



HEAVEN'S KITCHEN

5 LESSONS ON THE PARABLES OF JESUS
BY DIENNA GOSCHA

prep time

cooking up
God's word

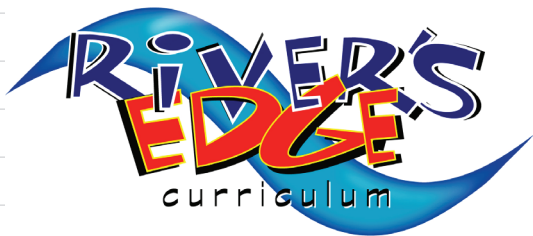
time to eat

dinner party

notes

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Each Lesson Contains:

Prep Time- A story, question or activity to get your mind ready to learn.

Cooking Up God's Word- We are going to read His word and let it simmer awhile. Dig into Scripture and let it speak to you. This part can be completed in one setting or divide it up to last the week.

Time to Eat: You have learned what His word has to say. Now, what are you going to do with it? Each lesson ends with an action point. The action point will be written on a "recipe card." Place the card somewhere you can see each day to remind you of the choice you made.

Dinner Party: These are fun activities and recipes that go with the lesson. If you are doing the study as a group, make one of the recipes to enjoy together. Maybe have a craft time at the end of your study. If you are doing it individually, invite a friend over to enjoy the recipe and share what you are learning. Or make it for your family and let them know what God is teaching you.

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LESSON ONE GROWING THE INGREDIENTS

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PREP TIME

prep time

When I was growing up, my family had a hobby farm in Tennessee in what was referred to as “Pardon’s Hollow.” Every weekend during the school year and all summer long, our family could be found hanging out in this place nestled between two hills with a bubbling creek flowing through it. Most days you could find me sitting on a bridge with my feet dangling off the edge over the creek water below dreaming of my future. That was the part I loved.

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But there was a part I did not love so much. The garden. (Sinister music plays...) A huge garden. A garden full of green growing things that I did not like to eat. And yet I was required to work in it. In the hot sun. Sweating. Worrying that a snake lurked behind every cabbage leaf or corn stalk ready to devour me alive. The only place worse than the garden was the blackberry patch where chiggers and poisonous snakes hung out just for fun. Really. We even had to wear our snake boots when venturing into the thorny, scary patch of blackberriness. We wore long sleeves and long pants even in the baking heat and humidity to protect us from the thorns and the biting insects. It was intense. It was miserable to a junior high girl who did not enjoy blackberries and would rather be on the phone. I am pretty sure I was a royal pain to deal with during those gardening afternoons and blackberry picking jaunts.

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I also remember the hillside scattered with small rocks. I once offered to pick up the rocks at 25 cents a head. Dad did not take me up on it. I thought it would be a good deal for both of

us. Apparently he did not. He just let the cattle graze around the rocks and never planted hay or anything worthwhile on the rocky pastures. Meanwhile, paths would develop in the pastures and on the rocky hillsides as the cows were creatures of habit in their moving from one field to the next. The paths were never straight but rather meandered through the pasture with the earth firmly beaten down under the hooves, eliminating any chance of grass growth.

If you could describe your life, what would it resemble? Would it be the rocky hillside which had a hard time growing anything? Would it be the thorny black berry bush that had some good eats but was a pretty miserable place to be? Would it be a path beaten down with no chance of a living thing growing on it? Or would your life look like a well-cared for garden producing green wonderfulness?

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COOKING UP GOD'S WORD

This first lesson contains a parable about a sower, some seed and soil. Jesus often taught using parables, which are just stories that compare one thing to another to illustrate a spiritual truth.

Read Matthew 13:3-8.

What kinds of soil does Jesus talk about?

1.

2.

3.

4.

My family calls me the black thumb of the family. With good reason, too. Every year I get excited as summer looms ahead, buying plants, making beautiful arrangements and admiring the beauty I have created. However, it is not long before a day or two goes by and I have forgotten to water them. I go on vacation and forget about them. A multitude of things happen until, you guessed it, the plants are shriveled and brown. I try to revive them. But they never look quite the same again until finally in the heat of August I usually give up. I know those of you who love plants are gasping about now. Judge me if you must.

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However, even with my notorious black thumb, I know that good soil is going to grow the best plants. I know that weeds will overgrow a plant. I know that rocky ground is a problem for growing productive plants. And I know that planting seed on a footpath is not going to produce anything.

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To truly understand this parable, we need to look back at how planting was accomplished during biblical times. A sower would place seed in a leather sack that was slung around a shoulder. Then he would take handfuls of seed and scatter it on the ground. After he had finished sowing the seed, he would take a plow and scratch the surface of the ground just enough to cover the seed.

