Lesson 12
May 17, 2020

**Practice Justice**

**Lesson Scripture:** Jeremiah 21

**Focus Scripture:** Jeremiah 21:8-14

Key Verse: *I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, says the Lord.* Jeremiah 21:14a

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**Jeremiah 21:8-14 (NRSV)**

8 And to this people you shall say: Thus says the Lord: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.

9 Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out and surrender to the Chaldeans who arebesieging you shall live and shall have their lives as a prize of war.

10 For I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good, says the Lord: it shall be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

11 To the house of the king of Judah say: Hear the word of the Lord,

12 O house of David! Thus says the Lord: Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn, with no one to quench it, because of your evil doings.

13 See, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley, O rock of the plain, says the Lord; you who say, “Who can come down against us, or who can enter our places of refuge?”

14 I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, says the Lord; I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all that is around it.
VOCABULARY

- **Pestilence** – A fatal epidemic disease, something that is destructive.
- **Besieged** – To be harassed or surrounded.
- **Speculative** – Based on guesses rather than the facts.

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**

**INTRODUCTION**

*Enough is Enough!* is an idiom that means stopping something because it is no longer acceptable or tolerated. Many of us can remember a time when we had enough of a particular behavior, enough of a particular challenge, or even enough of a relationship, situation, or attitude. This is what Leslie was feeling when she and her childhood friend, Amber, finally came to an impasse. Amber had always been judgmental, mean spirited, and rude at the most inappropriate times. Who would befriend a person like her?

When the girls were in kindergarten, Leslie was painfully shy and had a visible birthmark that the other kids would tease her about constantly. Amber didn’t like people who
bullied others and immediately jumped to her defense. After a few times of defending Leslie from bullies, Amber and Leslie were inseparable. As they grew, Leslie learned how to cover her birthmark and also began standing up for herself. Amber, however, got more blatant with her negative behaviors.

After many conversations and interventions, Leslie warned Amber that she could no longer tolerate her behavior and she really needed to change or get some help for it. After many conversations like that one, and an obvious change in her behavior, the girls went to a school party together. Shortly after arriving, someone made a comment that set Amber off and her behavior escalated to an all-time high. Completely outdone, Leslie finally yelled, “Amber, enough is enough!!” After a long and heated conversation, Leslie left, unfriended her on all her social media sites, blocked Amber’s number, and refused to associate with her again.

**Activity #1: Death of a Relationship.** Reflect and discuss a time when you had to deal with the end of a relationship. Name the emotions that you experienced. How did it make you feel?

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**THE BIBLE STORY**

The Babylonians were attacking the Israelites in their city and it wasn’t going well. King Zedekiah sent messengers to Jeremiah to ask God to intervene and help them. The
tone of their asking seemed entitled and without humility. The answer was not at all what they expected. God told Jeremiah to let them know that not only was he not going to intervene, God was going to join in with the Babylonians to destroy the city. God was so angry with the Israelites for their injustice and unrighteousness towards the oppressed, that God’s wrath burned mightily against them.

Even though God sent word that their city would be completely destroyed, God did not leave the Israelites without a glimmer of hope. God told them that everything and everyone within the city would be killed by the sword or plague, and everything burned down. However, if they left the city and surrendered to the Babylonians, they would live.

**Activity #2: It Just Ain’t Right!** View the trailer from the movie, “The Hate You Give” ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MM8OkVT0hw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MM8OkVT0hw)). Discuss the evil and the injustices that continue to exist which are outlined in this trailer. Create a response that is pleasing to God.

**LIFE APPLICATION**

Being black or brown in America comes with its challenges. The lines of justice are always moving, and we continue to struggle to keep up with those moves. As a result, the rate of black and brown persons arrested, killed, profiled, victimized, and oppressed is disproportionately higher than that of other races. Parents struggle every time youth are out of their sight, praying that the lessons they were taught will serve them
well in times of trouble.

There is a direct correlation between being obedient to God and justice. Even though from time to time oppression weighs in heavier with people of color than others, it is still our responsibility to consciously make a difference in the lives of others who are oppressed. Our duty to God in this manner is not a seasonal proposition. It is an everyday act of righteousness for our brothers and sisters in need of liberation.

Our job is to love and do the right thing. However, not all youth feel the same way. When we go against what God has asked us to do on a regular basis, it is time to take a good look at who we are. Continuous bad behavior produces bad fruit—meaning you cannot plant bad seeds and have good fruit spring up or vice versa. Our job, even in the face of oppression, is to still sow good seed.

Activity #3: Strange Fruit. When God said that we could produce good fruit, what does that mean? Discuss the difference between good and bad fruit. Find ways to produce more “good fruit.”

SUMMARY

Enough is enough! We see it in this lesson where God has had enough of the people of Israel’s behavior and arrogant assumption about God’s constant protection. The Israelites have forgotten about the plight they suffered not too long before in Egypt, but remember God using Moses to end their oppression. Fast forward to their present predicament. They are the ones dismissing the oppressive behaviors and
injustices against people, thinking that God is a safety net. Well, what a hard lesson to learn: planting bad seed produces bad fruit. The one thing God will not accept is bad fruit. Pray for insight to resist injustice.

Before a person acts unjustly, speaks unfavorably, refuses to help and remains in an entitled position, that person should be sure to remember that in a short time to come, that person may be in a position where he or she will need an intervention. Having a consciousness of helping those who are oppressed around you will allow you to continuously bud good fruit. God would rather help someone who helps others, rather than destroy others for their lack of compassion.

**Activity #4: Stand for Righteousness.** Discuss abuse (physical and verbal) and its effects on God’s creatures and creation.

**CLOSING DEVOTION**

God, we stand before you, an army of youth looking to be soldiers in the army against social injustice and oppression. We are eager to make a DIFFERENCE; however, we need you for insight and encouragement. Bless us now, in Jesus’ name we pray. AMEN!