

# Devotional Calendar

May  
2020

Unit III.  
Called to God's  
Work of Justice

3



**Meditate:** Psalm 47

**Listen:** "Mighty God" by Deitrick Haddon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0neDlq65eNg>

**Pray:** Tell the Lord that He Is an Awesome King and that You Praise His Holy Name

10



**Meditate:** Zephaniah 8:18-23

**Listen:** "Change Me" by Tamela Mann

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlgLJEHF30k>

**Pray:** Let the Lord Know that You Give Him Your Hands to Use to Do His Holy Will

17



**Meditate:** Psalm 86:1-13

**Listen:** "Forgive Me, Lord (It's Me Again)" by J. Moss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDwXg7nVlyk>

**Pray:** Ask the Father to Search You and to Forgive You

24



**Meditate:** Psalm 72:1-17

**Listen:** "Take Away" by Yolanda Adams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afJ80kCFLs>

**Pray:** Plead with the Lord to Give You a Heart of Compassion for Others

31



**Meditate:** Deuteronomy 8:11-20

**Listen:** "We Offer Praise" by Rodnie Bryant and the Christian Community Mass Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7inK80mS64>

**Pray:** Tell the Lord that You Will Never Forget His Goodness and Mercy

## How to Do a Devotional

Daily devotionals are important to help you grow in your relationship with God. Pray, meditate, and read the Word of God, and you will grow spiritually. Devote ten minutes at the beginning of your day to clear your mind and heart and prepare to receive God. Daily devotions will prepare you for any obstacles that may come your way. Take time each morning to hear from God. Even Jesus used time in the morning to be with God. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35, NIV).



# WHAT'S ON YOUR TREE?

by Toy Lisa Mitchell

**IN ONE OF HIS MOST FAMOUS SERMONS, JESUS MARKED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS AND DISCIPLES.** He began by comparing prophets to fruit trees, telling His listeners that they could determine whether a prophet was sincere or false by observing whether his fruit was good or bad. “By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:16-18). The “fruit” Jesus spoke of was the persons’ character—the sincerity of their spiritual works, and the connection (or disconnection) between their outward appearance (who they appear to be), and what is in their hearts (who they truly are).



Many people believe that God expects little or nothing from those who say they are Christians, when nothing could be further from the truth. God is a fruit inspector. People may be fooled by a person's outward appearance—nice clothes, good reputation, pretty smile, or church attendance—but, God looks deeper to determine a person's true spiritual character. We can never see what the Lord sees, so His advice to us, in discerning or judging a person's character, is to pay attention to the fruit of his or her life. If you do not give your name, you are constantly introducing yourself to others. However, people learn who you are through your private conversations, conduct, obedience to God's Word, and treatment of others (especially those who have very little to offer you). And, although there are many types of fruit trees, the Lord only recognizes two types of people, based on their fruit—good or bad. Simply put, your life is either pleasing to God, or it is not. In God's eyes, there is no gray area or in-between levels of character. If you love God and want to please Him, then it is not complicated—your life must bring forth good fruit.

God's expectations on this matter are nothing new. From the days of Adam and Eve to the years of ancient Israel, to the days of the early church, to modern times, God has always expected good fruit from the lives of His people. The problem is that in today's world, producing bad fruit is easy, so that is what most people do. Many produce bad fruit without hesitation or guilt because they do not realize or believe that bad fruit brings bad, far-reaching consequences. It requires no serious self-sacrifice, effort, or spiritual discipline, but the final cost is high, because God rejects bad fruit and punishes sin.

Those who are spiritual carefully consider the importance and consequences of their words and actions. Those who are unspiritual get lost in their feelings or caught up in the moment and fail to think about the impact that their actions may have on other people. God knows your thoughts; He

sees who you are and what you say when nobody else is looking. Take a moment to check your life—what is on your tree? What does God really see when He looks at you?

Do you try to live a fruitful life of honesty, purity, and peace? Are you one to always hurt people with your words? Do you bully others? Do you talk badly about others, betray their trust, spread lies, or go along with those who do? What kind of fruit is on your tree?

By the days of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry to Judah, their northern neighbors in Israel had already been conquered. In Jeremiah 21:14, the prophet warned the people of Judah with a simple but powerful message from God: "I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD."

God had given Judah chance after chance to do the right thing, but they would not listen or obey. Eventually, the patience of God gave way to the justice of God; and God's people had to bear the consequences of their "bad fruit," or disobedience to God.

Some think that God is too "good" to punish sin, but if God allowed us to sin without accountability or consequence, then His goodness would be compromised, and many people would never turn their hearts back to Him. God is too wise, too loving, too just, and too holy to allow His people to continue operating unchecked in sin and disobedience. God's grace gives us what we do not deserve. God's mercy holds back judgment that we deserve and gives us another chance. But eventually, as with any loving father, God's justice steps in to discipline His children and to train them to do what is right (see Hebrews 12:6-7).

What type of person do you want to be? Are you satisfied to live a life that constantly falls short of God's righteous standards? Do you want a fruitful life that helps others and glorifies God? You are never too young to make a serious commitment to God—that is what God wants. The choice is yours and God is listening for your answer. So, what will it be—good fruit or bad?



