MY TREE OF LIFE
FOR PARTICIPANTS
Thanks to Frühstückstreffen für Frauen CH and Denise Hochstrasser, Inter-European Division Women’s Ministries Director, for producing this resource.
INDEX

My Tree of Life I
Introduction round (no documents)

My Tree of Life II
Miracles of Creation.............................................. 4

My Tree of Life III
Wintertime.......................................................... 7

My Tree of Life IV
Spring.................................................................10

My Tree of Life V
Summer............................................................ 12

My Tree of Life VI
Creativity (no documents)

My Tree of Life VII
Summer (Continuation).........................................14

My Tree of Life VIII
Autumn..............................................................16

My Tree of Life IX
Autumn (Continuation).........................................19

My Tree of Life X
Roots.................................................................21
1. In front of us are pictures of different trees. We will each choose one picture and tell others our thoughts about this tree.

   Everyone enjoys seeing the beauty, the splendor of a tree in bloom. A tree covered in blossoms is a miracle of God’s creative hand.

   Why did God create such splendor? For what purpose?

2. I have come from the hand of the Creator. Can I change the first question a little, asking “Why has God put me here? What is His purpose for my life?”

3. Looking at the beauty of the trees has amazed us. Every tree is beautiful, even the plainest and weakest tree.

   David said in one Psalm: “Marvelous are thy works.”

   Can we agree with that?

4. God’s foremost creation is mankind.

   In Psalms 139:13, 14 David says: “For you created my inmost being. You formed me in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

   Am I really perfect?

   Am I satisfied with my looks? Am I satisfied with my abilities? Am I satisfied with my circumstances in life?
5. In winter when the trees are bare, you can see their individuality clearly. Some are gnarled, twisted, or deformed; some are tall, stately and beautiful.

When I really look at myself—like the tree in winter, without superficialities—how do I see myself?

Looking carefully at my appearance, my ways, my character, what do I see?

What do I like about myself?
What do I think are my weaknesses?

6. My good features, which God has given me, adorn me like jewelry. We write them on blossom-leaves and decorate the tree with them at page 20.

7. In Isaiah 64:8, it says: “Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter, We are all the work of you hand.”
What does this verse mean for my self-acceptance?

What shall I do about the things I don’t like about myself? What shall I do when God hasn’t given me abilities which I admire in others?

8. Like a soft lump of clay lets itself be formed by the potter, I can let myself be formed, formed by God. This gives me courage to accept myself just the way I am today. It also helps me to be thankful because I have already received many good gifts and talents from God.

9. In 1Thessalonians 5:18 it says, “Don’t forget to give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

What do I want to be thankful for from now on?

Don’t forget to thank God for everything, because that is what God expects from his children.
MY TREE OF LIFE III
WINTERTIME

1. We are looking at pictures of the four different seasons of the year. What appeals to us about the cycle of the seasons?

   Psalms 104:24 says this: “How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures!”

2. What do ideas do these trees suggest to us?

   Spring?       Summer?       Autumn?       Winter?

3. How do the various seasons affect us?

   Spring?       Summer?       Autumn?       Winter?

4. What moods, ideas, or emotions might each of these different seasons suggest?
5. What is the meaning of the following bible-passage?

“Mortals, born of woman, are of few days and full of trouble. They spring up like flowers and wither away; like fleeting shadows, they do not endure.” (Job 14:1-2)

What does this verse suggest to me?

6. In the Bible we find this verse: “Serve the LORD as long as you can, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the LORD’s will is!” (Ephesians 5:16-17)

What does that mean to me? How do I know God’s will for me?
7. To recognize God’s will means taking time to think over our relationship to God and to listen to him. For this we need silence. God knows we need silence, that nature needs silence and peace. Winter suggests a time of quietness, sleep, and peace.

What do I feel when I look at this picture of a tree on a clear, freezing cold winter day? When and how do I find time of such peace?

8. Not all winters are as beautiful as our picture of winter. Imagine a gloomy, foggy picture of winter, with dirty snow. What does that picture suggest to us?

