Thanks to Frühstückstreffen für Frauen CH and Denise Hochstrasser, Inter-European Division Women’s Ministries Director, for producing this resource.
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<td>III</td>
<td>Winter Rest</td>
<td>I evaluate my time.</td>
<td>Show pictures of trees; the cycle of the four seasons. Poster of winter tree in sunshine</td>
<td>Cycle of seasons (from craft shop, all in small frames)</td>
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<td>IV</td>
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<td>V</td>
<td>Summer Fullness</td>
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| VII  | Summer (cont.) Growth | Difficulties help me grow.  
Saying yes to problems, because God changes me through them.  
To be thankful. | Perhaps writing both proverbs on a piece of paper and hanging it up.  
Next time bring Sticky Blossom tree. | Poster Summer tree.  
Small beech tree with clear thick parts. |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| VIII | Autumn Brings fruit  
Love that comes from living with Jesus; real love (Agape). | Quietness—  
Look at 2 bowls. Choose an item or a fruit. | 2 bowls, 1 with fruit, the other with dried leaves or grass.  
Round stickers. |
| IX   | Autumn Impermanence/Death  
Jesus Christ has victory over death. Through him I have everlasting life. We all long for happiness.  
Jesus is the source of joy. | Listening to a piece of music.  
Let pictures work on us. | Perhaps pictures of fog  
Autumn |
| X    | Roots Foundation  
Jesus is the foundation of life; trusting him is my support. | Seeds in plant pots.  
Everyone can take a pot home. | Poster of summer tree  
Small tree (approx. 15 cm) from woods or garden with roots |

Another possibility: A big branch, which carries us through the whole year, placing it in a vase. This can be decorated according to the season or subject.
MY TREE OF LIFE I
GETTING ACQUAINTED

**Goal:** Getting to know each other. If possible serve light refreshments or a breakfast.

1. **Introduction of Program**
   Coordinate the schedule. Plan for childcare: Women with small children should meet in the playroom 10-15 minutes prior, so the get-acquainted session can begin on time.

2. **Collect expectations and concerns of the participants.**

3. **Finish with a relaxing part, such as a poem, verses of a song, music, etc.**

The following material for leaders includes the answers and opinions of participants from earlier courses. They are not complete and are merely suggestions for leaders.

This meeting is optional and can be omitted if leaders wish to start with subject II.
Preparation page:

**MY TREE OF LIFE II**

MIRACLES OF CREATION

**Goal:** Saying YES to myself and being thankful to God

1. Laying out pictures of trees, letting people choose, discussing.

   Meaning: enhances air, oxygen, protection of earth, shadow, joy, nesting place for birds and other animals, fruit, protection from storms, timber, heating, game

2. Protection, security in the family, resting place, spreading joy, place of security, being needed and used, protect children from evil

3. We can understand by looking at the tree that even disabled people carry miracles of creation within them, because even a crippled tree is beautiful

4. By looking at a part of the body, perhaps a hand, I realize how intricate and complete it is. I look around at my surroundings and see the goodness and beauty.

5. Encouragement to focus on one’s abilities and talents, such as: I have a talent for listening well, for making peace, for calming stressful situations, for playing with children, for cheerfulness, for playing piano; I have practical talents, etc.

6. I have no right to grumble.

7. Keep sticky blossoms ready.

8. Task: To see things in my life which are good, and to thank God for them.
Goal: I evaluate my time – I need rest to build my relationship with God.

1. Hang up pictures of seasons (maybe framed from craft-shop or painted pictures), change of life, growth, continuance, revival, rhythm, alternations, moods, colors, glory

2. Spring: New life awakens, blossoms, unfolds, happiness, delight
   Summer: Growing, ripening, to spread, stability, width
   Autumn: Fullness, fruit, to be ripe, colorful, to let go, giving
   Winter: Resting, sleepy, waiting, collecting strength, silence

