

Lesson 175

TEXT Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that the Lord expects fruit from our lives. Though He may postpone judgment, the time will come when those who do not bear fruit will be eternally punished.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. — Luke 13:9

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. — John 15:2

**ANSWER
TITLE: One More Chance**
**SEARCH
TITLE: The Fig Tree**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The fig tree is very common in the land of Israel and is mentioned in Deuteronomy as being among the blessings the Children of Israel would find in the land of Canaan. To sit under one's own vine and fig tree was an expression among the Jews to denote peace and prosperity. See 1 Kings 4:25.

On various occasions, Christ used the fig tree as a symbol of the Jewish nation. One commentator explains this parable in the following manner. The certain man is God, the fig tree is the Jewish church, and the vineyard is the land of Judea. God sought fruit, indicating that He expected the Jewish church to show forth the fruit of right-

eousness. The vinedresser is Jesus and the three years are the years of Jesus' ministry. The phrase, "Cut it down," suggests that God would permit the Romans to come in and destroy the nation. The vinedresser, Jesus, said, "Let it alone." He would give it further care and then if it bore no fruit, it could be cut down. Sad to say, there was little response to Jesus' efforts and the nation was cut down by the Roman army in 70 A.D.

In many other places in Scripture we are admonished to bring forth fruit. We should be sure we do not pass over this parable and fail to perceive a warning in it for us.

YOUR OPENER

The Fig Tree

TEXT: Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8

KEY VERSE: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. — John 15:2

RESPONSES

1. As your students discuss this parable, the point should be made that in our lives, too, God is looking for fruit—evidences of the graces of true Christianity. If this does not transpire, the Lord may extend mercy for a time because of the intervention of our advocate, Jesus. But in the end, we will be eternally doomed for our continued failure to show the evidences of a fruitful Christian life.

2. Verse 8 tells us that He asked that He might have one more year to dig about the fig tree and fertilize it. Christ did not ask God to excuse the fruitlessness, but He did ask God to allow Him to work with the tree that it might become fruitful. Ask your students to give some ways in which God patiently deals with individuals, trying to bring them to a realization of their need to bear fruit.

3. Your students will no doubt bring out that he had the right because he was the owner of the fig tree. He had purchased the tree and placed it in his vineyard. In the same sense, God has the right to expect the Christian to bear spiritual fruit. He would not expect those of the world to bring forth fruit for Him. The price has been paid, but until the sinner accepts the payment made for him he is not planted in God's vineyard.

Jesus often used trees, gardens, vines, branches, and fruit to teach lessons of truth. A Christian life is like a tree—not just a tree with leaves, but a tree that bears good fruit. As in the natural, fruit is the product of plant growth, so it is only by spiritual growth that man bears fruit unto the Lord. Without growth, one becomes fruitless, resulting in eternal punishment. However, as one walks in the commandments of God, he is able to bear the fruit expected of him.

1. On various occasions, Christ used the fig tree as a symbol of the Jewish nation. This parable illustrated the patience of God with Jerusalem, whose day of doom was approaching because of their failure to show forth the fruit of righteousness. However, there is also a warning in it for individuals. Explain how you feel this parable applies to us.

2. What did the dresser of the vineyard do to try to improve the fig tree's production?

3. Why did the owner of the vineyard have the right to expect fruit?

13

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Looking at our text in John 15, how are we to bring forth fruit? Explain.

5. What does God do to the fruit-bearing branches? How much fruit must we bear?

6. God cares for every branch. Each has the same nurturing and opportunity to bear good fruit. Each receives the "sunshine and rain" of God's love. What happens to the branch that does not bear fruit?

7. What fruit does God expect to see in a life? Give a specific example of how each one is a spiritual benefit.

8. If one discovers he is not bearing as much fruit as he should, what do you think he should do to improve?

4. We are to bring forth fruit by abiding in the Vine. Ask your students to discuss the phrase, "Abide in me." They should note the fact that the branches draw their strength from the Vine. Ask them to bring out specific ways we can "abide" in Christ and be productive Christians. They may bring out that this can be done through the study of God's Word, through prayer, personal consecration, and seeking the Lord's will in every aspect of life. We should recognize that "abiding" is not a passive state— it requires determined effort and persistence in order to be maintained.