9. What happens inside the tree during these periods of change, the months between bleakness and brightness?

10. If I practice this process myself, what could it mean for me?

11. David says in Psalms 62:1, “Truly my soul finds rest in God, my salvation comes from him.” What happens when I wait silently before God and think about His will for my life?”
MY TREE OF LIFE IV
SPRING

1. We compare a winter branch with a branch of blossoms. What really appeals to me?

2. We don’t stop with just one branch; we imagine a beautiful spring day. What does this mean to me?

3. Spring – a time of hope – a time of reawakening life!
   What do I hope for in the coming days?
   What do I hope for in my life?

4. In the Bible the word hope is used often. Psalms 40:4a says: “Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD.”
   What is the meaning of this?
   What does it mean to me?

5. Hope and life are closely related. What does life mean to me?

We have the opportunity to arrange our lives.
6. In John 14:6 we read:  
“Jesus said: ‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me’.”

What does Jesus mean by this?  
What does the Way look like to me?

7. John 11:25-26  
“Jesus said: ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die’.”

Do I believe in everlasting life? What’s the meaning of that?

8. Let’s again think about the blossoming spring branch. What does the life of a tree depend upon? What can it do for itself?

9. And what about us? Do we really have our lives in our own hands?  
How can we influence our own lives?

10. We have the opportunity to arrange our own lives, making changes where we think they are needed. The Bible helps us to see where these changes should start.

“Instead, be concerned with the Kingdom of GOD and he will provide you with those things.” Luke 12:31

What do I think about the meaning of this verse?
1. In a short time the blossoms will fall off the trees. But this change won’t make us upset; instead it makes us look forward to the next season, summer.

What do the falling blossoms suggest to us?

2. One aspect of summer is fullness. Let’s consider a short story.

A family sits at the table. The children are rejoicing because the father has promised them cherries. When he comes in, he is greeted with a big HELLO. Smiling, he holds up two cherries. There is big excitement. How many have you brought for us? Only two? Great disappointment. Then the phone rings. An uncle is inviting the family to pick all the cherries on his cherry trees.

Reaction of the first child: “Hurray, we are picking cherries till we’ll have enough.” The second child says, “No, I won’t do that. We get black fingers when we pick all those cherries. And anyway it is too hot and too dangerous for me on the ladder.”

What are my thoughts and reaction to this scene?
3. In John 10:10 Jesus says: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

What do I understand by this?

4. Jesus says in Revelation 3:20
   “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and feast with that person, and they with me.”

A feast? Does that mean completely, fully? What does it mean to me, as the one opening the door?

5. Most people don’t deny that there is a GOD. But they leave him, figuratively, outside their door. As in the little story about the cherries, the fullness doesn’t just drop in one’s lap.

What is my responsibility when Jesus offers me the feast, the fullness of life?
1. For weeks we enjoy lovely summer weather, hoping that these pleasant days won’t end for a long time.

What do the following two proverbs say about these carefree times of our lives?

• “Constant sunshine creates nothing but desert.”
• “Nothing is harder to cope with than too many sunny days.” [or “Nothing is more harmful than too many sunny days.”]

2. Let’s look at our summer tree one more time.

3. How can I apply this concept of growth to human experience?
4. If it is true that I grow through difficulties and problems, then I want to think about my problems.

What problems depress me?

________________________________________________________________________

5. Only the problems which I face—which I acknowledge—can I work on and solve.

6. In the Bible in Romans 8:28 we read: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

If this is true, then God allows difficulties come my way in order for me to grow.

- Can I remember a problem in my life which turned out to my advantage?
- With what problems do I find it difficult to believe in this biblical statement?

7. We choose a current problem, face it, and look for a solution.

8. I do not always see solutions right away if I face up to the problem. With what difficulties do I decide to trust God and to be thankful for them?

Jeremiah 17:7-8
“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes, its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”
MY TREE OF LIFE VIII
AUTUMN

1. There are two bowls. One is filled richly with lovely-smelling fruit; the other has colorful autumn leaves, dried-up leaves and thin grass in it. We take this picture, memorize it, and think about it for a while. Now we choose one of the fruits or an item from the other bowl, and share our thoughts with each other.