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The fields were not square enclosures. Instead, they covered large areas with no fence. The paths were woven through the fields as people traveled through. In the corners of the fields might be thistles. Rocky places were scattered about the fields. Within a sower's area, different types of ground could exist.

time to eat

Read Matthew 13:18-23.

Using Jesus' explanation of the parable, write the kind of soil that represents each phrase below.

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In one ear and out the other: _____

Abandoned when life gets hard: _____

notes

Too much stuff getting in the way: _____

Listens, understands and perseveres: _____

In one ear and out the other: seed falling on the path

How many times do we hear something but do not really listen to what is being said? Or if we do listen, we choose not to let what we heard make a difference in our lives? We might nod and think that is a good idea but never put the good idea to use. I can hear someone say that French fries are bad for me and I can nod in agreement but until I cut back on the fries I eat or quit eating them all together, I have just let that knowledge go in one ear and out the other.

Do we do that with God's Word? Do we listen to what He has to say and then ignore it? Simply hearing His Word does not mean that we understand it or are embracing it.

Abandoned when life gets hard : rocky ground

This kind of ground could be summed up in two words: shallow commitment. We can embrace God's Word and believe in Him. We can start off being excited about our faith and the changes that we initially see taking place in our life. However, if we do not grow roots, it will be easy to abandon this new life once we hit some hard experiences.

How do we grow roots? We need to get into God's

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Word and study it. We need to apply it to our lives. We need to let Him transform our lives to be more like His. This means hard choices. This means not taking the easy way out. This means that we might have to suffer. However, the roots that grow will be worth it because they will hold us tight when life gets hard.

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Scripture is clear that we will go through hard times. The question is, how will we deal with those hard times?

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Read Acts 14:22, 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4.

How would "growing roots" help during tough times? Be specific. Think deeply about this-do not just give the good girl Christian answer. ---

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Too much stuff getting in the way: weeds

It is so easy to be distracted. We mean well. We really do. We mean to pay attention to Jesus. It's just that the new job, the family, financial security, the must-have vacations, the convertible, the cabin, the boat, the friends, the swimming pool, the skiing trip, the PTO, the night classes, the boyfriend, the computer, scrapbooking, reading, working out. Well, it is just too much. Too much stuff going on in our lives. Too much to do. And before we know it these things start coming before Jesus. He falls in rank. First to second place, then to third and

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on and on down the line until one day we do not even remember Him or recognize Him.

It starts so slowly. The desire for “whatever” starts to take hold of us. We become “me” focused instead of Jesus focused and the weeds start growing. The distractions take hold of us. Jesus must be first in our life. He should be involved in every part of our life. He is life. We have to be intentional about this. It does not just happen. We have to make choices every single day. Every time our feet hit the floor in the morning, we must make a decision that Jesus is who it is all about. Everything is about Him. If we do not make that choice, even the good things will get in the way of our relationship with Him.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17, 1 Peter 4:11.

Summarize what these verses are saying: _____

Listens, understands and perseveres: Good Soil

A strong faith does not happen overnight. A person who sticks to her faith is one who has persevered through both good times and bad. It is someone who hears the message of God’s Word and understands it. Who understands it and applies it. Whose life has been changed because of God’s Word.

We do not hear His Word to gain knowledge. We hear His Word to be transformed. To become

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more and more like Him. Listening without changing is useless.

Read John 8:31-32.

How does the truth set you free and lead to changed lives? _____

Abiding in His Word. Taking time with Him every day. Letting it sink in. Letting it grow deep down inside of us and change us. That is who I want to be. The woman who takes time with Jesus. Who lets Him transform her. Who allows Him to chisel away the stuff that is not needed.

Who do you want to be? _____

What do you need to do for your life to look like this? _____

When we go to the grocery store to buy the ingredients for the meal we are making, we do not usually stop to think about where this food comes from. However, if we were to consider the head of lettuce or the bag of apples in our hands, we might think of the farm they were grown on. And if we were to think even deeper about the produce, we might think about the kind of soil needed to grow that product. Only good soil will produce good food.

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Time to Eat

Before we can even start thinking about what it means to live a life that is Christ focused, we have to make sure that we are willing to cultivate the kind of soil where His word can take root. Are we really listening to His word? Are we willing to make tough choices based on what we hear?

What kind of soil do you think your spiritual life would represent? _____

Do you need to make changes to be more receptive to His Word? _____

Is there something in your life that you know Jesus has been talking to you about but you are not willing to listen? If so, what would it mean if you had the courage to really listen to Him?

Do you need to commit to spending more time in His Word? What things in life get in the way of you doing so? What could you do to put those things in the right perspective? _____

Decide on one action item to keep you focused on listening, understanding and persevering with His Word. Write it on the recipe cards and place one somewhere you will see each day.

