

**DISMANTLING
THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF
GOOD AND EVIL WITHIN
SO LOVE CAN THRIVE**

RENE LAFAUT, MSc.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to all those who struggle navigating relationships.

ENDORSEMENT

It shows a great amount of wisdom concerning the Christian life that has been learned in the trenches.
It shows grace and love rather than a bare legalism

Bill Reimer, Regent College, Vancouver, BC

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1 INTRODUCTION

This book, manual, or map is written in response to questions I had accumulated over the years as I struggled with sin strongholds (those things that go against self-love, people-love, and God-love that I was powerless to change all by myself) that I wanted gone. I confessed my struggles to spiritual directors, priests, and those I trusted with my baggage over many years, but none had the necessary experience to fully deal with my issues or had lived with as hard a heart or confused mind like I had. They had never walked in my shoes. Yet, I was open to the wisdom that came my way and this helped me to navigate life until the contents of this book were slowly revealed to, understood by, and successfully administered to me in prayer.

Ultimately, I landed up embracing God, my Bible and input from the body of Christ¹; and decided to let them speak to me. I did not have immediate revelations that answered all my questions all at once. But I began to journey with God with Him using triggers such as uncomfortable circumstance, and awkward moments I had with people, to show me what was in my heart so that we could work on cleaning up my life from the inside out with His guidance.

The Gospel's invitation to its hearers is to repent and believe in Jesus. However, the word "repent" is often misunderstood by those outside and inside the church because of so much hypocrisy and powerlessness to make it real. The "how to do this part" of repentance is not well understood and very confusing to many people who struggle with bad habits and sin strongholds that bring guilt and shame besides powerlessness and condemnation from spectators.

Personally, I began to discover that my vocabulary, understanding, and practice of the Christian basics was weak and that led to me searching for and getting revelations on "how to repent" from my strongholds of sin, my addictive behaviors, and how to change my negative unloving attitudes to become a more positive person with Jesus' help (grace), promises, teachings and truth found in the Scriptures. I started to learn how to process my emotions and baggage within and learned how to navigate my conflicts more healthily. The "how to do this part" was not immediately obvious to me for the longest time even though I was a serious Christian who had gone through many serious trials without losing my faith.

Having said this, many people accept that in this life, they will never go to church with everything right in their souls, that they have supposedly arrived, that they got the package or are the correct package, or keep all the rules; nor do they suppose that anyone belongs for such reasons. None of us are the package: only Jesus is. Fact is, we sin, sometimes grossly, sometimes

¹ Cf. Chapter fourteen for those authors whose books helped to point me in healthy directions so I could eventually enter more deeply into the healing process that Jesus was leading me through.

repeatedly. If one is honest, one realizes that even with cleaning up the outside, there are often many unresolved issues or sin habits that we likely don't have the desire, commitment, energy or know how to overcome. And we often come to accept that we will focus on one or two issues in our life times because we don't know how to start cleaning up even a little of the stuff in our hearts that we feel guilty about, because we don't understand what is happening in our hearts that causes us to sin habitually.

I am learning to conquer together with Jesus many of the sin strongholds in my life through His promises, teachings, commands, authority, power (grace), truths, and presence; and I want to share the outline on how I am experiencing this process, with the reader. Having said this, I am a sinner and I go for grace when receiving communion, I don't earn it by being in a state of grace. Being in a state of grace is good, but confessing sin and working on repentance so love will blossom is more important to God than supposedly being prepared to receive communion because one is abstaining from all (or, is it most?) visible sins just prior to communion. A thorough cleaning job is better than cosmetic changes in most people's eyes; I think God agrees. However, I think that if I can repent from serious sin, I should do so to restore me to a state of grace.

I need to say that the invitation from God that I accepted to change for spiritual relational-health reasons written about in this book isn't based on deep mysteries, or complex doctrines, but on the basic teachings of the Good News of Jesus Christ that was forgotten by me soon after conversion, discounted as "that is too easy to be true" and later jettisoned as only being important for "baby-Christians". The reason I didn't make progress for a long time and didn't grow into maturity as a Christian is because I thought I knew better and had moved onto greener pastures. Real change comes slowly and only comes to those who don't give up, who do search for how to care for and love people, and don't discount or despise the simplicity of the Good News as taught by Jesus in the Gospels.

There is a lot of theology in this book that I use to support my take on how I've learned to repent. It should not be looked at as a system, or set of laws that supposedly need to be conformed to for there to be freedom. Freedom only comes from abiding in Jesus and He let's us know, when we are listening, what needs to be believed and practiced. No finite set of rules, principles, laws, or code is enough to solve all our problems, and this applies to this book. Rules create pressure not freedom, but healthy relationships do create freedom. So, if God speaks to you in some context through this book embrace it when it happens in a healthy way as you become aware of the limitations and benefits of the revealed truth, but the focus should always be on what Jesus is showing.