# In the End, You Win!

## LESSON 10

**Background Scripture:**  
**Zephaniah 3**  
**Print Passage:**  
**Zephaniah 3:14-20**

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"At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:20)  
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Because of the rapid attendance growth of youth and young adult worshippers at Liberty Baptist Church over the past two years, the church voted to incorporate a second worship service. A traditional worship service will be held at 8:00 a.m. and a contemporary service will be held at 11:00 a.m. A team of youth and young adults were assigned to create a worship format for the second worship service. Among the changes they proposed were a casual dress code, a thirty-minute praise-and-worship period, followed by up to fifteen minutes of time for personal testimonies.

Joe, the keyboardist, was one of the more outspoken supporters of more praise and worship time and opportunities to testify. He believed that hearing the testimonies of others would encourage the faith of the rest of the congregation. At the first service, Joe stood and gave a moving testimony that caused others to shout for joy with him. He shared the story of a medical diagnosis he received at age five: the doctors found a cancerous tumor the size of a tennis ball. Joe's doctors prescribed a series of treatments (radiation and chemotherapy) hoping to slow down the growth of the aggressive tumor.

One night, when he was still five years old, Joe had a dream in which God promised to heal him of cancer. By age 7, the doctors were amazed at Joe's progress—the tumor had been reduced to the size of a pea. By age 10, Joe was completely cancer-free. Now, Joe is a twenty-five-year-old man, and this month marks the fifteenth year that he has lived without cancer. He is still rejoicing over the promise that God made to him when he was a young boy. Joe testified, "This is the greatest testimony of my life! Cancer had me like a bully on the playground, but God showed up for me. God will come through on His promises every time. That's why I give Him all the praise! Hallelujah!"

**Can you describe an incident when God gave you a reason to shout for joy?**





## Zephaniah 3:14-20

**14** Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! **15** The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. **16** On that day they will say to Jerusalem, “Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. **17** The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” **18** “I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. **19** At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. **20** At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,” says the LORD.



## Intersect

Zephaniah is a short, three-chapter book with a powerful punch. It opens with a troubling prediction of punishment and destruction for the unrepentant people of Judah, who had given themselves to sin and unbelief. In chapter 2, the prophet calls the people to righteousness and humility. The book closes in chapter 3, the focus of today’s lesson, with a hopeful call for rejoicing, based on God’s faithfulness. Zephaniah’s final words in chapter 3 point forward to the last days, a time when God will bring justice, punish sinners, and reward the faithful.

Despite the opening message of destruction and judgment, God promised (through the prophet) that a new day will come—a day when God’s people will have great reason to rejoice; a day when God will hold back His hand of judgment, “turn back” Israel’s enemies, and restore the gladness of His presence with them.

God’s holiness cannot allow sin to continue without judgment. But God’s love moves Him to remain faithful to His disobedient people. God sent the people a word of restoration to assure them that despite the difficulties of divine judgment, God would never abandon them.

Zephaniah’s prophecy called the people to prayer and a changed life in God’s presence. It also offered the promise of honor, praise, and a “restoration of fortunes” (verse 20), so they would know that every blessing, turn-around, or improvement in their situation is always the work of God. Without God, things do not just randomly get better—God is the source of every blessing we receive.

## Inside Out

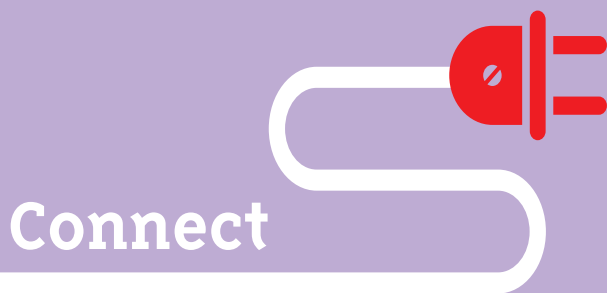
Someone has described “hope” as faith in the future tense—a confident expectation that your future is in God’s good hands. Have you ever felt like giving up when problems kept getting worse? Hope protects us from discouragement during difficult days. God can use difficult circumstances to build our faith, show us our character, show us who He is, or to deliver us from a habitual sin. Walk with God, following Him closely, so that you do not miss the blessing or the lesson in your experiences!





## There's an App for That!

What is your first response when the circumstances of life overwhelm you? Many believers are tempted to blame or pull away from God when faced with unexplained difficulties. In times of grief, serious illness, or some other disappointment, people get frustrated when they can't see any hope or light at the end of the tunnel. God gives us patience to endure tough times and wait without losing heart as He unfolds His purpose in our lives day by day. Even when you cannot see God at work or hear His voice, you can be sure that He is always with you.



## Connect

All of us, like the Israelites, have disappointed God and earned His judgment. God loves us despite our sins. When we turn to God in repentance and faith and trust in Jesus, we are not just saved—we are forgiven. Sometimes, God uses correction, trials, or trouble to draw us to a closer relationship with Him. We can trust God's heart in whatever He allows.

## Stepping Out!

Your challenge for the week is to locate an article (newspaper or Internet) about the plight of the Israelites in Jerusalem today. Discover how the Israelites in today's world may be in their land, but they are not yet experiencing the "renowned praise" as Zephaniah prophesied. Be prepared to share your findings during the next class session.



## Media Mission

Visit <https://vimeo.com/279826661>

and watch the video entitled "The Restoration Story." The video is a call to action against poverty and injustice and a challenge to join Jesus' work in serving the needs of those who suffer in meaningful ways. Don't just have pity on others—do something to help.