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Dinner Party

Fun Drinks

Each of the drinks use mint, a plant that needs good soil to grow. Buy some fresh mint at the grocery store, or better yet, grow some in a little pot in your kitchen, on your deck or in your garden.

Grape Lime Sparkler

Ingredients:

6-8 small mint leaves

1 lime wedge

purple grape juice

ginger ale (Diet tastes great with this.)

Place mint leaves on the bottom of the glass

(Use a mason jar!).

Squeeze juice from the lime wedge over the mint leaves. Fill with ice cubes. Pour grape juice over halfway to the top. Top off with ginger ale.

Garnish with the lime wedge.

Mint Iced Tea

Ingredients:

1 qt boiling water

4 tea bags

1 c fresh mint

¼ c sugar

lime wedge

Place the tea bags in the water along with the sugar and fresh mint. Let set (steep) for 15 minutes. Take out the tea bags and strain the mint. Allow to cool.

Fill glasses with ice and pour tea mixture over the ice. Garnish with lime wedge and mint leaf.

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Watermelon Lime Water

Ingredients:

Watermelon cut into chunks

1 Tbsp sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ c Water

Mint leaves

Fill the blender $\frac{3}{4}$ full of watermelon chunks.

Pour in sugar and water and blend well. Pour through a sieve to collect juice.

Fill glass with ice and pour juice into glass.

Garnish with mint leaves.

Herb Planter

Supplies: mason jars, empty pop bottles, cleaned out cans, blackboard paint, sponge brush, chalk, herb or herb seeds, potting soil (Get a kind that drains well)

If using the pop bottles, cut off the tops.

Paint the jars, bottles or cans with blackboard paint. Allow to dry and coat a second time.

Fill half way with potting soil and place the herb plant inside (or fill all the way if planting seeds.) Water. With the chalk, write the name of the plant on the outside.

Be creative with containers. Reuse old containers and give them a brand new look and style with the blackboard paint.

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LESSON TWO THE SECRET INGREDIENT

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PREP TIME

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Grandma Darbro was an amazing gardener. Her flowers overflowed from various kinds of odd containers including an old blue horse trough. Her vegetable garden was beautiful, especially her tomatoes which she grew in a multitude of colors and forms. Rumor had it that in the days of the depression and the aftermath she kept a family that was homeless, living in a tent, alive by bringing the family bags of her tomatoes.

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While she was outstanding in every way when it came to gardening, cooking was an entirely different matter. It was edible. Usually. But it never really stacked up to her gardening skill. You just never knew. She made divinity that was heavenly. But then she would sneak goat meat into the meatloaf. Mind you, I realize some of you may like goat meat. However, petting the goat at a previous visit changes your perspective. You get my drift? Her chili was usually swimming in grease and squash pie wasn't my favorite. However, the one thing that was never hit or miss at Grandma's house was her rolls. She called them icebox rolls. And they were to die for. The best yeast rolls I've ever had in my life.

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One year for Christmas she gave me a whole pile of recipes written on cute yellow cards. Included was the recipe for Ice Box Rolls. (To truly get this right you needed to have pronounced "recipe" as receipt.) I was over the moon with excitement when years later, after Grandma went to heaven, I discovered the cards where I had packed them away for when "I grew up." However, I was a complete failure at making the beloved ice box rolls. They never rose. They were

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flat and hard as a rock. (Ok, I'd like to add that I'm a fairly good cook.) What in the world? Had Grandma left out an ingredient? Put the wrong instructions? What went wrong? Maybe yeast rolls weren't my thing. Today, I buy those frozen rolls that taste like you slaved all day to make them.

What makes the rolls raise? Yeast. The secret ingredient. You can't see it but if you forget it, you'll know right away because it is secretly working. It's the ingredient that makes all the difference.

What makes all the difference in your life? What is the most important ingredient? What is it that you have a hard time having a good day without?

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COOKING UP GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 13:33.

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Since this parable is so short, write it out above. Circle what the parable is about. Place a box around what the kingdom of heaven is compared. Underline what action the woman took. Finally, draw a starburst around the result. (Using colored pencils or pens makes this even more fun!)

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Depending on the version you are reading, the word "leaven" or "yeast" is what the kingdom of heaven is compared. When we think of yeast, we probably think of the little packets that come in threes from the grocery store. Or if you bake much you might have a jar of it in your pantry. However, when this parable was taught, women would save back a piece of dough and then use it the next day to raise the new bread. It was mixed in (or hidden), depending again on your version, into the dough. If you have ever made sourdough from a starter or the Amish Friendship bread, you have an idea how this works.

