

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?



LESSON
13

Background Scripture:
Jeremiah 22
Print Passage:
Jeremiah 22:1-10



Repent

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“Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.” (Jeremiah 22:3b)
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Benjamin's dad had circled the mall parking lot for five minutes trying to find a parking spot. They sat behind an SUV that pulled into a spot marked "Pregnant Women or Women with Small Children Only." The person who got out of the SUV was not a woman, he was able-bodied, and he did not have any small children with him. He locked his vehicle with his key fob and went into the mall.

Ben asked his dad, "What's up with that?"

Ben's dad said, "Son, some people just feel privileged and entitled to do whatever they want to do. Perhaps that guy thinks the rules don't apply to him because of his race and gender." Ben brought up the incident in his English class, which prompted a huge discussion. Ben learned that privilege exists when it comes to housing, employment, gender, purchasing power, and even manipulation of immigration laws, so that certain groups of people will be blocked from migrating to the United States. Sarah, who is biracial, said that her father had been deprived of an opportunity for a job he was qualified for solely on the basis of his skin color. A few students in the class disagreed and said that "privilege" does not exist. The teacher gave the students an assignment to ask ten people for their thoughts on "privilege in America." When the students shared their survey responses in class, they were surprised to learn that so many people enjoy privileges based purely on their race, gender, age, class, or physical abilities.

Ben said, "I don't know about you, but this survey makes me want to look for ways to stand up for justice in our society."

Is privilege a social reality? Explain.



Jeremiah 22:1-10

1 This is what the LORD says: “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there: **2** ‘Hear the word of the LORD to you, king of Judah, you who sit on David’s throne—you, your officials and your people who come through these gates. **3** This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. **4** For if you are careful to carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David’s throne will come through the gates of this palace, riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by their officials and their people. **5** But if you do not obey these commands, declares the LORD, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin.’” **6** For this is what the LORD says about the palace of the king of Judah: “Though you are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon, I will surely make you like a wasteland, like towns not inhabited. **7** I will send destroyers against you, each man with his weapons, and they will cut up your fine cedar beams and throw them into the fire. **8** People from many nations will pass by this city and will ask one another, ‘Why has the LORD done such a thing to this great city?’ **9** And the answer will be: ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God and have worshiped and served other gods.’” **10** Do not weep for the dead king or mourn his loss; rather, weep bitterly for him who is exiled, because he will never return nor see his native land again.

Intersect

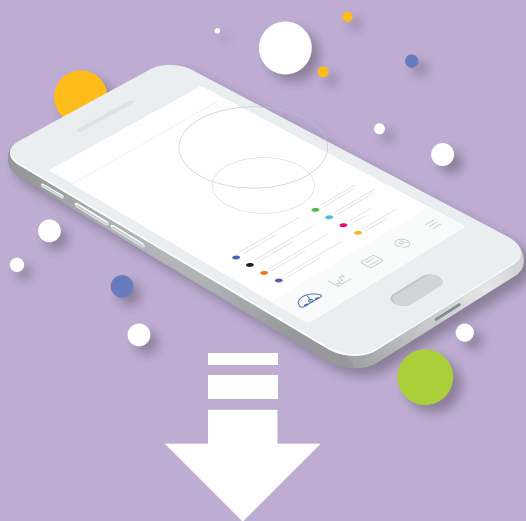
Today’s Bible lesson continues in the book of Jeremiah. Zedekiah was king of Judah and the people of the land were right on the brink of being conquered and taken into captivity. Jeremiah delivered God’s message faithfully and although he knew the message was unpleasant, Jeremiah spoke powerfully. Jeremiah’s prophecy was for the king of Judah, his nobles, and the people. The king and his nobles were obligated before God to act with justice on behalf of the afflicted. Jeremiah went to the king’s house and gave the warnings: (1) do what is just and right; (2) rescue the one who has been robbed from the hands of his oppressor; (3) do not allow the immigrant, foreigner, or stranger to be exploited; this includes the fatherless and the widow; and (4) do not kill innocent people in this holy place. Verses 4-5 lay out the blessing for obedience and consequences for disobedience. Verse 10 refers to Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz (also known as Shallum). Josiah was one of Judah’s good kings who brought about a revival in the land. After Josiah’s violent death, Jehoahaz was chosen by the people to take over the throne. Jehoahaz was an evil king and an idol worshipper who was later dethroned by the king of Egypt and placed in chains until his death.

Jeremiah 22 recalls a dark, desperate time for the people of Judah. Their story is a warning and a reminder that God punishes sin, but their story does not have to be your story. Examine your life. If you need to repent, do it quickly and turn back to God.

Inside Out

Respond to the statements/questions below.

1. Explain in your own words why God sent Jeremiah to the king of Judah.
2. Read verse 3. In your own words, explain the warnings given to Judah’s king and officials.
3. Why is it important for leaders to be good? Explain.
4. Do you believe justice includes those who are unbelievers or those outside of the family of faith? Explain your answer.



There's an App for That!

What Would You Do? Your teacher will give you a “What Would You Do?” statement. Use the statement to create a very brief skit addressing the issue.



Connect

When we are called out for our sins, we must show God our genuine repentance. Repenting restores our relationship with God, but it does not always protect us from suffering the consequences of our actions. Judah experienced strong judgment because they refused to turn from their sins. Even though God punished them, He promised spiritual and physical restoration. As God restored Judah, He will also restore you.

Stepping Out!

This week's challenge is to identify a world leader who governs with a mindset driven by dishonesty, cruelty, or injustice. Write a note about the leader you choose and briefly describe why you chose him or her.

Media Mission

Watch the movie clip entitled “The Lorax: Let it Grow” at <https://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/the-lorax/let-it-grow>. After viewing, discuss your thoughts.

