

Middle School

Teacher's Plans



May 17, 2020

Youth Topic: Unit III. Called to God's Work of Justice

Bad Fruit

Lesson 12

General Lesson:
Practice Justice

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



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

PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, paper, pens or pencils, index cards, (**optional:** Youth Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])

LESSON OVERVIEW

Evil is pervasive throughout human society. Can people continue to do evil without consequence? Jeremiah tells us that God is a God of justice and will recompense evil.

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.

Status Update: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? "Can you think of an example in society that could demonstrate the concept of 'bad fruit'?"

It's Go Time! (illustration)

Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week's lesson.

Give each student a sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Have the students do a quick sketch of something in society that reflects actions that are displeasing to God. Encourage them to complete their

sketches. Then have the students take turns guessing what the different sketches are about. Discuss how "bad fruit" can spoil the whole bunch. Connect these thoughts to today's lesson.

WAKE UP! (10 minutes)

Have the students read this week's contemporary story and connect it this week's lesson.

In this week's "Wake Up!" story, the Kennybrooks were caught stealing money from the school activity fund. Even though justice was due, Marla was sad that the Kennybrooks were arrested. Allow the students to discuss their thoughts and ideas about the Kennybrooks' behavior. Emphasize the point that people's sinful schemes do not go unnoticed by God. In due time, God will bring all wrongdoing to justice.

WORD UP (10 minutes)

Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.

Back Up! (background)

Here is some background for today's text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.

The biblical character featured in today's lesson is Jeremiah. Many biblical scholars refer to Jeremiah as the weeping prophet, because much of his ministry was spent pleading with the people to turn away from sin and serve God. When Jeremiah spoke, it was if nobody heard him, because the people continued to disregard his warning and they continued to rebel against God. The basic theme of Jeremiah's message is to repent and turn to God, or be punished.

In today's Scripture passage, King Zedekiah is seeking refuge from Babylon's destructive forces. Judah was being attacked by Nebuchadnezzar's armies, causing Judah's leaders to cry out to Jeremiah—asking him to talk to God on their behalf. God used Jeremiah to deliver the strong message to Judah's leaders. Jeremiah informed King Zedekiah and the other leaders of Judah that God was not going to deliver them. Even worse, God Himself was going to fight against them. It was too late for Jerusalem. The nation would be destroyed by the Babylonians.

In the past, Jeremiah had warned the people about Jerusalem's destruction. The leaders rejected Jeremiah's warnings and continued to violate God's commandments. King Zedekiah was seeking God's help to deliver him from the hands of the enemy. He wanted relief from his situation, but he did not want to change to live in a way that was pleasing to God.

This lesson reminds us that people often want God's help in the times of trouble—but when things are going well, they rarely consider how their disobedience or rejection of God's Word makes God feel. Judah's refusal to accept Jeremiah's warnings created an irreversible sentence of severe judgment that God would not cancel. Jerusalem was protected from the west, south, and east, but not the north, which is where the enemy was going to attack. God, the protector at the north side, would allow Jerusalem to be destroyed because of the people's disobedience and idol worship.

It's Text Time! (Scripture)

Here is the New International Version of today's Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.

(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.'"

WORK OUT (10 minutes)

Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?

After the text in this section of the student book is read, explain that Jeremiah had warned the people about Jerusalem's destruction numerous times. The leaders rejected Jeremiah's warnings and continued to violate God's commandments. But now, King Zedekiah was seeking God's help to deliver them from Babylonian attacks. Say, "This lesson reminds us that people often want God's help in the times of trouble—but when things are going well, they rarely consider how their disobedience or rejection of God's Word makes God feel. Judah's refusal to accept Jeremiah's warnings created an irreversible sentence of severe judgment that God would not cancel. Jerusalem would not escape God's wrath."

Inside Out (interpretation)

Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.