2. These two contrasts are the two sides of autumn:

   Harvest - Fruit, Fullness, Pleasure  
   Death   - Letting Go, Sorrow, Dying

Let us consider just the aspect of joy and pleasure for now. What is fruit? What does it achieve?

3. What does the concept of fruit suggest about our human experience?
4. Are loving your neighbor and social activities a response to a human primal need? We compare the major world religions—Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism—with Christianity. What does each tell us about loving your neighbor? What does “loving your neighbor” mean to me?

5. The striving for social justice in the westernized world has its origins in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

   Jesus says in John 15:5
   “If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing.”

   But I can spend my life helping others without believing in Jesus Christ? What do is your view on that?

6. The Bible tells us that GOD is the Creator of all fruit, good traits, especially the “fruits of the spirit” in the human heart. In Galatians 5:22 it says: “But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Forbearance, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness.”

   Can I summarize the mentioned traits into the phrase “Loving your neighbor”? 
7. What difference is there between humans who are socially actively, using all their energy to benefit others, and Christians who let themselves be led by GOD?

8. “Fruit” in a biblical sense is a gift of GOD, which transforms us inside. His work is to finish us in perfection.

In spring, together we created a tree in blossom, covering it with the good characteristics and abilities we have discovered in ourselves. Now we are going to add to this tree. We are going to glue fruit, as mentioned in Galatians 5:22, to it, the “fruit” which we have already received or we have asked for.

John 15:1-2
“I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, with every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”
1. We imagine a grey, foggy autumn-day. How does this picture affect us?

2. What can we do to meet days like this without being lost in gloom or despair?

3. Let’s look at the following two poems, the first by a Buddhist and the second by a Christian.

**AUTUMN**

The leaves are falling, falling as if from far up, as if orchards were dying high in space.
Each leaf falls as if it were motioning “no.”

And tonight the heavy earth is falling away from all other stars in the loneliness.

We’re all falling, this hand here is falling. And look at the other one. It’s in them all. And yet there is Someone, whose hands infinitely calm, holding up all this falling.

(by Rainer Maria Rilke)

**HAPPINESS**

If luck you chase, you have not grown enough for happiness to stay, not even if you get your way.

If, what you lost, you still bemoan, and grasp at tasks, and dash and dart, you have not known true peace of heart.

But if no wishes are your own, and you don’t try to win the game, and Lady Luck is just a name, then tides of life won’t reach your breast, and all your strife and all your soul will rest.

(by Hermann Hesse)

How do these two poets cope with perishing, sorrow and death?
4. How do I cope with sorrow and death? What are my thoughts about it?

5. David says in Psalms 145:14: “The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.” Do I let myself fall into GOD’s hands?

6. In John 11:25 Jesus says:

“I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”
MY TREE OF LIFE X
ROOTS

1. In front of us we have a beautiful picture of a summer tree, and next to it there is a small young tree ripped out of the ground. What thoughts does this contrast suggest to you?

2. What does the little live tree need in order to get big, strong and beautiful as the tree on the picture?

3. How do 3 different locations—rock, sand or good soil—affect the growth of a tree?
   - Rock:
   - Sand:
   - Good Soil:

4. What do *earth*, *ground*, and *foundation* mean to us in the figurative sense?

5. The tree needs mineral salts, water and light to grow. What nourishment do we need to grow?

Like a tree in the ground, this is how we should stay rooted in Christ.
6. In the Bible in Jeremiah 17:7-8 it says:
   “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD. For he will be like a
tree planted by the water that extends its roots by a stream and
will not fear when heat comes, but its leaves will be green and it
will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.”

   What does it mean to me to rely on the LORD?

7. The tree must develop many roots, both fine and thick ones,
growing deep and wide, in order to draw up nourishment.

   What does that suggest about spiritual growth?

8. Jesus says in John 7:37
   “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.”

   What does Jesus mean by this figure of speech?
9. We finish our topic tree as we listen to Psalms 1:1-3

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in this law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does he prospers.”

Jesus is the foundation which holds us up and never fails. He wants to quench our thirst for wisdom and fulfilment in life. Therefore we would like to offer a five-stage Bible discussion group where we talk about the person “Jesus Christ”, his mission and his invitation to us, with the Bible in hand.

Colossians 2:7
“Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”