3. Spring: Joy of life, prepared for new things, joy of traveling, set to go, strength, to be free, to be happy
   Summer: Full of life, enjoyment, strength, steadiness, energy, adventurous (maybe even emptiness, silence, feeling down because of the heat)
   Autumn: Maturity, melancholy, saying Good-bye, tidying, warmth
   Winter: Waiting, living, resting, having time, time to reflect, recover, collecting strength (maybe relaxing in a warm home)

4. Spring: Awakening, blossoming, childhood, youth
   Summer: Living, middle of life, family
   Autumn: Ripening, maturity (50), letting go (of children)
   Winter: Dying, age, death

5. Life is short, I want to live more consciously in today, melancholy, feeling of having missed out on something. Letting go of unimportant things, setting priorities.
6. Locating my focus – Which are my life priorities?
God wants me to grow in my relationship with him. Studying the Bible.

Women may talk superficially about keeping God’s commandments, that we’re not to be selfish, that we are to be there for others. Collect these contributions and talk them to the ground. But point to the essential, that God wants to be invited into a personal relationship with every human being.

7. Poster: Picture of winter, looking at rays of sunshine, peace, clearness, Sabbath, depth, reflection, enchantment, truth, loneliness, freshness.

Point out that every human being needs to make room for a time of rest during the day.

8. Hopelessness, coldness, sorrow, gloomy, loneliness, being alone, death

9. Preparation, collecting strength, resting, growth of buds, sap rising in trees to give new life

10. Reflecting on life priorities, planning, preparing

11. God helps me to set priorities. He helps me to see the lasting values.

**Action:** Think about—and perhaps reset—my life’s priorities.
Preparation page:

**MY TREE OF LIFE IV**

**SPRING**

**Goal:** Jesus is the way to a meaningful life and to everlasting life.

1. Happiness, hope, expectations, new life, awakening, beauty, development, amazement, emotions, admiration, love, power

2. As in #1, Joy of life, fun of life, confidence, thankfulness, freedom, new beginnings, redemption (from winter), maybe thoughts of perishing.

3. Peace, no war, health, healthy sleep, healthy children who do well, no accidents, enough money, good marriage, that I can say “Yes” to whatever happens to me, hope, to be transformed as God wants me to be, everlasting life.

4. Hope that God will give me everything I need, trusting that God will make everything right, that he changes me, that I can be happy even if the future seems hopeless, because God stands above it all and makes changes.

5. Time between birth and death, present, to unfold, strength, vitality, adventurous, fondness of life, spiritual growth.

6. Without me you can’t live; to live in a close relationship with Jesus.

7. Reincarnation, rebirth as a different being.

8. Life after death, in Paradise, with God.

9. Depending on the surroundings, circumstances, weather, soil. Can use what is available; can develop.
10. We can choose to have a negative or a positive attitude to life, can change it, making it better, forming it, making decisions.

11. Life is a gift. God has given us the freedom to make our own choices.

12. Women may say that this verse is too easy; you can’t just leave everything to God and sit with your hands in your lap. To submit your will to God means to realize, through Bible study and prayer, that God created me, that I can live in close relationship with him. Only in this close relationship can God give me everything I need.

**Action:** The Bible says “Jesus is the way.” Who is Jesus for me—one way of many, or the right and only way?
**Goal:** Jesus offers me a gift, a life of fullness. I can accept it or reject it.

1. Anticipation, bathing, to be free, open houses, brightness, longer days, richness, happiness, sitting outside, heat.

   Poster: Rich green, full leaves, fullness, out of peace to abundance, development, joy of life, strength, peace (lying underneath), light and shadows.

2. Making a small sketch is easy to do and brings the concept of I-need-to-do-something-myself closer to the women.

   Fullness is there: A child wants this and not the other, it’s unwilling to make an effort.

   Fullness has something to do with doing it ourselves. Our relationship to fullness is more intense when we worked at it ourselves, when it doesn’t just fall into our lap.

3. Fulfilled life, rich life, having found the meaning of life, capacity for life.

4. Opening the door: To occupy myself with God and the Bible. Being open.

   At this point I have told my experience with this Bible verse. There are three possible ways I can react to this situation.
   
a. I can leave the door closed and say: “I have no interest in you, God. I will live my own life.”
   
b. I can open up a little and say: “It’s good that you are there, God. If I need you, then I will open the door completely.”
c. I can open fully and say: “Come and take over my life. I want to trust you.”

