, not our own. Jesus told a story to show how this works: it's called the Parable of the Talents.

*A man went on a long journey. Before he left, he gave his money to his three servants so they would look after it for him. He gave five bags of silver to one of his servants. ...When he returned the man who had received five bags of silver brought them back with another five as well. 'Master', he said, 'you trusted me to care for five bags of silver, so I used them to earn five more.' The master was very pleased. 'You did well. You are a good and loyal servant. Because you were loyal with small things, I will let you care for much greater things. Come and enjoy a feast with me! (Matthew 25:14-30).*

God has promised that he will give us enough for our own needs and for our family. The rest is for helping to share the good news about what Jesus has done for us so that other people can enjoy the Tree of Life as well!



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***Everything we have been given in  
this life really belongs to God,  
and we should use it in his service.***

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## *Chapter Four*

# **God's Gardener**

## **Planting Seeds for God**

When we are God's servants we want to tell as many people as we can about God's love. This is called sowing seeds for the Kingdom of God. The Bible tells us that "we have been sent to speak for Christ". God needs us to tell everyone in the world about the good news that Jesus died for their sins so they could live forever.



When you love God, you want to do everything you can to tell other people about the Gospel. Jesus told a story about a farmer who sowed seeds. It's called the Parable of the Sower



and you can read it in Matthew 13. Some of the seeds grew in good soil and gave the farmer a rich harvest, but some seeds fell on bad soil and didn't grow. The true Sower is God. When we plant Gospel seeds we are doing the work of God. Some people will respond to God's message, but some people won't. You shouldn't be discouraged, because God wants to you go on sowing seeds for him so that people can hear about him.



When you  
love God, you  
want to do  
everything you  
can to tell other  
people about  
the Gospel.

Paul and his friend Apollos preached about Jesus not long after he returned to heaven. Paul wrote to a group of Christians:

*I planted the seed. Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. The man who plants the seed doesn't make it grow. The man who waters it doesn't make it grow. It's God who makes it grow. But God*

*rewards us for planting and watering the seed. We are God's workers. (From 1 Corinthians 3:6-9).*

Jesus wants to gather a big harvest of Christians from the seeds that we plant. God gives us the strength to do this and we can be happy to be part of spreading the Gospel right around the world.

## Chapter Five

# God's Servant

We are God's servants when we do what God asks us to do. God's servants care about other people. They are kind to others. They do things that help people. They also help other people to learn about Jesus and the Gospel.

Jesus gave us many examples of how to love and care for other people. When Jesus died on the cross, he showed us the greatest act of love and care that's possible.

If we do  
a small  
kindness to  
others, it's as  
if we've done  
it for God.

Even though Jesus was God, he gave up his position in heaven beside God the Father to come to earth. On earth, he became a servant of other people, and died like a

criminal on the cross so that everyone could be saved from their sins.

Jesus gave his followers a good example of how to be a servant when he washed his

disciples' feet. The story is told in John 13:1-17. After Jesus had washed their feet, he said:

On earth,  
Jesus became  
a servant of  
other people.

*"I have given you an example, so you can do what I have done for you."*

When we are God's true servants, we want to help other people in any way they need. Jesus tells us that we can serve other people in large or small ways. Everything is important.

*This is a big job I'm asking you to do, but don't be afraid of it. You can start by doing small things for God. If you give a cup of cold water to a thirsty person, God will reward you for it (From Matthew 10:41-42).*

The Bible tells us that we should do all these

things as if we were doing them for Jesus. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus tells us that everything we do, or don't do, is counted by God.

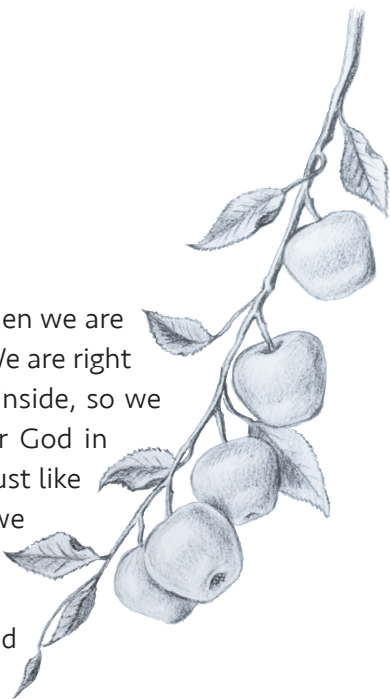
If we do a small kindness to others, it's as if we've done it for God. And when we refuse to help others, it's as if we have said 'no' to God. Jesus tells us that God sees all these things.

*"Anything you did for my people here, you also did for me"* (Matthew 25:40, Easy-to-Read Version).

*Chapter Six***The Fruit.**

What happens when we are Jesus' disciples? We are right with God on the inside, so we show our love for God in the way we live. Just like a healthy tree, we produce 'good fruit'.

When we are joined to God, he gives us his spirit. People who have received God's great gift of salvation want to please God in everything they do. This is called 'the fruit of the Spirit': love, joy, kindness, self-control, generosity or faithfulness. This is what God is like, and he gives us these gifts.



The good fruit of our Christian life is really the character of Jesus shining through us. This is what the Bible means when it talks about 'Christ in us'. The fruit tree gets everything it needs to grow fruit from the roots that burrow deep through the soil.

A farmer knows that if he cares for his fruit tree, it will produce good fruit. Christians know that when we put God first in our lives, we also will produce good fruit.

Every good fruit  
tree produces  
good fruit.  
(Matthew 7:7)

When we have a deep friendship with God, we naturally want to obey him and do what pleases him. In this way we can live a full life in Christ in this world while we look forward to an eternity in his company.

When we produce good fruit for God, other people will want to enjoy the Tree of Life for themselves.

Not only will this make us happy, but In this way, the good news of the kingdom of God will spread everywhere quickly.



## Finally...

The Tree of Life represents the perfect paradise that God has prepared for us. God designed us so we could share this paradise with him.

Jesus came to the earth to die for us on the cross to give us a way back to God's kingdom, so we could look forward to an eternity with God and also a positive life here and now.

The Tree of Life has shown us how we can take advantage of God's wonderful gift. It helps us understand how we can live the life that God has designed for us on this earth with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Most of all, the Tree of Life reminds us that we are deeply connected to God and to each other. It is a powerful model for living life in harmony with God and our fellow men and women.



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# TREE OF LIFE

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Discover this powerful model for living life in harmony with God and your fellow men and women.



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