

# 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.**

# Size It Up!

LESSON

# 14

**Background Scripture:**  
Hosea 11-12

**Print Passage:**  
Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

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You must return to your God. (Hosea 12:6a)



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Richard had been a popular athlete. Last year, he got into a disagreement with his football coach and punched the coach in the face. After he was expelled from school for the incident, Richard was embarrassed and stopped coming to church—he has not been to church in nearly a year.



In preparation for youth revival, members of the youth ministry were asked to pray for young people they knew who needed salvation or restoration.

Allan and Richard used to be very good friends; so, Allan decided to pray for Richard. Allan knew that Richard often hung out at the corner store, so he went there often in hopes of running into Richard. Whenever he saw Richard, he asked how he was doing, and then said, "I'm praying for you, man. We miss you."

During the revival, Richard came back to church, responded to the invitation, and rededicated His life to God.

Richard said, "After the school incident, I was so discouraged that I wandered away from my relationship with God and my life began to fall apart. But every time I saw Allan, he would remind me that God loves me and would say that he was praying for me." With tears in his eyes, Richard looked at the pastor and said, "Please help me find my way back to God."

On the way home from church, Allan told his father that he could not tell if he had been getting through to Richard or not, but he kept telling him, "God loves you, man, and so do I."

Allan's father said, "Son, you were showing Richard the love of Jesus, and it touched him. I'm proud of you."

Allan said, "I couldn't stand by and watch Richard ruin his life. Our Sunday school teacher said that God calls us to do more than pray; He wants us to show people God's love—not condemnation."

**Give examples of how we can convey love and justice in this world.**



# Inspect



Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10;  
12:1-2, 6-14

1 “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. 2 But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.”

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7 “My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them. 8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. 9 I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities. 10 They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west.”

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1 Ephraim feeds on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt. 2 The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

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6 But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always. 7 The merchant uses dishonest scales and loves to defraud. 8 Ephraim boasts, “I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin.” 9 “I have been the LORD your God ever since you came out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of your appointed festivals. 10 I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them.” 11 Is Gilead wicked? Its people are worthless! Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Their altars will be like piles of stones on a plowed field. 12 Jacob fled to the country of Aram; Israel served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep. 13 The LORD used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him. 14 But Ephraim has aroused his bitter anger; his Lord will leave on him the guilt of his bloodshed and will repay him for his contempt.

## Intersect

God had treated the nation of Israel with the kind of care a father would show to a son. Like a father teaching a child to walk, God had patiently given the people of Israel instructions and cared for them gently when they were hurt. When the people began to disobey, God did not deal harshly with them; He continued to show concern for them and provide for their needs.

God had been a loving Father, and yet Israel had failed to return that love. They had betrayed God by burning incense to idols, refused to listen to the prophets, and refused to repent and turn back to God. Sin had hardened their hearts and they deserved God’s punishment.

Like a disappointed Father, God asked, “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?” (verse 8). When God felt moved to judge Israel for their sins, His compassion kept Him from completely wiping them out. When people get angry, they are often unable to balance their anger with compassion, but God’s emotions are always balanced. Even though the Israelites deserved punishment, God held back from punishing them as He had punished their neighbors, Admah and Zeboyim. God would carry out His anger against Israel for their sins; He refused to destroy them.

In chapter 12, the prophet addressed Israel and Judah’s unfaithfulness to God’s covenant. Hosea highlights the love of God for His people. Because God loves, God uses discipline to correct, not to destroy.

## Inside Out

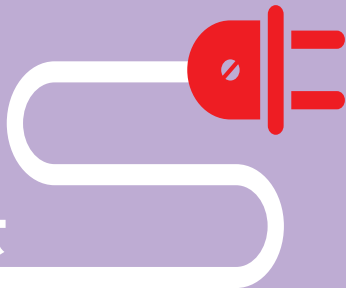
Respond to the statements/questions below.

1. Describe in your own words the spiritual state of the people during Hosea’s ministry.
2. How can you remain faithful to God’s way of living in an ungodly/changing world?
3. Why did God not give up on Israel?
4. Share how thankful you are that God has not given up on you.



## There's an App for That!

Think about and share your thoughts on how young people can live to demonstrate love and justice by embracing diversity, addressing economic inequality, welcoming everyone, showing fairness, and getting involved in community development.



## Connect

During the time when Hosea was preaching, the people seemed to enjoy living in sin. They reached the point of rejecting God and turning away from God's commandments. Sin brings divine judgment and discipline, but believers can rejoice because if we are willing to change, then God is willing to restore us! Regardless of what you have done, God still welcomes you to "return to the Lord."

# Stepping Out!

This week, you are challenged to interview at least two people and ask, "What can Christians do to bring God's justice to the world?"

Write the responses below.

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## Media Mission

Watch the music video by Mandisa (featuring Toby Mac and Kirk Franklin) entitled "Bleed the Same" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVKuA1s5I3o>. After listening, be prepared to put the song's message into your own words.