5. I would answer this question myself as Leader.

Saying “Yes” to Jesus means to let him take over in my life. I have showed the women from this drawing what changes will take place if I place my life in Christ’s hands.

Natural human being

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Spiritual human being</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
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My ego sits on the throne. Christ takes over my life and is in charge.
Preparation page:

MY TREE OF LIFE VI
CREATIVITY

At one of the first meetings, a woman artist brought a beautiful little tree made out of glass-pearls, leaves and little birds—a little tree that was bearing leaves, blossoms and fruit at the same time. She was willing to teach us this handicraft. This afternoon of crafts intensified our feeling of belonging and took us deeper into the subject “Tree”.

EXAMPLES FOR AN AFTERNOON OF HANDICRAFTS

**Little tree of pearls:**

From golden or silver wire we twist branches with sparkling pearls, leaves and little birds and hearts. It looks beautiful on a nice stone and you can use it as a table decoration.

Materials and seminars are offered at craft shops.

**Little tree of moss:**

We form a little tree out of colored Iceland moss onto a small wooden disc (pink for spring, green for summer, brown/orange for autumn, white or cream for winter). A hazelnut branch makes up the stem. Everything is held with hot glue. Decorate with your own imagination (blossoms, apples, birds, mushrooms, etc.)

Find examples in craft books.
Goal: Problems are good for me because I grow through them. I learn to say “Yes” to the path God is traveling with me.

1. Most women agreed with Proverbs 1. We’ll get blunt, flimsy, won’t value the good, unthankful, won’t understand others any more, will create problems for ourselves, grow poor, wither, dry out; life will get boring, monotonous, dissatisfied. With Proverbs 2. The row of good deeds needs to last for years; only then would “written above” be appropriate.

2. It would need a lot of time, rain, sun and deep roots. After this first short sharing of thoughts, we looked at a beech twig and noticed that at every new sprout, every branch and every leaf a thickening had grown. Growth had stopped to allow a gathering of sap to build new.

3. From a dead end, from difficulties, from a problem I have to work on, something new can start. It occurs to me that I have to change something.

4. Bringing up children, puberty of a child, mountains of work, no discipline, impatience, problems with neighbors, problems in marriage, a bad conscience about those who have died.

5. There are different ways I can choose to handle problems. I can go around them, pretend as though nothing is wrong. I can run from them, going in circles, feeling sorry for myself and giving up. This will end in depression or suicide. I can back up and circle around other things, can push the problem away through other activities, such as self-realization. Growth can start only if, like the growth of the branch, I push through the thickness, the standstill.
6.  
   a. Problems in marriage, which have led to a deeper understanding.
   b. Problems with children, which have led to a better family situation.
   c. Illness, death.

7. Please prepare examples
   Procedure:
   a. Acknowledging the problem, acceptance, taking responsibility
   b. How did the problem develop? Is it going back to a much deeper problem? Who else is responsible?
   c. Asking for God’s guidance in this problem! Looking for solutions.
   d. Planning small steps of change.
   e. Putting those steps into practice.

8. Explain to the women that we don’t have to thank God for the bad things in life but for the plan behind them, which is good for us.

**Action:** Looking for the meaning behind the difficulties, and learning to be thankful for them.
Goal: Love which flows from our connection to Jesus is true love.

1. Fullness, pleasure, colorful, liveliness, accomplishment, perfection.
   Death, exhaustion, self-surrender, dying, drought.

2. She is beautiful, a feast for the eyes, healthy, satisfied, nourished, strength, pleasure, a joy

3. Result of doing, giving, doing good, giving joy, love, charity

4. Social activities can be a continuation, an act of race-preservation, an act of self-preservation.
   Charity, in the religions of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, has one meaning, the goal of improving one’s status before God or gods.
   Christianity demands a selfless love for others which doesn’t expect anything for one’s self. We love because God loves us, and we share this love with others. For Christians, love is an order from God.
   What is love for me? It means to live for others. Normally when we love, we expect to get love in return.

