

Discussion Guide

Use this guide by yourself, with a friend, or in a group to help you pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus this week!

Open

This week Pastor Don starts a new series that takes a look at the parables Jesus used in His teaching. Simply defined, a parable is a short story that illustrates a point or lesson, and parables were one of Jesus' preferred teaching tools. In today's sermon, the focus is on Luke 13:6-9 where Jesus uses the illustration of a fig tree to help us understand both God's mercy and his eventual judgment. To begin your group's discussion, let everyone tell about a situation where someone (a parent, boss, spouse, teacher, etc.) gave them grace after they messed up...

BIG THOUGHT

In Jesus' parable of the fig tree we learn that God patiently offers us encouragement and grace to respond to Him. But we also learn that we will be held accountable for our choice.

Dig

1. It's important to see that Jesus tells his listeners the parable of the fig tree after referencing local tragedies. Read Luke 13:1-4. What current events had Jesus heard about? And what interpretation of the tragedy does He flat out reject? Have you ever felt or believed that bad things happen to people primarily because they somehow deserve it? Or do you know someone who believes this way? Explain.
2. Now look at those verses again - on what is Jesus wanting his listeners to focus (v. 3, v. 5)? What connects the issue of those tragedies and what Jesus ultimately reminds his listeners of (hint: it's one of the two certainties of life!)?

3. Read v. 6. What word at the beginning of the verse lets us know Jesus is connecting His parable to the earlier stories? A freshly planted fig tree may take as many as two or more years to bear fruit (which Jesus' listeners would have known) - so is Jesus saying the owner is too eager since he keeps checking on it? Excited? Unreasonable? Something else?
4. How long does v. 7 say the owner eventually waits before he makes the decision to cut down the tree? What does this imply about his level of patience? And do you think Jesus could have intentionally used this number of years since it would approximate the number of years of His own earthly ministry? Why or why not?
5. Now read v. 8-9. What is the gardener going to do to help the tree bear fruit (and survive)? Who do you think the gardener represents? Ultimately what determines whether the tree will survive or not? What is the parable saying about our responsibility to respond to the "second chances" God gives us?

Take it Further

Talk with God, and thank Him for His gracious patience. If you've never turned to Him in repentance to begin a relationship with Him, do it now and don't wait! And if you're already in a relationship with Him, ask Him to help you bear more fruit...

Daily Readings

- Day 1: Psalm 86:15
- Day 2: Isaiah 48:9
- Day 3: John 3:16-17

- Day 4: Psalm 78:38
- Day 5: Exodus 34:6
- Day 6: 2 Peter 3:9

Memory Verse: John 3:17



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