

The Stories of Jesus- Week 3 God Time

The Parable of the Fig Tree

These scriptures are selected to help you gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. You can read them each day or listen to the daily audio that is sent to you. They are intentionally designed for you to engage in your time alone with God. You will find them complementary to the teachings on the weekend (gatherings) and to the LIFE Group materials.

Some tips:

Use a Bible that is easy to read. The ESV or The NLT are both good translations.

Use a prayer journal. After you read the passages jot down what “jumped out” at you while reading. Then take a few minutes to write a prayer response to what you have read.

There are only five days of reading provided so if you miss a day you have time to catch up. Do not get legalistic! If you miss a day or even a week...God still loves you!

Monday: 1 Peter 2:1-3

Tuesday: Colossians 3:10-11

Wednesday: 2 Peter 3:9

Thursday: 1 John 1:5-9

Friday: Micah 7:18

Diving Deeper

The Stories of Jesus - The Parable of the Fig Tree

Read Luke 13:1-8

The Parable of the Fig Tree is a story that should cause each and every one of us to pause and reflect not only on the message Jesus is making, but also on how it applies to us and those we care about especially in light of eternal life.

This parable complements the teaching of Jesus in verses 1-5 where he is approached once again by the religious leaders who seek to entice Jesus to say something bad about Pilate. Instead, Jesus turns the tables and drives a point that these religious Jews either did not understand or because of their pride and arrogance chose to ignore.

The Jews wanted to make the point that when something bad happens to people like when the Tower of Siloam killed 18 people in Jerusalem, that God must not have been happy with them. Jesus responds to them that when something happens to people, don't conclude that God is upset and causing harm to them. Bad things happen all the time, to both good people and evil people. If a stone drops on your foot and breaks it, how can you say God caused it, when you probably just put your foot in the wrong place. Events happen, accidents happen, and we should not turn our blame to God. But Jesus makes his point to the Jews, and it is one that is of great importance, "But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Who will perish, ALL? Even you high standing religious leaders who use God to play your blame games on others.

Then Jesus tells them the story of the Fig Tree. Fruit trees were planted in vineyards to provide winemakers with a subtle addition to the flavor of their wine. In this case, a fig in the wine. The owner had every right to expect fruit after 3 years. In this case, Jesus is speaking less about the fruit of the Spirit, than he is about the fruit worthy of repentance – humility, brokenness, inner reflection, and a contrite heart. The owner had a useless fruit tree cut down because it had no value, and it exhausted the soil. The vineyard owner, represents God, the one who rightly expects to see fruit on His tree and who justly decides to destroy it when it yields none. The gardener or the vineyard keeper represents Jesus, who cares for the tree, watering and fertilizing it. The tree itself represents 2 symbolic meanings: the nation of Israel and the individual.

Why the 3 year period? It is significant because it is the time that John the Baptist and Jesus had been preaching the message of repentance throughout Israel. But the fruits of repentance were not forthcoming from the Jews, who were offended by the idea they needed to repent. The Jews had their own idea of how they viewed God and it was not in sync with Jesus' teachings. What they didn't understand is that they had departed from the

true living God and had replaced God's way with a system of work's righteousness that was an abomination to God. God was ready to bring the axe down, but the gardener was there pleading for a little more time. Jesus, the compassionate gardener, was there then and is with us today interceding and pleading for more time to water and fertilize the fruitless trees, and God, through His grace, responds with patience.

What are we as individuals to take away from this? God's patience has limits. He will be willing to grant another day, but never lose sight of the fact that judgment is looming. Christ stands at the door of each man's heart knocking and seeking to gain entrance and requiring repentance. But if there is no fruit, no repentance, there will be a day of reckoning that will come and the fruitless unrepentant individual will be cut down.

1. Does this concern you when you consider that Jesus is talking about the fruit of repentance?
2. Maybe you have repented and are walking with Christ, but what about those around you?
3. What role should you play in helping others to know Christ and help them to repent?
4. What is the church's view of repentance? Do some churches see repentance in the same way as the Jewish religious leaders? Do we take for granted the need to repent?
5. How will repentance lead us into a deeper relationship with Jesus?