As with all books that talk about the possibility of good change, there is a warning with this one. When I have been set free by a truth and grace in an area that may have plagued me for

decades, the impulse has been often to carry the truth to an extreme, forget about grace, get proud, and start to judge and hurt people because of my twisted slant on things. Church history unfortunately has witnessed many clergy trying to “muzzle truths” that “seem dangerous” and “threatening” to them or the status quo. Whatever the place of shepherds in the church is, and they do have a place, if one can't embrace truth one embraces fear and “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” in my opinion. When I personally encounter a new truth I usually don't grasp all of its aspects or properties immediately and need to wrestle with it until I understand its limitations, and its freeing power through grace. I need the freedom to make mistakes and that means sometimes taking things too far. Without this freedom to make mistakes I just wouldn't learn and grow in the freedom to love or mature like I have.

The Gospel of John says Jesus is full of grace and truth. I have learned that I need Jesus and the grace and truth He offers if I want my sin strongholds structure to lose its power and to be dismantled.

The sin strongholds I speak about in this book made up an ugly structure erected in my heart for a very long time, and can fittingly be called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within, and needed to be replaced with LOVE. I have learned some tools to do just that in this book. “The tree of knowledge of good and evil” is a structure made from commitments to beliefs and expectations based on lies, guilt, and fears rooted in broken-relationship-wounds that negatively impact our relational lives.

The three-major-categories of sin: unhealthily seeking power, seeking sex, and seeking money characterize “the tree of knowledge of good and evil's” building blocks of “resentments, fear and pride”, its branches of “abandoning love, compulsive-laziness, and compulsive-indulging,” and its branches of “coveting judging and selfishness” respectively, and are commonly revealed to us in broken relationships, business-dealings, wars, history, the news, TV, radio, Internet, movies, magazines, or read about in books. In rejecting God, we seek power to carry out our plans to survive and to make a name for ourselves just like those who built the Tower of Babel as is recorded in the book of Genesis. Just as many people in the church are busy growing this hideous tree structure within themselves as those outside of the church. We are all fallen.

“The tree of knowledge of good and evil” within consists of a dark energy flowing and giving life to a connected structure that is comprised of the building blocks of resentments, fears, pride, coveting, judgmentalism, selfishness, abandoning love, compulsive-laziness, and compulsive-indulging and many other hideous attitudes and bad fruit. It needs to be dismantled for love to thrive.

Here is an overview of this book:

- Chapter one, Introduction.

- Chapter two, I talk about the power of the “sin nature” vs. “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within me, and how they differ on their impact in my life. Understanding this helps me to choose my battles wisely.
- Chapter three, I give a description or outline of the methodology God gave me so I could enter a deeper transforming-friendship-with-Him like He promised me a long time ago. This chapter shows what I learned to expect from God and what energy and humility is needed for real change.
- Chapter four, I start to describe how I’ve learned to dismantle “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within me, give what key Scriptures are used to drive the methodology, and give some definitions of Christian jargon that make transformation possible in this life. Without them little but cosmetic change is possible. In the next five-chapters I attempt to show the connections between the different parts belonging to “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” which is intended to help us pray through them more thoroughly and help to dismantle them in the different contexts of our lives:
 - Chapter five, I expand my discussion on the process of transformation, by talking about broken relationships and our search for peace in the wrong places which is where “the tree of knowledge of good and evil’s” life deceptively comes from.
 - Chapter six, I explain how to heal fear and its related vices which are a part of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” I talk about healing self-pity, worry, pressure, cowardice, and conceit which are all ingredients that get the tree to grow wildly.
 - Chapter seven, I explain how to kill the stronghold of pride from the tree, and grow humility instead. Deeply renewing the mind with healthy strategic truths and thinking is key to stopping the tree’s growth. Arrogance, pressure, and using force are also related ingredients that get this tree to grow wildly.
 - Chapter eight, I explain how I kill my using people and the related vices of compulsive-laziness and compulsive-indulging from “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” and how to grow healthy habits instead.
 - Chapter nine, I explain how to kill my coveting, envy, jealousy and related vices such as judging, anger, addictions, moral policing, greed, and selfishness from the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” and how to grow kindness and generosity instead.
 - Chapter ten, I summarize what was discussed in the previous chapters and deal with some trouble shooting tips when I get stuck.
 - Chapter eleven, I give six successful personal examples of how to work and pray so certain parts of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” are dismantled within me.
 - Chapter twelve, I present an alternative tree to replace “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” whose source is God and is accessed through a humble faith relationship.
 - Chapter thirteen, Conclusion.

