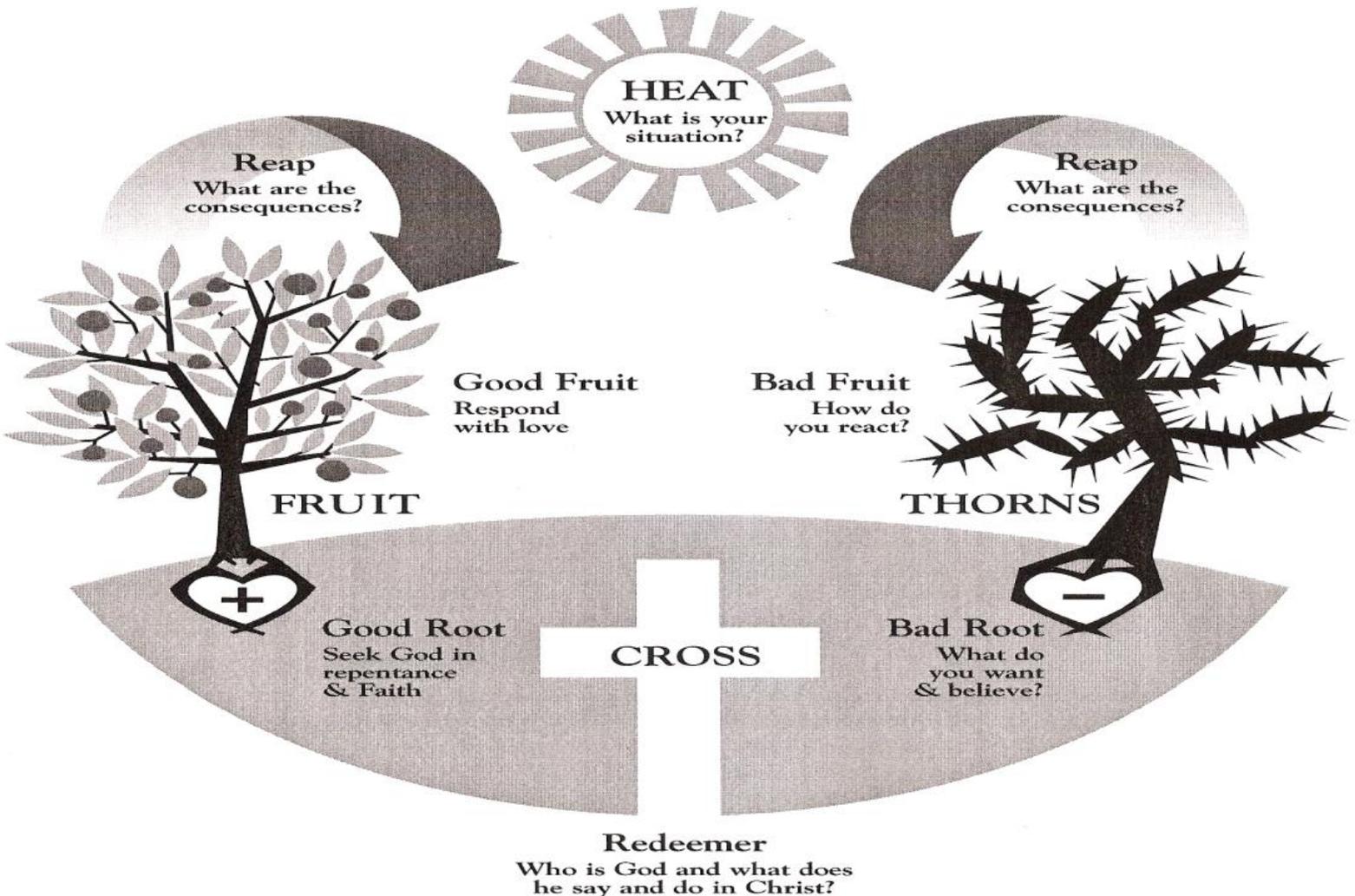


“3 Trees” Biblical Counseling Model



Introduction

The "3 Trees" model is a tool to speak truth into our lives. This model is taken straight out of Luke 6:43-45, where Jesus explains the connection between our behavior and our heart.

“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” **Luke 6:43-45**

We need to get to our roots to understand why we struggle with the same behaviors over and over again. We need the cross to transform our roots.

1. **Heat: What is going on?**

a. *Questions:*

What happened?; Who was involved?; What stressors are you facing (relational, work, school, church, finances)?; What are your responsibilities?; What did you do that you shouldn't have done?; Who are the difficult people in your life?; When do you feel alone, misunderstood?; When do you feel overwhelmed?; What are your temptations?; What do you fear? What are you worried about? What are you struggling with?

b. *False assumptions/irrational thoughts:*

Do you minimize how painful life can be?; Do you expect life to be free of trouble?; Do you try to control your life?; Do you assume that you can manage your way out of anything?

c. *Biblical truths:*

God comforts you in the middle of genuine difficulties in a sin-stained world. (James 1:1-15)

You can learn humility and discipline in the wilderness. (Deut 8:2-14)

When you are in a situation, you are never outside of God's love. God may be taking you where you do not want to go to produce in you what you could not achieve on your own. (Psalm 46:1)

2. **Bad Fruit: How are you responding to what's going on?**

a. *Questions about emotions, behaviors, actions, reactions:*

What did you feel, think, say, do? What is your bad fruit?; Where have you slacked off?; When have you given into anxiety, bitterness, unbelief, anger, or envy?; Who have you spoken rudely to?; Where have you blamed others?; When have you accused God?; What are you not doing that you should be doing?

b. *Examples:*

- i. Magnify/catastrophize. The circumstance is the lens in which you are seeing the entire world. Blowing things out of proportion. Losing perspective. "My life is over".
- ii. Minimize/denial: "It's no big deal. I'm fine."
- iii. Escape the pain. You try to numb the pain by satisfying your urges, desires, needs: parties, drinking, drugs, sex, material things to numb, ease, distract, and escape reality.
- iv. Using people: trying to earn people's approval to make you feel loved, popular.
- v. Become prickly and hypersensitive. "Why is everyone out to get me?" and avoiding them all together.
- vi. Vengeance. You are filled with murderous thoughts, control, self-pity, and anger. "What's wrong with every body?"
- vii. Paralyzed. Risk averse, failure-mode; "I quit life".
- viii. *More bad fruit:* Complaining, laziness, anger, gossip, envy, lust, bitterness, avoidance, pride, indifference, rage, swearing rants, blame, judgmental spirit, greed, lack of self-control.