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Throughout Scripture leaven is usually used to illustrate a corrupting force. However, here it is compared to the kingdom of heaven with a positive result. Directly before this parable is a similar parable.

Read Matthew 13:31-32. Here the Kingdom of God is referred to as a _____. It starts small and grows _____. The same concept is repeated in the parable of the leaven.

It only takes a small bit of dough (leavening agent) to work its way into the entire dough resulting in the whole batch rising.

Read Galatians 5:9.

In this parable the amount of flour the woman used is approximately fifty pounds. This would be enough to serve over one hundred people. Obviously one woman could not manage to knead this much, which illustrates the supernatural work taking place. The small piece of fermented dough would be hidden once it was worked in. No one would know it was present. However, as it spread throughout the rest of the dough, it would become evident as the size of the dough would grow.

If you mix up bread dough without putting in the yeast, it will remain just a lump of dough. Without the power of the yeast it will not grow. Yeast is called "active" for good reason.

Once upon a time my husband was teaching the student ministry at our church. He was trying to be creative in working his way through

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Exodus with them. During the teaching of the ten plagues, he made homemade root beer and placed red dye in it to represent blood. Part of making homemade root beer is placing yeast in it to create the bubbles. He got confused with the whole teaspoon and tablespoon idea and instead of putting 6 teaspoons, 6 tablespoons were added. A few days later I came upon the bottle and noticed that it was bulging. I was afraid it would explode so I took it to the sink to open the cap just a bit to relieve the pressure. That is the last thing I remembered until I found myself across the room from the opened bottle with red root beer covering my kitchen in every conceivable space. It was a mess. The power of yeast was not lost to me especially as I cleaned all the red drops off my 10 foot ceiling. Needless to say my husband was banned from making root beer.

We can look at this parable from two views. One view is that the body of Christ (those who follow Jesus) is the leaven in the world. Through their influence the kingdom of God will grow.

The other view is a more personal one. To put it simply, just a bit grows into a lot. When we make the decision to follow Jesus, this decision starts off small but grows into something larger as we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Where does the power to transform us come from? _____

It is through His Spirit and the power of that "leavening" that changes our lives. When God's _____

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kingdom is inside us, placed there by the Holy Spirit, it has the power to change us from the inside out. Our texture will change. Our volume will change. We will become something so much greater than we thought we could ever be. We can be a part of a transformation of the world. We can be the leavening agent wherever God has placed us. However, to do so, we must allow the Holy Spirit to permeate our hearts and our life. We must spend time in His Word. We must be open to what the Holy Spirit is teaching us. We must be willing to obey the Holy Spirit. As we allow Him to work in us, the small bit of faith planted in us will grow into something larger and more influential .

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Time to Eat

What kind of leaven are you? The kind that is a positive influence such as the parable describes or the kind that is a corrupting force?

Have you seen the “leaven” in your life (in other words, for those of you who have put your faith in Jesus Christ- that faith) grow? If not, why do you think that is the case?

How can you be an influence for Jesus in the community where God has placed you? Don't give the good girl Christian answer. Give a real, authentic answer.

Do you think much about how you are furthering the Kingdom of God? Why or why not? Would you like to change that?

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Action point for today's lesson: What do you need to do in your life to be more of an influence to those around you? Example: be more open about your faith, more serious prayer time so Holy Spirit can work in you, hang out with non-Christians more (if any of you are balking- this is what Jesus did!!), spending quality time in God's Word soaking it in.

Write the action point on both recipe cards.
Place one where you can see it to remind you.

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Dinner Party

Today's recipes are a bit more involved. Just think of them like yeast that takes its time to work.

Amish Friendship Bread Recipe

Create your own fermented dough (called the starter) using this recipe. Then pass it onto friends who would like to make the bread.

Amish Friendship Bread Starter

Do not use any metal utensils or containers! It is very important to use plastic or wooden utensils and plastic or glass containers when making this. Mason jars work great to store the starter.

Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. active dry yeast
- 1/4 cup warm water (110° F)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup warm milk (110° F)

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in warm water for about 10 minutes. Stir well.
2. In a 2 quart glass or plastic container, combine 1 cup sifted flour and 1 cup sugar. Mix thoroughly or the flour will get lumpy when you add the milk.
3. Slowly stir in warm milk and dissolved yeast mixture. Loosely cover the mixture with a lid or plastic wrap. The mixture will get bubbly. Consider this Day 1 of the cycle, or the day you receive the starter.

For the next 10 days handle starter according to the instructions below for Amish Friendship Bread.

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Day 1 - Receive the starter.

Day 2 - Stir.

Day 3 - Stir.

Day 4 - Stir.

Day 5 - Add 1 cup each flour, sugar and milk.