There are many graphic and coarse examples of strongholds found in this book. They are brutal, ugly, selfish, proud, arrogant, hostile, mean, hurtful, and often angry. And, they are mine, seeded through unhealthy beliefs that grew in time only to find their way into my subconscious

as I foolishly tried to suppress the baggage and not healthily process any of it.

Whenever I believed a devil's lie about myself and the people I knew in many contexts over the years of being hurt, a huge mess resulted in my interior and relational life. I landed up stuffing the bad energy that came from inside of me and I kept believing the devil's lies for years because I really didn't know how to wash away what was inside of me, even though I didn't want this bad energy in my life. I was just too blind on how to get healed, but I "really" wanted the healing. I did not like my lack of love and I did not know what to do about it until God gave me the keys found in this book. Lies usually sound good to us when we believe them, but the consequences of doing so are often horrible. Lies always have catches.

Words of caution:

- 1) I did not find any healing when I isolated myself and put my own needs selfishly before others. The parable of the Good Samaritan has a priest who cares more about his spiritual state than a wounded person on the side of the road. When I care more about "not sinning", than "loving the people" in my life, then I won't grow in loving people through God's grace. The way to healing is to seek to love and that means putting people before concepts and other idols. Seeking to love, and not waiting till I'm healthy enough, or until it is easier to love is the path to growing in love. Seeing the difficulties and obstacles as my place, my work bench, and my classroom to learn to love is wise!
- 2) I don't produce good fruit, but I bear it to use the True-Vine analogy from John 15. All the virtues, goodness, love, compassion, mercy, and grace that comes out of me is a result of the Holy Spirit. He performs His work through me. I am an instrument God uses. God told me that He was digging tunnels of love within me a long time ago, that means that when I love the Holy Spirit lives in me, and uses me as His instrument of love. God gets the glory.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.²

Admitting that I am God's instrument is what honest pride acknowledges. It concedes that God is the Author, Mastermind, Life-giver, and Peace-Giver that is responsible for whatever good comes out of me. When Paul says that "we no longer live" he means we no longer live according to the flesh or "sin nature", but we are now dedicated to the Holy Spirit.

- 3) Focusing primarily on Jesus' presence, grace, and secondarily on little "t"-truths brings the most stability in navigating life's obstacles to love because they keep me from using anger and self-pity for selfish reasons.
- 4) I realized that I can't assume that doing things that require effort will always become

² Galatians 2:20

easy through prayers, and that by coasting through life I can do God's will. Going by my feelings (to feel good alone) in this context is never a good idea when it comes to living my life healthily, practicing self-control, doing acts of love, and working in a useful manner. If I do abandon effort, initiative, and caring and instead coast (seeking pleasure), then I negate the useful strategies found in this book, and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" will not die, and the "flesh or sin nature" helps to strengthen this tree's domination over our relationships.

All sins that attempt to get us what we desire... like using people, greed, compulsive-laziness, selfishness, pride, judging, and compulsive-indulging that land up hurting others; along with angry pressure, force, hatred, and meanness directed at others and ourselves to better our positions in life, or acquire stuff we covet. All land up hurting us immediately and stay with us on into the future if not processed healthily. The strategy outlined in this book did help me learn to love myself, besides others, and God more deeply too. We can't love God if we don't love others and ourselves. When I pray(ed) like I suggest in this book, I have often gotten in touch with and felt powerful rawness, and intense sensitivity as a wound within me. And, I eventually realized that I needed to learn how to love myself to help the raw wound to be healed. If I don't love myself, God's love can't get through to me (or as deeply) as I need Him too. So, asking God to heal the "sin" within me, confessing the sin I commit against myself (and others), repenting in prayer, renewing my mind and attitudes towards others not forgetting myself too, and gently submitting to God daily and resisting the devil, all help to bring inner (and relational) healing to me.

All sin strongholds are very immature, self-centered, and self-pitying. The way for me to progress has been to uproot my bad attitudes by giving up the lies and immature beliefs behind them that I had incorporated into my life- thinking- belief- personality- character- and action-structure within. I couldn't take giant leaps to maturity over night: "Rome was not built in a day". Rather I realized that each lesson needs to be fully mastered, savored, understood, and put into practice by me for progress to be made so that eventually what Saint Paul said:

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.³

comes true in my life. "God comforts me, consoles me, refreshes me but He does not want me to become stuck with Him forever changing my diapers, so He wisely puts challenges or things that bring discomfort in my path to urge me forward to growth so my path doesn't become stagnant."⁴

Sometimes... we can have very valid concerns... but the methodology to stand up for them or to

³ 1 Corinthians 13:11

⁴ This thought comes from my friend Mark Munn

carry them out can be very unhealthy. The mode in which we attempt to carry out good causes can either be childish, or mature. It can be done crudely, meanly, angrily, in self-pity, and be demanded... this all needs to be jettisoned, and the valid concerns still need to be embraced but with gentleness, respect, kindness, honor, peace, and acceptance that we can't demand things to always go our way. Instead we submit in kindness, letting the truth speak up for itself.

