

Wednesday Night of Worship: Tree of Life

(Matthew 15:3-9 NLT) Jesus replied, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? 4For instance, God says, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.' 5But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.' 6In this way, you say they don't need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. 7You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 8'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'"

(Hebrews 8:7-12 NLT) If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. But when God found fault with the people, he said: "The day is coming, says the lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to my covenant, so I turned my back on them, says the lord. But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already. And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."

Two Trees

(Genesis 2:8-9 NIV) 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 2:16-17 NIV) And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

(Galatians 1:6-7 NIV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert (twist) the gospel of Christ.

✓ Religion focuses on what you do. Christianity focuses on what Jesus has done.

(John 5:39-40 NIV) You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

✓ **Religion focuses on trying to get God's approval. Christianity focuses on receiving God's love.**

(Isaiah 55:7-9 NLT) Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously. "My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

(Romans 5:8 NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

✓ **Religion focuses on external duty. Christianity focuses on internal desire.**

(John 14:15 NIV) If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Living in the Tree of Life

1. Approach God through relationships not rules.

(1 John 5:3, 12 NIV) This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

(2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV) For Christ's love compels us.

2. Respond to sin with life.

(Deuteronomy 30:19 NIV) This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life.

3. Guard your heart from going back.

(Proverbs 4:23 NIV) Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.