

Aug 2 Practice: Cozy Up to a Tree

Find a tree in your neighborhood. Get to know it using the following prompts as inspiration.

Trees are a powerful metaphor in the Bible. For example, Psalm 1:3 compares people who love God's law to "trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper."

Trees are 'everywhere' in our city, but because they are so familiar to us, we are often blind to actually seeing them. The last time you drove down your street you likely saw trees, but how many different kinds of trees did you see?

Were they growing in unique ways? Were they there naturally or were they planted intentionally?

We can observe a tree from a distance: for example, do the branches grow up, down or out? What does the bark look like from a distance? Is the tree leaning in one direction? How does the tree respond to the wind: do its leaves rattle, its branches creak? Does the tree sway or stand still? What kind of a shadow does it cast? What animals are using the tree? Does it collect anything underneath? Does it protect anything underneath?

We can observe them from close in: for example, is there a scent from the tree? Could it be from the leaves or needles, cones, bark? What does the bark look like (smooth, rough, patterned, flaking, peeling)? What does the bark feel like? Are there any holes, bare spots, unique blemishes, fungi or lichen?



Look down, what shape is the base of the tree? Are the roots visible? Look up, can you see through the branches to the top? Are there any nests? Are there any seedpods or nuts? How are they encased? How do they open? Are there any berries? What color? Any spots or patterns? Do they grow in clusters or individually? Are there any cones? How do they grow? Are they large or small? Do they grow upward or downward? Do they come apart easily or are they tightly contained?

Have you ever stood out near a tree during the rain? Have you watched how the water runs down the trunk, gets into the cracks, creates little bubbles, and softens and soaks bits of moss growing in the trunk? Have you looked at a tree in moonlight, or in fog? Have you paid attention to how a particular old tree looks in the sunlight?

Responses to these and many other questions can be written in your nature journal, and personal reflections on your observations may surprise and bless you. Sketches or photos of leaves, cones, bark patterns etc. can be included. Perhaps this tree will become like a companion to you as you walk by it in your neighborhood and watch it change and grow with the seasons. It gives new meaning to the term “treehugger”!

Kids Version:

HUG-A-TREE GAME Blindfold one person and lead them indirectly to a tree. The leader helps the blindfolded person touch, smell, and familiarize their self with the tree. Then the blindfolded person is led back to the start. The blindfold is removed and the person has to find the tree. Switch roles.

(Source: A Rocha Simple Nature Activities Handbook. Available free online <https://arocha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SimpleNatureActivities-web.pdf>)

Bible verse: Matt 6:28-9 “See how the flowers [trees!] of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.”

Gratitude Tree