Even when we have a good cause we can meanly, judgmentally, proudly intolerantly go about developing and carrying out our cause. This needs to be repented from.

One might notice that in starting to read this book, that you may begin to feel more judgmental in some ways. If this is the case, then the book is triggering in you what has only been hidden from you in your heart and mind up until now. As one perseveres in applying the principles found in this book, eventually what is in you that gets triggered will be dismantled with Jesus' grace and truth, and you will become more tolerant, compassionate, caring, and loving towards the people in your life. So don't give up reading and applying this book to your life for your reward is very great.

The book of James in chapter three, says, and I paraphrase: "where the tongue goes, the body follows suit." I'm pained at just how true this has been in my life about negative stuff. When I seek to control situations or people I use my tongue. By the tongue, I judge what is pleasurable, and by the tongue I hurt people. It will be shown that "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within me is heavily influenced by how I use my tongue. Lies spring from my tongue, and lies did cause this tree to grow stronger and more twisted within me over time; and helped me to become more hurtful in how I related to others. My tongue speaks from the abundance of what is stored in my heart either for good or for evil. What is stored in my heart are my beliefs, loyalties, desires, and commitments; and I often land up believing what I carelessly speak.

It is fitting then, that through the tongue in prayer, this unhealthy "tree of knowledge of good and evil" structure within can be dismantled with God's help. This is usually a gradual process, and it can be a good idea to pray the prayers we learn to craft in this book repeatedly going deeper until the strongholds are completely dismantled and uprooted. Also, learning to give thanks to God for the practical progress, forgiveness, and healing that come our way helps to brighten our attitudes and lessen the unwanted burdens. It's all about freedom to love.

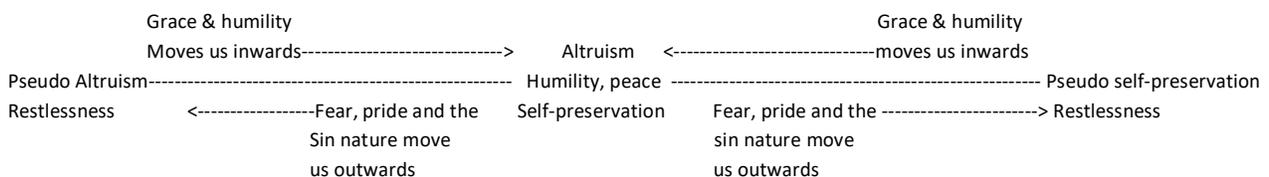
If you need to repent, then the approach found in this book is useful, but the enemy is not always the "sin nature" or "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". Demonization and delusional- types- of- mental illnesses may need to be addressed as possible diagnoses in some cases and healed with other medicines especially when repenting does not work in certain contexts of one's life.

2 THE POWER OF MY SIN NATURE VS. THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL WITHIN

“The tree of knowledge of good and evil” is not the same as the “sin nature.” Why is it that one person has no addictions, while another can’t stop eating or getting drunk? Or, why is it that one person has spiritual pride, whereas another is humble about spiritual things? Or, why is it that one person gets jealous so easily, while another person is more altruistic? One person’s “sin nature” is not better than another person’s “sin nature” surely? No, there is a level playing field. But we can allow our “sin natures” together with our choices and folly to grow “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” in us into a structure of death, hatred, malice, bad fruit, addictions and negativity that tries to push everyone away from us in the worst-case scenarios.

Yes, the “sin nature” can draw one to worry, be proud, to judge, to be jealous, to be greedy, to focus on selfish-love, to over eat, and to be lazy. But these only become strongholds when they become compulsive, and when they do, they form a part of the structure within that is called “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” This tree is merciless.

In this chapter, I develop a rationale for how “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within develops and is acted on by the “sin nature”, “fear”, and “pride” in the context of relational conflicts, challenges, and foolishness. The diagram⁵ below shows two-continuums of behavior where I can find myself. In the center is the place of humility, where there is awareness of our self-preservation and connectedness to our altruism (pseudo means “not genuine”).