Day 6 - Stir.

Day 7 - Stir.

Day 8 - Stir.

Day 9 - Stir.

Day 10 - Add 1 cup flour, 1 cup sugar and 1 cup milk.

Divide into 4 containers, with 1 cup each for three of your friends and 1 cup for your own loaves. Give friends the instructions for Day 1 through Day 10 and the following recipe for baking the bread.

After removing the 3 cups of batter, combine the] remaining cup of Amish Friendship Bread starter with the following ingredients in a large bowl:

2/3 cup oil

3 eggs

1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. vanilla

1 to 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1 cup sugar

2 cups flour

1 1/4 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. baking soda

Using a fork, beat by hand until well blended. You can add 1 cup raisins and 1 cup nuts (optional).

Grease two loaf pans with butter, sprinkle with sugar instead of flour.

Bake at 325° F for 45 minutes to 1 hour (Individual oven temperatures vary). Cool 10 minutes, remove from pans. Makes two loaves of Amish Friendship Bread.

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Caramel Pecan Round Coffee Cake

Batter

Cooking Spray

1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour

2 envelopes Yeast

2 tablespoons sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup very warm water (120°F to 130°F)

2 tablespoons butter, melted

Cinnamon Sugar Topping

1/4 cup sugar

1 teaspoon Cinnamon

Caramel Pecan Topping

1/3 cup Karo® Dark Corn Syrup

1/3 cup brown sugar

2 tablespoons butter, melted

1/2 cup chopped pecans

Spray 9 1/2inch deep dish pie pan. Mix batter ingredients in the pan.

Combine cinnamon sugar topping in a bowl and set aside.

Mix caramel pecan topping ingredients together in a separate bowl. Be sure to mix well.

Top the batter with the cinnamon sugar mixture. Then spoon the caramel pecan topping evenly over it.

Do not preheat oven. Place pan in the oven and turn to 350° F. Bake 25 minutes, until lightly browned and firm in the center. Cool slightly, serving warm.

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Bread in a Mason Jar

2 cups white wheat flour
1 Tbs. yeast
1 cup warm water (115° - 120° F)
¼ cup sugar (or honey)
1 tsp. salt
2 Tbs.melted shortening

Dissolve the sugar in warm water and then stir in yeast. Allow to sit until yeast looks like creamy foam. Mix salt and shortening into the yeast.

Mix in flour one cup at a time.

Knead dough until smooth.

Lightly oil the dough and cover with a damp cloth.

Allow to rise until doubled in size (about 1 hour).

Punch dough down.

Knead a few minutes. Place into 4 wide mouth, pint size greased mason jars. (Can also be placed in a loaf pan)

Let them rise and then bake 30 min in 400° F oven.

These can be sealed for later use by placing a lid and ring on the jar immediately after it has baked. As it cools, the lid will seal the jar and keep the bread fresh for weeks.

Mason Jar Gift

Think of someone that you need to encourage.

Place candy, cookies or even bake the bread in the recipe above in a mason jar. Screw on the lid. Tie a pretty ribbon, twine or raffia around the lid.

Attach a note to the ribbon or twine.

Added fun: Use an old typewriter to type the note on a vintage looking tag.

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HEAVEN'S KITCHEN

LESSON THREE
BE TASTY

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PREP TIME

When I was around 10 years old, my parents hired a babysitter for the day, a girl down the street who was in college. This babysitter adored my younger sister who was six years old. She did not adore me. It got tiresome as she thought everything my sister did was cute and she literally ignored me except when she wanted something. The final straw came when she took my bag of M&M's and ate them. I told her they were mine. MINE. But she ignored me and ate them anyway. Now you have to understand. Bags of M&M's were hard to come by in our home. We never got a candy bar or special treat like that for ourselves. In fact whenever a candy bar would somehow come into our existence, my sister and I would have to share it. My mom, ever the fair arbitrator of justice and equality of all things, would activate the one cut and one pick rule. In other words, one of us would cut the candy bar in half and the other would pick. Out would come the ruler to make sure that the candy bar was cut exactly in half. This was before I learned the whole concept of putting others before myself- I loved Jesus but hadn't really caught onto the whole "be like Him deal."

Back to the M&M's. I was seething. The nerve. My M&M's going down this mean babysitter's throat and her haughtiness over devouring them did me in. It was revenge time. We were outside playing and she told me to go inside and get her a glass of water. (You think I'm going to tell you that I spit in it. I wasn't that mean!) So I filled up a glass with water and poured a spoonful of salt in it and stirred. I can still remember the feeling of exhilaration at the

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thought of her coughing and sputtering when the salt water hit her throat.