3. **Bad Root: What do you want?**

What do you think about what is going on? What is your interpretation, are you rationalizing, making excuses for yourself? What are you living for? What is your purpose in life?

a. *Questions about God, yourself, people, life:*

What has captured your heart?; What do you think about most often?; What cravings, desires, and beliefs are ruling your heart?; What do you love more than God?; What do you want?; What do you desire?; What do you crave, long for, wish?; What do you seek?; What are your personal expectations and goals?; What are your intentions?; What do you fear?; What do you *feel* like doing?; What do you think you *need*?; What makes you tick? What really matters to you?; What are you living for?; Whose performance matters to you?; Who are your role models?; What brings you the greatest pleasure?; What do you see as your rights?; What do you feel entitled to?

b. *Examples:*

"I worship myself. I serve myself. The world revolves around me"; "My time is to fulfill my own desires."; "When I am wronged, I demand revenge."; "Sexually, I obey my physical urges."; "I want things for myself."; "I say things to make me look good and you look bad."; "I want what you have, and I don't want you to have it."

4. **Reaping: What are the consequences of your behavior?**
- Sin is self-destructive, how have your desires and behavior affected you?
 - Sin affects others. Humbly, think about how your behavior has affected others. Who was affected by your behavior? How were they affected?

5. **The Cross/The Redeemer/The Gospel: Who is God?**

What does God say? What does God do in Christ?

Who am I in Jesus? How do I live for Jesus, my Savior, my King?

This is the most important tree!!!!!!

If you skip this tree you will be either: depressed and anxious from your awareness of sin (bad tree) or arrogant, legalistic, and self-justifying with your performances (good tree). The Gospel must be your motivation to have authentic, God-honoring roots, fruit, and reaping.

- The cross defines your identity and purpose in life. Christ lives in you through the Holy Spirit giving you a new heart with the power to live out a new life. (Gal 2:20)
- New goals for God: To live with integrity, to know myself biblically as God sees me in Christ, to create a climate of grace in my relationships, to forgive, to be generous, to serve (Rom 12:14-21). To live with grace and truth, to speak honestly with love.
- Ultimate goal of everything: To magnify Christ. To give maximum glory to God.
- Some keys to daily living in the cross: Believe in Jesus. Depend on God. Seeing who you are in Christ. You are justified (1 John 2:1-2), You are adopted (John 3:1-3). Repentance. Fight and give up sin and self-dependence, and receive God's love and power. Obedience. What has God called me to do?
- God is not surprised by your struggle. God speaks to you through the bible. Christ enters your struggle. Jesus will help you. You can go to God with confidence. (Heb 4:14-5:10)
- Questions:* God loves you. Are you receiving the love God has for you?; Is God getting bigger in your life?; What are the implications of the cross in your life? Why did Jesus die?; Do you find your sense of identity in Jesus?; Are you living in the reality of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection for you?; In what specific ways are you failing to let the God shape your life, situations, and relationships?; How does the Gospel motivate you to change this specific sin?; How does the cross increase your desire to live for God?; Will you turn from the lies you have believed? Do you believe in Jesus?

6. **Good Root: What do you want?**

How can you re-order and prioritize your desires?

Do you love God more than the things in this world?

- Academic success, financial and career security, physical appearance, achievements, approval/love of people, popularity... these motivations can replace your good root to live for God. What functional saviors do you trust in more than God?
- Questions to confront self-righteousness, self-justification, self-salvation projects:* What do you love more than God?; What are your personal expectations and goals?; What are you studying/working for?; What do you feel like doing?; Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, and escape?; Who do you have to please, whose opinion counts?; Whose value system do you measure yourself against?; What do you feel entitled to?
- Questions for biblical good fruit:* What does Scripture teach about this circumstance?; What are the truths about God, yourself, and others?; What is God calling you to do?; What specific Scripture encourages you and that you can hold on to?

7. **Good Fruit: How are you responding?**

- What commitments are you making? What changes do you want to make in your life? How authentic is your behavior? Do you genuinely want to do that? Is there joy, strengthening, and thankfulness for your fruits of labor?
- What is the connection and consistency between what you say you believe, the motivation in your heart, and how you are living your life? How are you spending your resources, time, money?
- What decisions do you need to make for Jesus?

8. Reaping: What is the effect of your behavior?

- a. Am I seeing the fruit of the Spirit produced in my life? And are others seeing this fruit as well? (Gal. 5:22-23)
- b. Do I show a growing trust in God's sovereignty over the circumstances of life?
- c. Do I increasingly reflect the peace and praise that come from understanding the role of suffering in the lives of Christians?
- d. Do I progressively demonstrate the kind of loving actions that flow from a willingness to give up myself for the sake of others?
- e. Do I give evidence of the transforming work of the Spirit in our willingness to stand for the truth as God's people?
- f. Does my life model for others what it means to follow Jesus?
- g. Am I sharing testimonies of God working in, through, and around my life?