These two natures are healthy God-given qualities, but within me is a “dark energy”, a “force”, or a “pull” known as the “sin nature” that tries to pull me away from humility through lies, fears (of having to love in sacrificial ways), and pride towards pseudo self-preservation (coveting/ envy/ selfishness) on the right, and pseudo altruism (lust or selfish-love) on the left. This “pull” is always there in this life and is known as the “flesh”. It tries to warp the spiritual healthiness or humility within me and tries to push me to the extreme left or right in the different challenges in the contexts of my makeup, relationships, and life through fear and pride. When I grow in humility I move along either continuum towards the center. Even when I am near the center I will feel my self-preservation and altruism being pulled and harassed by the “sin nature”. One

⁵ I am grateful to my friend Rafael for a discussion that inspires this diagram.

can get self-preservation confused with selfishness when one doesn't understand the pull of the "sin nature". When I don't jump the gun and patiently wait, then I see the difference. The more one moves away from the center the more one acts out of lies that inspire fear and pride.

The sense of self-preservation within is strong, and I need to acknowledge it as a gift from God. The pull to the right by the "sin nature", "fear" and "pride" is strong too, and should not be ignored, stuffed, and pushed down to try and mortify or supposedly annihilate. To annihilate the "sin nature" is an impossibility in this life. Yes, I can kill the strongholds of fear and pride, but I can't kill the "sin nature", the "pull", or the "dark energy" within me. God grants me grace, truth, and strategy to say, "I accept you, but I don't need you right now,"⁶ directly to the "sin nature"- attitudes when they rear their ugly heads (usually through angry pressure mixed with self-pity and possibly ugly demands), and then to pray "I give it up with your help Jesus through faith", and to say, "yes" to Jesus' peace within who is the Holy Spirit and asking Him to overcome⁷ my sin instead. But I will always feel the pull to the extreme right in this life.

My sense of altruism is strong too, and I need to acknowledge it as a gift from God, not as a badge of merit or honor that gets me God's favor. The "sin nature", "pull", and "dark energy" tries to draw me to the left, congratulating me on noble acts, trying to motivate me with fears of rejection and losses of honor, trying to move me with pride/ conceit, and seeks to put pressure on me so I will push towards a reputation of goodness that "actually" is full of selfish-love, empty of love, and is full of self-righteousness. The fear is one of not being accepted, welcomed, loved, and cared for. My conceit when in action (also known as "the ego" going bad), actually steals genuine honor and real love directed towards me, and I need to say, "I accept you, but I don't need you right now", directly to this dark energy within when it rears its ugly head and then pray "I give it up with your help Jesus' through faith" so I can say, "yes" to Jesus' peace: known as the Holy Spirit, and ask Him to overcome my sin. I say this because in saying, "no" to it I give it a firmer place and added power in my life to tempt that it doesn't deserve.

"It is in dying that we are born again" comes from a Prayer inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi's life, and is often used in conjunction with Saint Paul's statement: "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain"⁸ to wrongly mean that we can kill the part of ourselves we don't like, the "sin nature", so we can somehow love people more deeply. This is done religiously through putting pressure on oneself through anger and self-hatred. This is all a horrible trap. We can't crucify ourselves or our flesh, and we can't kill the "sin nature", but we can kill the strongholds mentioned in this book with Jesus' help as He shows us. When St. Paul used the word "die" he was referring to physical death and being united with Jesus in heaven. We can't add anything to Jesus to get

⁶ Insight from my friend Suda

⁷ Cf. Romans 8:2,13

⁸ Philippians 1:21

more or better on top of whom Jesus is.

When I saw that all people have a “sin nature”, a “pull”, or a “dark energy” within that the Bible calls the “flesh” or sin,⁹ then I began to realize that we are all basically the same. There is no need to feel superior, to judge, or to condemn others, and when I do, then I have spiritual pride. No matter how far I walk spiritually in this life the flesh is still with me; any healthy righteousness within me always comes from God. I have nothing to boast about (not even about God’s Spirit within me) because I am not better than anyone else.

So, Pseudo Altruism is basically selfish-love also known as lust. This is spoken about and developed as the left side of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” below. Pseudo Self-preservation is basically coveting, envy/ selfishness and is developed on the right side of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” below. Lies inspire fears, and pride together with the “sin nature” try to push me to these two extremes that are never absolute or complete because they are perversions of healthy humility. The power of the “sin nature” works to establish in my life the strongholds of fear, pride, coveting, jealousy, judging, selfishness, using people, compulsive-indulging, compulsive-laziness and the sins that come from them. These strongholds can be dismantled in my life, but the “sin nature” can’t be dismantled. The glue that holds this tree-structure together are the commitments made with the help of lies I believe about the nature of God, people, and myself relationally in the context of conflicts, and challenges. Lies trigger broken relationships that trigger fear and guilt, and these work together with the strongholds, and make the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” a powerful structure that has sought to dominate me and the rest of humanity since initially found in the Garden of Eden as talked about in the book of Genesis.

