

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?



**God's grace
gives us what we
do not deserve.**

Bad Fruit

LESSON 12

Background Scripture:
Jeremiah 21
Print Passage:
Jeremiah 21:8-14

.....
"I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 21:14a)
.....



Tyler's mother told him over and over, "Son, you cannot sin and get away with it." But Tyler has always been hardheaded and pushes the limits. This time, his pushing the limits of his mother's patience and his stubbornness got him into a jam. A few of Tyler's buddies decided they wanted to try some e-cigarettes. Tyler's mother had always warned him: stay away from smoking!

One day after school, when Tyler's friends wanted to experiment with e-cigarettes, Tyler went along with them. As the guys walked to the alley near the school, Tyler reasoned, "It's not a real cigarette . . . what harm could it do?" The boys passed the e-cigarette around, and after the first few puffs, Tyler quickly began having difficulty breathing. Tyler told his buddies to call his mother, but the boys were scared and ran away, leaving Tyler alone in the alley, struggling to breathe. Tyler could not believe that his friends had left him like that. He texted his mother, telling her that he could not breathe. His mother called the school trying to get help but could not reach anyone. She drove quickly to get Tyler and rushed him to the emergency room.

When they arrived at the hospital, the doctor said they had arrived just in time: "A few minutes later, and Tyler might not have made it." As it turned out, Tyler had a severe asthma attack. When Tyler and his mom were alone in the hospital room, she asked him why he had disobeyed her. Tyler had nothing to say but "I'm sorry. You were right, Mom; I can't sin and get away with it."

How much can a person get away with?





Jeremiah 21:8-14

8 “Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. **9** Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives. **10** I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.’ **11** Moreover, say to the royal house of Judah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD. **12** This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it. **13** I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD—you who say, “Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?” **14** I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you.’”



Intersect

Jeremiah is the prophet on the scene in today’s biblical narrative. Zedekiah was the king of Judah. Jeremiah addressed this message to King Zedekiah in verses 1-7 and beginning in verses 8-10, Jeremiah turned his attention to the people of God. Jeremiah informed the people and the king that judgment was on the way. The Babylonians (Chaldeans) had surrounded the city. God, through His prophet, counseled them to either surrender to the Babylonians or die! The prophet gave the people an ultimatum: choose life or choose death. This option is echoed in Deuteronomy 30:15-20, which contains a list of the conditional provisions of the covenant. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar was ready to burn the city and take the people into captivity.

In verses 11-14, God’s message was directed to the house of David. The message was that because evil kings ruled, God would judge the entire land and allow it to be destroyed. God was punishing the people because of their disobedience and idol worship. There was no escaping God’s judgment. People sin expecting that they will always escape the judgment of God—but that is not true. God may delay His punishment, but sooner or later, one way or another, everyone will face the consequences of sinning against God.

For many decades, God had given grace to the people and sent the prophets to call them to turn from sin, but they had refused to do so. Eventually, God’s patience ran out and He pronounced judgment on the city—giving them into the hands of the Babylonians. Even today, when God’s people allow sin to continue in their lives, refusing to repent and turn away sin, God will do whatever it takes to bring them back to Him, even if He must punish them.

• Inside Out

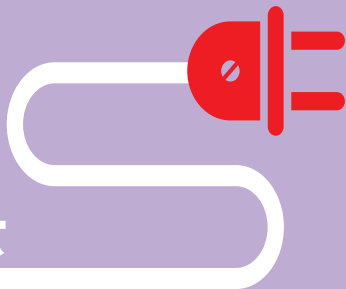
Respond to the questions/statements below.

1. Why was God angry with the Israelites?
2. The city of Jerusalem was of the house of whom?
(a) Benjamin (b) David (c) Joseph
3. Why did the people think no harm would come to them? Why were they so relaxed in their sin?
4. Read Deuteronomy 30:16-18 and list the covenant conditions and consequences.



There's an App for That!

Injustice Scenarios: Your class will work in groups for this activity. Your group will be presented with a scenario concerning an injustice. Your group will be given time to work together to create a response that you consider pleasing to God.



Connect

There are some who wonder why God's own people were being punished by God. Remember that God is always fair and just. What happened to God's people in Judah was the direct result of their own decision to sin and rebel against Him. Anyone risks being punished by God when he or she continues sinning and refuses to repent. God is holy and He is always offended when believers keep choosing sin instead of living to please Him.



Stepping Out!

Using the Middle Passage Atlantic Slave Trade and the history of the Native Americans, research and record three injustices and/or times of oppression these people endured. Volunteers will be asked to share their findings with the class next week.

Middle Passage Atlantic Slave Trade	Native Americans
1. _____ _____	1. _____ _____
2. _____ _____	2. _____ _____
3. _____ _____	3. _____ _____

Media Mission

Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zP0p3nQYJk> and listen to "Gracefully Broken" by Tasha Cobbs Leonard. What does it mean to be gracefully broken? How does the song's message relate to the lesson?