After the students ask and answer their own questions about the text, point out that even though God

is a loving God, He hates sin and disobedience. God sent Jeremiah to warn the people of their sinful ways, but no one listened. God is patient, but in His own time, He will settle the score and give people the justice they deserve. Tell the students to avoid God's wrath by doing what is right according to God's commandments.

There's an App for That! (application)
Show how this Scripture applies to present day.

After the text in this section of the student book is read, discuss how today's "Wake Up!" story provides an example of how wrong decisions lead to severe consequences. Emphasize the point that Judah never thought God would allow them to be destroyed by their enemies. They took God's love and care for granted. Even though God never stopped loving Judah, the people had to learn how their disobedience would cause extreme consequences that God would not reverse.

WALK OUT (10 minutes)
Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.

After the text in this section of the student book is read, emphasize the point that success, as measured by God, involves obedience. Discuss how Jeremiah may have been viewed as a failure because he warned the people, but no one listened to him. Highlight the fact that Jeremiah was obedient to God even though the people's conduct did not improve. Remind the students that what is important to God is often viewed as unimportant to humanity. The Christian response should be to please God.

Stepping Out! (challenge)
Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!

Challenge the students to plant some kind of seeds to observe the growth process. Encourage them to research what seeds will need to grow. Invite the students to consider how this experience might compare to the experience of growing spiritually. Tell the students, "At a minimum, seeds will need water and sunlight. Likewise, living a Christ-centered life also requires water (refreshing of the Holy Spirit) and sunlight or Son-light (Jesus Christ)."

It's Game Time! (Answer Key)
Answers will vary. Stand ready to assist any students who may need additional examples of how to complete the activity.

MEDIA MISSION (after you meet!)
Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.

Have the students visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUsaOOKIZjw> and listen to Kevin Burgess, known as KB, a gospel rapper with a powerful message in his song "No Chains." Discuss how the upbeat lyrics proclaim how a life rooted in Jesus gives believers the freedom and power to live right. Remind the students that through Jesus, believers are empowered to resist sin and live a life of obedience to God. Encourage the students to share the video with three other friends and discuss how the message can be applied to their daily lives.

NOTES

High School

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Background Scripture: Jeremiah 21

Print Passage: Jeremiah 21:8-14



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

PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, paper, pens or pencils, a flip-chart, markers, a timer, (**optional:** Youth Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])
- Prior to class, select several questions from previous lessons this quarter from the "Inside Out" section to use during the "It's Go Time!" activity.
- Prior to class, make two copies of the "Injustice Scenario" to be used during the "There's an App for That!" activity.
- Prior to class, select a word of the day.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Evil is pervasive throughout human society. Can people continue to do evil without consequence? Jeremiah tells us that God is a God of justice and will recompense evil.

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.

Status Update: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? "Share A time when you bit into a piece of bad (spoiled) fruit. What was your reaction?"

It's Go Time! (illustration)

Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week's lesson.

Race at the Board: Divide the class into two teams. As representatives from each team come to the board, ask a preselected question. The first student to write the correct answer wins a point for their team. If neither team answers correctly, then move to the next round. Teams have ten seconds to write the correct answer after the question is asked.

REFLECT (10 minutes)

Have the students read this week's contemporary story and relate it back to the main points of this week's lesson.

Have the students read the contemporary story and then read and discuss the question posed at the end of the story. Have the class to discuss Tyler's other options in the situation. Transition into the lesson by saying, "Today's lesson will reveal how bad decisions lead to unpleasant consequences."

INSPECT (10 minutes)

Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.

Back Up! (background)

Here is some background for today's text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.