She took the glass and after one swallow looked at me and said, "Did you put salt in this?" I laughed. She just gave it back to me and told me to get her a new glass of water. I learned revenge is not sweet. In fact, it was overrated. I hardly got a reaction out of her. Talk about disappointment.

When I was looking for something to torment my babysitter with, salt was the most obvious choice. I knew that salt was something she wouldn't see but something that would make a huge difference in the taste of the water. Salt seems so ordinary and yet it has the ability to change everything. Just think about eating a bowl of chips and salsa. Chips with salt or chips without salt. Popcorn with or without salt. Saltine crackers with or without salt. (Which always made me wonder, why do you still call them Saltines when they are unsalted?)

When you think of salt, what comes to your mind? List as many emotions or word pictures as you can below:

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COOKING UP GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 5:13. Write the parable below.

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In this parable, Jesus is talking to His disciples, those who have chosen to follow Him. If you have made that same decision then this parable is written for you, too.

What are we to be? _____

time to eat

When we think of salt today, we might picture a salt shaker on the dinner table. We think of it as basically seasoning. However, to truly understand this parable we need to get a first century AD Jewish view of salt.

In the Jewish culture, salt had many different uses. Some are the same as today, many are different.

dinner party

How salt is viewed today and was viewed in the ancient world:

- Salt is a necessity of life.
- Salt is a primary seasoning.
- Salt has an unimpressive appearance.

notes

Some ways the ancient world viewed salt :

-Salt was scarce and precious.

Soldiers were actually paid partially with salt.

This was called their “salarium” which is where we get the word “salary.” It is hard for us to fathom this since salt is one of the cheapest products we can buy in the grocery store today.

-Salt was a primary preservative.

Before the days of refrigeration, salt was used to keep meat from rotting and decaying. The Jewish people had a process known as kashering (which would make food kosher) in which they would process meat by soaking it in water first and then soaking it in salt. This process would preserve the meat.

-Salt was used for healing and cleansing.

Newborn babies were washed in salt to cleanse their bodies and firm their skin. Also, salt in a wound can cleanse the area and lead to healing (although it hurts like crazy!).

-Salt was added to offerings.

This was called the covenant of salt and symbolized the everlasting covenant between God and man.

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Read Leviticus 2:13 and Numbers 18:19 .

prep time

The last part of the parable talks about what happened to salt when it lost its saltiness. It was actually possible in that day for the salt to lose its flavor. Salt was mined from salt cliffs along the Dead Sea or evaporated from the waters of the Dead Sea. It was then mixed with mineral or vegetable matter. If the substance was exposed to the elements it would lose its taste.

cooking up
God's word

When this happened, it was thrown onto footpaths. Basically it became like gravel today. So literally it was trampled under people's feet.

time to eat

Now that we understand the role of salt in the ancient world, how are we to fulfill Jesus' teaching that we are to be the salt of the world?

As a preservative, we should preserve the world by counteracting the corruption and destruction in the world. We should be a good influence bringing Jesus' love to others. As a seasoning, we should add something to every single situation or relationship such as love, peace, joy or comfort. Our enthusiasm should make life come alive for those around us. Even when bad things happen, we must continue to flavor situations with His love.

dinner party

As a healing agent, we should help mend wounds by being Jesus to a hurting world. So many people are hurting physically, emotionally and

notes

spiritually and yet when we withhold ourselves from them, we are refusing to be the salt of the world.

Write Psalm 34:8 below:

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God's word

One way for the world to “taste” is for Christ followers to be the salt of the world. As the world gets a “taste” of Jesus from our lives, they will come to understand who He is. I don’t know about you, but this makes me stop short. How many times have I left a bitter taste in someone’s mouth instead of a taste of Jesus? How many times have I failed to be the salt that makes people thirsty for Him?

time to eat

Write Colossians 4:6 below:

dinner party

The answer to our leaving a salty taste instead of a bitter taste is found in this verse. What does our conversation need to be seasoned with? _____ To do that it needs to be full of _____.

notes

Our conversations should impress people with Jesus. Grace does not deny that there is sin. It does not deny a problem. However, it shows that there is a remedy for the sin, for a problem. It shows the way to Jesus, not in judgment but in love. Every word out of our mouth should be rooted in love from Jesus. The only way that is going to happen is by spending time with Him. The more time we spend with Him, the more He fills us with His love, which in turn allows us to pour out that love on others.

Not long ago I was on Coronado Island in San Diego. As soon as I got out of my vehicle I could smell the salt in the air. I could almost taste it on my tongue. I sat on the beach, watching the waves splash the shore while a little wisp of salt floated through the air refreshing me. Shouldn't that be what we do for the world? Just enough salt to season the moment with Him. Just enough salt to be noticeable but not overwhelming. Just enough salt to draw attention to a thirst that is deep inside of every human. A thirst for Him.