It is clear that if we have pride (that says we are the center of the universe), then we will seek to use people and things when we are on top (this is called abandoning love that leads to compulsive-laziness (not wanting to love) and compulsive-indulging (seeking pleasure in unhealthy ways to fill the void)).

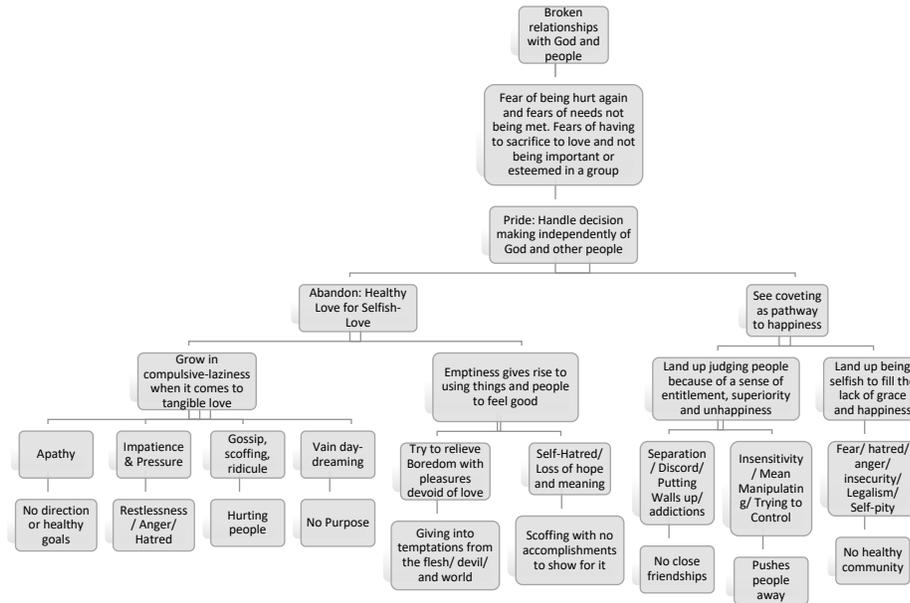
If we have pride, then jealousy results too when we are on the bottom because we are the center of the universe in our eyes. We will covet what others have (in a selfish way) and judge others because we have to be the center of the universe and think we are better.

These sins: pride, using people, compulsive-indulging, compulsive-laziness, jealousy, judging, and selfishness are not just sins that happen and get relegated to the past. They form a bad energy structure in the form of misguided beliefs, commitments, and loyalties in our hearts if we let them and these determine our (lack of) character. It grows as we let our foolish loyalties rule.

⁹ Cf. Romans 7:14-20

The only way to change this is to dismantle it, which is what this book is about.

These living connections between the vices (that have been discussed by many for a long time) can form “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within us if we let them. The way I have experienced this structure is like the diagram below:



My structure has similarities and differences to a tree diagram put forth by father George Aquaro on his Orthodoxy and Recovery blog. But both structures capture truths in their own rights and contexts. His diagram’s context is “The state of a man without God”; my diagram’s context is about “An imperfect (broken) relationship with God and/ or people” when conflict or trauma enters the scene. His diagram inspired mine, and came at the right time.

This tree is a negative energy structure that is held together with hurts, fear, false beliefs and commitments to lies that have sinful expectations and behavior consequences. The very bottom row of the tree contains some of the more visible fruits or consequences of indulging in the nature of the tree; many harsher ones can be added. Obviously, this tree does not list all the sins mentioned in the Bible but it will do for our discussions. I will discuss this tree and show the prescriptions God gave me on how to dismantle it within me and how to replace it with practical life-giving wisdom together with the helping presence of the Holy Spirit.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil is an invitation to decide for ourselves what is good and bad and ignore the God who sees everything. We do this when we limit or cut out the causes and effects found in the spiritual realm that God wants us to be informed about so we can make healthy and wise decisions. We aren't even always well informed about the physical realm either. There is nothing wrong with our intellects, but when we decide to limit what we can

know to space, time, matter, and energy and ignore what is real but unseen then we become foolish. The tree of knowledge of good and evil's scope is limited to what we can see through the natural and our fallen human nature.

The following is how I think the “good” functions in “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” found in the book of Genesis and the one discussed in this book:

(1) Satan promised that Adam and Eve would experience both good and evil through “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”. What he didn’t tell them was that they would land up using the evil to get supposedly good things. Sin is taking a good thing by unhealthy (or evil) means. Evils like cowardice, pride, abandoning love, compulsive-indulging, compulsive-laziness, jealousy, judging, and selfishness are the tools that we use or are tempted to use to get the good things we think we want and to avoid pain.

