

**IT IS NOT POSSIBLE
FOR A CHRISTIAN TO BE
SPIRITUALLY MATURE
WHILE REMAINING
EMOTIONALLY
IMMATURE.**

Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*

**Receive the
Gift of Limits**

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Gen 3v1-7)

WHY THE TREE?

God Has not made a bad tree. He has simply made a tree. And there is nothing intrinsic about the tree that is different in any way from the other trees. Rather, God has simply confronted man with a choice. He could have just as well said, “Don’t cross this stream; don’t climb this mountain.” He is saying, **“Believe me and stand in your place as a creature, not as one who is autonomous. Believe me and love me as a creature to his creator, and all will be well. This is the place for which I have made you.”**

Francis Schaeffer, Genesis in Space and Time

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3v4

**It's time to see what I can do,
to test the limits and break through.
No right, no wrong, no rules for me.
I'm free!**



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“Moralistic Therapeutic Deism”

- God exists who created the world and watches over human life
- God wants people to be good and nice
- The goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about yourself
- God is not really involved in our lives except when he is needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

Emerging adults are determined to be free. But they do not know what is worth doing with their freedom. They work very hard to stand on their own two feet. But they do not really know where they ought to go and why, once they are standing. They lack larger visions of what is true and real and good. . . . Many know that there must be something more, and they want it. Many are uncomfortable with their inability to make truth statements and moral claims without killing them with the death of a thousand qualifications. But they do not know what to do about that, given the crisis of truth and values that has destabilized their culture. And so they simply carry on as best they can, as sovereign, autonomous, empowered individuals who lack a reliable basis for any particular conviction or direction by which to guide their lives.

Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*

**FOR THE ESSENCE OF SIN
IS MAN SUBSTITUTING
HIMSELF FOR GOD...**

John Stott

Everything in the universe has a nature, which means limits as well as potentials, a truth well known by people who work daily with the things of the world. Making pottery, for example, involves more than telling the clay what to become. The clay presses back on the potter's hands, telling her what it can and cannot do—and if she fails to listen, the outcome will be both frail and ungainly. Engineering involves more than telling materials what they must do. If the engineer does not honor the nature of the steel or the wood or the stone, his failure will go well beyond aesthetics: the bridge or the building will collapse and put human life in peril. **The human self also has a nature, limits as well as potentials.**

Parker J. Palmer. Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (Jn 1v19-27)

John the Baptist's Identity (John 1v19-27)

1. **I Am Not** the Messiah, 19-20
2. **I Am Not** Elijah, 21a
3. **I Am Not** The Prophet, 21b

4. **I Am** a Voice (for the Lord), 23
5. **I Am** a Baptizer (in Water), 25-26
6. **I Am** Unworthy (to Untie His Sandals), 27-28

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less." (Jn 3v22-30)

John the Baptist receiving selfhood

“A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.”

(LIMITS)

“I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.”

(POTENTIAL)

“He must become greater; I must become less.”

(REALITY)

**FOR THE ESSENCE OF SIN IS MAN
SUBSTITUTING HIMSELF FOR GOD,
WHILE THE ESSENCE OF SALVATION
IS GOD SUBSTITUTING HIMSELF FOR
MAN. MAN ASSERTS HIMSELF
AGAINST GOD AND PUTS HIMSELF
WHERE ONLY GOD DESERVED TO BE;
GOD SACRIFICES HIMSELF FOR MAN
AND PUTS HIMSELF WHERE ONLY
MAN DESERVES TO BE.**

John Stott