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Time to Eat

When you look at the list of what salt is like, what stands out as something you are doing as the salt of the world?

Do you find that you struggle with any of these on the list?

What might change for the good in your world if you changed this from a struggle to something you consistently did?

Action point for the week: Think of one action you can take to be the salt of the world. Write it on the recipe cards and place one where you can see it each day. Ask God to help you to fulfill this goal. Rely on His Holy Spirit this week to lead you in knowing how to best work on the goal. You might be surprised at the situations He puts in front of you.

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Dinner Party

Salt and Garlic Bagels

Use stale bagels!

Ingredients:

- stale bagels
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- Sea salt to taste
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 325° F. Lightly grease a baking sheet with olive oil.

Slice bagels into 1/8 inch thick rounds. Arrange them in a single layer on the baking sheet. In a bowl, stir together the olive oil, garlic, Italian seasoning, and Parmesan cheese. Brush the flavored olive oil onto the bagel chips.

Sprinkle sea salt on the chips. Add pepper to taste.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until the chips are lightly browned. Remove from the oven and cool. The chips will become crispier as they cool.

Spicy Salt-Roasted Peanuts

Ingredients:

- 3 cups raw peanuts
- 3/8 cup light corn syrup
- 2 1/2 tbsp. light brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. Cajun seasoning
- 1 3/4 tsp. sea salt

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Preheat oven to 350°F. Meanwhile, mix peanuts, corn syrup and light brown sugar in a bowl making sure the peanuts are covered. Sprinkle the salt and spices over the peanuts and stir to dissolve the salt.

Spread the peanuts on the baking sheet and bake for 25-30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the nuts are browned and glazed.

Sprinkle just a bit more salt and spice over the peanuts. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Natural Spa Recipes

Have fun making natural spa products together or by yourself. Salt is a wonderful natural beauty product. It has astringent and antiseptic properties when used on the skin. It also works well for sloughing dead skin cells from the skin.

Refreshing Bath Soak

Supplies:

- 1 cup baking soda
- 1 cup Epsom salt
- 3 drops vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- Mason jar

Instructions: Mix the baking soda, cinnamon and salt in a bowl. Add vanilla and stir to avoid clumping. Once mixed thoroughly, place in a jar.

Soothing Bath Soak Recipe

If doing this in a group, have each member bring a different essential oil. Experiment with different combinations.

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Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons of Epsom salt
- 1 tablespoon of Sea salt
- 8 drops of essential oils of your choice
- 3 tablespoons of baking soda
- Small jar

Instructions: Mix all the ingredients in the jar. Shake to combine.

Strawberry Banana foot scrub

This foot scrub must be used immediately.

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 2 strawberries
- 3 tablespoons Epsom Salt
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (any oil can substitute.)

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Massage the mixture onto your feet for 3-5 minutes. Let set for another 5 minutes. Wash away and pat dry.

Homemade Salt Scrub Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 cups salt
- 1 cup olive or coconut oil
- Essential oil (optional)
- Mason jar

Mix the salt and oil together in the mason jar. A few drops of essential oil can be added. After a bath or shower, massage the salt scrub on the body beginning with the feet. Do not scrub on sensitive skin. After the body is covered, rinse with warm water. Keep left over scrub in refrigerator.

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HEAVEN'S KITCHEN

LESSON FOUR NOT ABOUT ME

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PREP TIME

prep time

Whenever I think about wheat, I have a picture of “amber waves of grain” swaying slightly in the breeze set against an azure blue sky. I suppose my thinking has been influenced by American patriotic songs sung in elementary school and pictures in magazines and television of the same scenario. My husband and I actually have our roots in two opposite corners of the wheat state, better known as Kansas. While I left as a baby, he grew up in a small town called Oberlin.

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God's word

A few years ago my husband, three boys and I took a trip to Colorado from our home in Minnesota. We took a detour and visited the town of Oberlin. What stuck out in my memory all these years later is leaving the local Pizza Hut and noticing that wheat was growing right next to the parking lot. It seemed surreal. Farms are for “out there.” To stand right beside a wheat field in a parking lot of Pizza Hut just seemed wrong. Odd. The town ended at the Pizza Hut and there was no buffer between it and the wheat field. Town. Wheat field. Continuous.

time to eat

My uncle was a wheat farmer in Kansas and I would occasionally visit his farm when I went to visit my grandparents but never got much further than the farmhouse. But as we drove the highways, I always loved the big sky hovering over the fields of wheat. It put me in a dreamy state of mind, one that conjured up stories of life as I hoped it would be.

dinner party

notes

The thing is whenever I think of wheat I think of life. Not death. I think of it growing. I think of farmers sweating under the hot Kansas sun. (Yes, I am aware that wheat is grown in other places than Kansas.) I think of the life giving effects of wheat in the form of nutrition. Wheat is known as the staff of life. (Well, bread actually is the staff of life but bread comes from wheat so I made the leap.)