5. God purges the fruit-bearing branches. We must bear "fruit," "more fruit," and "much fruit." Ask the students why they think God purges the fruit-bearing branches. Draw a parallel between God's purging and the orchardist's pruning the trees in his orchard. Often a branch is pruned so that another branch might gain strength. A tree growing without pruning is soon misshapen. Untended, a tree grows too dense to allow the sunlight to enter into the midst of it. Over a period of time, the fruit then becomes smaller and less desirable. In the same manner, a Christian cannot thrive without God's care and attention.

6. It is cast forth and is withered and burned. Help the students recognize that one who has been saved but does not continue to bear spiritual fruit will be lost. His final end will be a lost eternity in hellfire unless he repents of his backsliding.

7. Using the students' answers, list several spiritual fruits. You may wish to refer to Galatians 5:22-23. Discuss with the class members the need to bear all these as they should. Point out that the fruit of the Spirit is for everyone who is saved, and that God desires all to have the full benefit of them.

8. Your students' responses to this question should provide a good summary to the lesson. Ask your students what role they have in improving their spiritual productivity. They should see the necessity of asking the Lord to make them more willing to accept the pruning and cultivation He does in their lives. Refer to Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:11.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

How can we know if we are fruit-bearing Christians or not?

Who is represented by the "certain man"? Who is represented by the "dresser of his vineyard"? What does the "fig tree" represent?

What does Luke 13:8-9 indicate about God's mercy and judgment?

Compare each of these gardening duties with the spiritual care needed to produce spiritual fruit: planting good seed, preparing the ground, fertilizing the soil, watering and hoeing, weeding and cultivating.

What does Galatians 5:22-23 tell us is the expected fruit of a good Christian life?

In our ANSWER story, why did Gene's plans for a great strawberry crop fail? Why did he decide to give it a second chance? Compare Gene's strawberry plants to a Christian's life, noting the care and attention needed for both.

THINGS TO DO

Bring to class a houseplant that doesn't appear to be thriving. Mention that it is supposed to be a blooming plant, but that it does not have blossoms. Tell how you have fertilized it, watered it, moved it about, etc., but to no avail. Discuss with the class what they think you should do with it next.

Bring a plant to class and have a lesson on pruning. Explain the purpose, and why it is beneficial.

Show your students a simple drawing you have made. Point out why you are not pleased with it. Conclude by destroying the drawing. Bring out that because you made it, you have the right to frame it and display it if you

wish. But you also have the right to destroy it if you are not pleased with it. God created us, and if He is not pleased with us, He has the right and the power to condemn us to eternal death.

Bring a diary to class. Ask your students to consider this thought: If Christ were to read through a daily record of the events of their lives, would He find evidence of spiritual fruit in their everyday actions?

Answers for ANSWER

What Do Others See?

If we have fruit in our lives others will see and know what Jesus has done for us. To find out what some of this fruit is you will need to cross out any squares in the tree where the math problem does not equal nine. Then write the letters from the squares that do equal nine on the lines at the bottom of the page.

3×3	10-1	8+7	11-2	15-6	8×8
THE	FRU	REN	ITO	ETH	MOS
6+3	27÷3	14+2	2+7	8+2	16-7
ERI	GHT	JUN	EOU	REK	SIS
8+5	3+6	14-5	5×7	5+4	9-8
UX	ATR	EEO	IX	FLI	SUN
18÷2	7+2	1+8	6+8	13-4	1+8
FEA	NEV	NDH	ALH	ETH	ATW
9-8	17-8	3×6	5+4	8-7	3×3
WEN	INN	AT	ETH	NEB	SOU
7-6	18-9	10-1	8+7	14-8	18÷2
MEH	LSI	SWI	ESC	EBW	SE

Scratch Paper

THE FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUS
IS A TREE OF LIFE: AND HE
THAT WINNETH SOULS IS WISE.