(2) Often the good found in “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” is one of raising (or idolizing) pleasure (which is usually experienced in the flesh) and happiness (which is usually experienced in the mind) above spiritual considerations that deal with what is holy, healthy, and proper as far as God’s design is concerned when it comes to how we relate with God and each other.

(3) The good behavior aimed for in this devilish tree is not rooted in the real tangible rightnesses or spiritual healthy behaviors as seen in God’s nature. It may often look like humility but it’s source is that which tries to exult human effort, will, goodness, intellect, pedigree above God’s grace and is devoid of dependence on God. It is not wise to search this out in people and judge people for it. Jesus is clear: judge and condemn not; leave judgments to God.

(4) Pride in the world is often used to measure things as being either better than or worse than, instead of looking at parts of reality as either healthy vs. unhealthy.

I think that Satan sold the idea to Eve that the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” would get her and Adam to be as “special” as God. He wanted them to think God was holding out on them. The reason I think this is because the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” was the source of a devilish kind of knowledge or dark wisdom where:

Good = (I’m more special because...) or

(Mine is more special because...) or

(I think you are less special because...)

and where:

Evil = (You think I’m less special because...) or

(Mine is less special because...) or

(You think you are more special because...)

This kind of knowledge or thinking is a shallow and hurtful kind of paradigm of thought, rooted in disobedience, restlessness, anger, hatred, inferiority, fear and pride, and they bear the rest of the vices that all destroy wholesome/ healthy community/ and peaceful relationships. This kind of knowledge slowly defaces the image of God within us (except for the grace of God in our lives). And in so doing this knowledge helps us to hate, kill, and relish revenge, “eye for and eye” and “tooth for a tooth” actions against everyone who crosses our paths and eventually seeks the death of all. It is devoid of love, joy, peace, humility, warmth, kindness, hope, gentleness, valuing people, caring, altruism, and being a living sacrifice in the healthiest sense possible.

The “sin nature” has been wrongly relied on by me to try to save me from things that are uncomfortable by inspiring me to use self-pity and anger to get changes interiorly, in my circumstances, and my relationships. I only land up with guilt or meanness and restlessness/ anger/ more self-pity linked to demands for my way to come through in the end that may be limited by the presence of grace and mercy given by God.

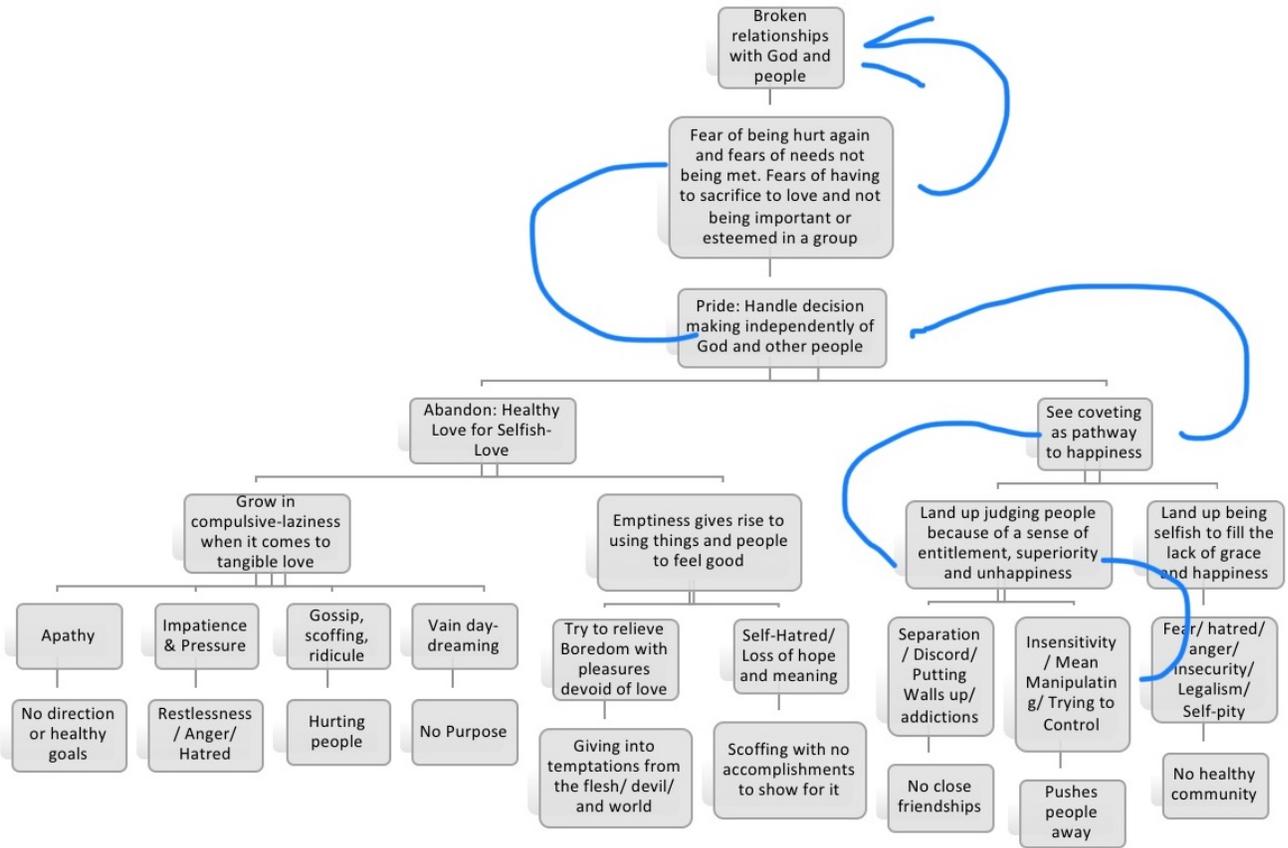
The “tree of knowledge of good and evil’s” seed, structure and fruit has infected all fallen humanity: Adam and Eve and us their fallen descendants. The tree’s infecting power is in the lies spoken to us that we too quickly and easily embrace because they promise us instant peace, alleviation of fears, and the lie that God’s promises to provide ways through darkness are not trustworthy. The devil promised independence, but made us slaves to sin, but only Jesus can free us from this tangled mess through the Good News found in the New Testament (NT).