While Habakkuk's and Zephaniah's preaching was stirring things up in Judah, Jeremiah was blowing through Jerusalem like a hot, desert wind. Jeremiah began preaching during the reign of Josiah, Judah's last good king, who sparked a religious revival in town. Jeremiah began prophesying around 627 BC. Jeremiah is called the "weeping prophet" because he cried over the sins of the people. Jeremiah's ministry would span forty-plus years. In spite of Jeremiah's warnings of approaching judgment, the people were hardheaded, and the message fell on deaf ears. But young Jeremiah, with fire burning in his heart, kept on preaching. By the time we reach Jeremiah 21, the king is Zedekiah and the time is 597–586 BC. The Babylonian captivity was imminent. Zedekiah sent a word to Jeremiah to intercede because Nebuchadnezzar had sent another army to overtake the city. Jeremiah made the announcement that God was responsible for orchestrating the destruction of Judah. While the Israelites were God's chosen people, due to their willful and insistent sin, and infidelity to the covenant, they had literally become God's enemies. Sin separates us from God (see Isaiah 59:2). Jeremiah said to surrender to the Babylonians and live, or resist and be killed! Jerusalem would burn at the hand of Babylon, but judgment was coming from God. Zedekiah, a descendant of David's, is reminded of his covenant responsibilities to hear the Word of God, obey it, and act with justice or else! Verse 14 reminded God's people that they were being judged *as your deeds deserve*—which meant the people were being punished according to their sins. God's people must remember that when good seeds are planted, fruit results. If the fruit of the people's wrongdoing is rotten, then the result is divine discipline. All of humanity are sinners and the wages of sin is death. God sent the Christ to die on the cross to bear humanity's sins. Persons who accept Christ as Savior and confess their sins will live. Those who do not accept Christ will die in their sins. Years of disobedience and rebellion had finally caught up with God's chosen people.

It's Text Time! (Scripture)

Here is the New International Version of today's Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.

(Jeremiah 21:8-14)

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INTERSECT (10 minutes)

Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?

After the text in this section of the student book has been read, say, "An important phrase in today's biblical text is 'I will punish' (Jeremiah 21:14). God is holy and just and will always do what is right. Since God does not tolerate sin, He reserves the right, as God, to respond to sin with whatever punishment or discipline He considers suitable. God deals with His people as a father deals with his children. He disciplines and trains His people to produce in them the qualities that match His own desire for them. Correction or punishment from God is an expression of God's love. God uses correction to stop or discourage us from continuing a dangerous or harmful pattern of sin and

disobedience. God knows that allowing His people to continue in disobedience would destroy them. God loves His people too much not to discipline them when they sin."

Inside Out (interpretation)

Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.

After the students ask and answer their own questions of the text, invite them to complete the activity in this section of the student book. Then review their responses.

Answers: (1) God was angry because of Israel’s sin and rebellion; (2) b; (3) God’s people sometimes believe that delayed punishment means that God is not offended by their sin. Israel also believed that because of their covenant as God’s people, God would not punish them; (4) God would reward obedience with blessings, and disobedience with curses and death.

There’s an App for That! (application)

Show how this Scripture applies to present day.

Split up the class into two groups. Each group should indicate action steps to address the issue with a response that would be pleasing to God.

Injustice Scenario: Nikki and Daniel were both hired at the mall at the same time. They were both excited! When Daniel told Nikki that he was getting two dollars more than minimum wage, Nikki’s mouth dropped because Daniel was getting paid more. They were both the same age, doing the same job, and working the same hours. Nikki realized she was the victim of wage discrimination.

CONNECT (10 minutes)

Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.

Have the students read the text in this section (found also in the student book): "There are some who wonder why God’s own people were being punished by God. 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 God. Anyone risks being punished by God when he or she continues to sin 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! (challenge)

Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!

Using historical examples such as the Middle Passage Atlantic Slave Trade and the history of the Native Americans, have the students to research and list three examples of injustice and oppression that people have been forced to endure. As time permits, have volunteers share their findings during the next class session.

MEDIA MISSION (after you meet!)

Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.

The students are asked to visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zP0p3nQYJk> and watch "Gracefully Broken" by Tasha Cobbs Leonard. After viewing, invite them to share their thoughts on the video. Ask the class what it means to be "gracefully broken."

NOTES