5. There are better people among non-believers than among Christians.
   This verse says that we can’t produce fruit ourselves, but it develops when we let Christ lead us.

6. The God-made fruit, the fruit of His Spirit, works first inside us.
   It changes us inwardly and brings healing. The result is that we as human beings can then produce love towards others.
7. Outwardly there is no difference.
   A socially engaged person works out of his own strength.
   A Christian is willing to be led and to do God’s will.

8. Instead of white blossoms, we glue green circles, small unripe fruit which still have to develop.

**Action:** Think about the fruit of the Holy Spirit described in Galatians 5:22. Where do I stand?

Recommended reading for preparation:
Dr. Gerhard Bergmann, *Jesus Christ or Buddha, Mohammed, Hinduism?* Schriftenmission-Verlag
Goal: All human beings long for happiness. Jesus is the Way to happiness. He has victory over death. Through him we receive everlasting life.

1. Describe an autumn day thoroughly, maybe closing your eyes in order to imagine it and to feel it. (Maybe show pictures.)

   Shudder, cold, loneliness, freezing, life-threatening, death

2. Make the house cozy, heat it, invite guests; enjoy listening to music, reading books, telling stories, being active

   a. The first poem is hostile to life. A deep loneliness lies within. Having no more goals is selfish; the others are of no interest to me. I only look to myself, just focusing on myself, with a let-go-of-everything attitude. I want to achieve self-realization, believing life is a fight, peace comes with denying all feelings, and non-caring is protection.

b. There lies a certain melancholy in the second poem, but still it shows security and happiness. I can let myself fall. I fall into good hands. If the Creator holds me, it’s good.

Rilke shows the kindness and gentleness of God, the love for his creation.

Hesse: If I deny sorrow and death, if I push it away, to view it as non-existing, if I don´t let any feelings come up inside of me, then I have peace. But it is a deadly peace.
Rilke sees God’s plan behind everything. Because a loving God catches me, I can bear it; I can feel secure and be happy.

3. Don’t answer, leave open.

4. I don’t want to occupy myself with it yet, it belongs to life, I am powerless, helpless, I am convinced of life after death, it’s unfair.

5. Only if the question of everlasting life has been solved can I find peace and happiness.
Preparation page:

MY TREE OF LIFE IX
ROOTS

**Goal:** Jesus Christ is the foundation of life; trusting Him carries me.

1. **Fullness – Emptiness,** barely imaginable that such a big tree will grow out of such a small tree. The small tree needs protection, still has little roots.

   Makes me astonished, it’s a miracle, it’s great, makes me feel good.

2. **Good ground,** enough nourishment, space, sun, light, time, protection, firmness, steadfastness, rhythm of the seasons.

3. **Rock:** Too hard, dies off, small growth, crippled  
   **Sand:** Little sand, unsure, needs very deep roots to reach water  
   **Good soil:** Perfect development, good place, branched roots

4. **Youth,** surroundings, life rhythm, culture, family, parents, friends  
   **Support:** Faith, knowledge, friend, partner, to receive love and to give, family, healthy marriage

5. **Light,** love, recognition, surroundings in which one lives, security, inner peace, difficulties which make me grow.

   **Love:** God has love to give, even if no one else is there.

6. a. **To make the best out of every day,** to listen to our conscience.
While discussing conscience, we recognized that our conscience was shaped by our culture and upbringing and therefore is not a valid measure. The only valid measure is based on the foundation of the Bible.

To ask God for His will for me, to decide to act after God’s will.

b. Illness, sorrow, death, sadness, marital problems.
   Whoever relies on the LORD will stay in hope; he will stand firm and can give love to others.

7. Maintain contact with other people, asking after the meaning of life, deepening your knowledge (Bible), and trusting in God.

8. God can show me the meaning of life. I can quench my thirst for knowledge in God’s Word, but also in science and music. If I have a lack of love and support, Jesus can fill the void.