In this book we will focused on what are called “sin-conduit-structures” that together form “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within. An example of such a structure is the one traced out in blue below.

One will learn how to confess (and repent) from these connected sin, attitude, fear, lie, bad commitment and habit structures to (and with the help of) God and in the process dismantle them so love can thrive. The blue-arrow-line goes upward because that is the order of how to process the structure and find freedom. The hidden powers of the sins stretch from the roots to the branches of the tree like gravity does from the earth to the sky.

The “sin-conduit-structure” below has the shorthand notation: “Foolishness=> Fear=> Pride=> Coveting & Jealousy=> Judging=> Meanness & Intolerance” in this instance, and fleshed out can look something like this, with the anatomy table beneath it:

Dismantling the Tree of Knowledge of a Good and Evil Within So Love Can Thrive



Meanness & Intolerance towards others	Judging	Coveting & Jealousy	Pride	Fear	Foolishness
	<=	<=	<=	<=	<= Cause and Effect
I want my will done (and I choose to do it meanly) instead of aiming for God's will to be done through me: i.e. "that I obey the Golden Rule".	Subconsciously or consciously I demanded: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" treatment towards those in my way... And I actually wanted karma visited on these people instead of grace.	I wanted to get my desires fulfilled ASAP demanding that others cooperate with me so I can get my way.	I see myself as the center of the universe. So my desires are more important than other people's.	I might have to get my hands dirty and love people other than myself. Believing the lie: "Loving people is too hard and unimportant".	People matter only insofar as they help me out with my chosen causes. I am committed to feeling as little pain as possible.
When I treated so and so disrespectfully...					
Confession & Repenting in Faith =>	=>	=>	=>	=>	

I have made many such anatomy tables and confessed and repented from the sins listed within them routing strongholds one after another with Jesus' help. I have included some of them as they are very helpful in aiming prayers and thoroughly covering all bases. I can't include them all for two reasons: (1) my dirty laundry involves many other people who I don't want to hurt or wound, and (2) this book can only be so long.

These dark energy "sin-conduit-structures" are a hungry, thirsty, compulsive energy seeking to draw relief to oneself that flows from the branches to the roots of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". It is more like a vacuum, than a supply. It is more like a black hole than a warm sun. These dark energy streams in a person are totally concerned about getting and taking things that one thinks will make one happy; the supposed good. The dark energy doesn't respect people or their boundaries. I need to say, "I accept you but I don't need you" to this energy within me and to commit myself to the Holy Spirit to have victory in each episode where this energy manifests. This "pull" or "dark energy" is used by the "sin nature" and more powerfully by "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within. Sin is about taking and using. Love is about giving and receiving.

It only takes a small situation and a small sin to start growing "the tree of knowledge of good

and evil” within, but that growth is not stagnant and it can and will grow as the years pass if left un dealt with. The longer left the stinkier it gets.