What do you think about when you hear the word "wheat?"

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COOKING UP GOD'S WORD

Read John 12:24-26.

Write verse 24 below. Circle the two things that the grain of wheat must do. Place a box around the result of these things happening.

When I think about wheat, I rarely think about death. As I mentioned before, I focus on life or the life giving plant. Yet, the fact is that for wheat to reproduce, the grain must fall into the dirt and die. The outside of the seed will eventually disintegrate. However, the inside of the seed, if watered, will sprout and a new plant will grow from it. Life will erupt. And that life will lead to the production of more seeds. The plant will bear fruit.

When Jesus told this parable, he was referring to two different ideas. One was the death that He would be facing. He was the seed. He must die in order for us to live.

Read Luke 19:10 and write it below. Circle what Jesus came to do.

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Read 1 Peter 3:18 and write it below. Underline the word that refers to dying. Circle what the result of the death would bring.

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Jesus' mission on earth was to seek and to save the lost. In order for that mission to be accomplished, He had to die for our sins. He did not stay dead, however, but was resurrected, bringing us life.

cooking up
God's word

The other idea that is illustrated in the parable refers to us. We must also die in order for life to spring forth. That seems like a paradox. Die to live?

time to eat

Write John 12: 25 below.

dinner party

Love versus hate. Are we to really hate our lives? Didn't God create us to enjoy life and to honor life? Absolutely. What this verse is referring to is giving up our lives and sacrificing it all for God. It means coming to a place in our lives where we realize that it is not about us but all about God. It means wanting what He wants for our life more than what we want for our life. And we find that when we get to that place, we find life.

notes

If we think about our lives, we can probably think about something in which we sacrificed and by doing so we found a greater measure of joy and life. When I think about my children, I can relate to this concept. With my first child, I sacrificed sleep, money and freedom; however, in its place I

received something greater than I could even imagine. Nothing could have prepared me for how I would feel when I held that baby in my arms. Nothing. I could not have ever imagined the immense joy it brought me.

I have found the same thing true of giving up my dreams for God's dreams. What I think my life should look like is nothing compared to what He has given me as I have "died" to myself. And I still am learning this. There are still times when it is clear that I am paving my own path and I need to turn something over to Him. The moment that I give up my life and embrace what He has is the moment that new life is breathed into the situation. And then I want to hit myself in the head and say "Why didn't I do that sooner?"

The ultimate paradox. Die to live. It makes no sense. And yet it works. Every. Single. Time.

Read the following verses and journal your thoughts on them:

Matthew 10:39

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John 11:25

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Luke 14:26

(Remember our earlier discussion on what the word “hate” refers to.)

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Time to Eat

Imagine your life as a seed that must fall to the ground to really live. What part of your life might be hard to detach and let go?

What kind of emotions does the phrase “you must die to actually live” bring up inside of you?

If you were truly honest with yourself, do you feel that you have come to a point of giving up your hold on your life for God?

Giving up one's life for Jesus is a simple decision and yet it seems so hard to make that step. We want to hold our lives in a closed fist. We might be able to pry one finger open or two but to truly give our lives up, our hands need to be outstretched toward Him, saying “whatever

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you want.” Sit for a moment and think about that. Perhaps journal your thoughts. My prayer is that you will be able to come to that place.

Maybe you have never even asked Jesus into your life. You can do that now, too. Just simply tell Him that you believe He died for you. That you are sorry for the life of sin that you have lived and you want to turn that around. Tell Him that you want to live for Him. But don't use my words. Use yours. He knows your heart. Just share your heart. Remember He came for you. He came to seek and save those who were lost. That includes you.

Action point: Pick a verse from the study. Write it on the recipe cards. Spend the week memorizing the verse and allowing it to soak deep in you.

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Dinner Party

Try some healthy whole wheat recipes this week.

Honey Pumpkin Wheat Muffins

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup canned pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Spray a 12 cup muffin pan.

In a large bowl, stir together the whole wheat flour, brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Make a well in the center, and put in eggs, pumpkin, oil and honey. Mix just until the dry ingredients are absorbed. Stir in the walnuts. Spoon into muffin cups so they are about 2/3 full.

Bake for 18 minutes, or until the tops spring back when lightly touched. Cool in the pan.

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Banana Whole Wheat Muffins

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups whole wheat flour, preferably pastry flour

3/4 sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup mashed banana

1 egg, beaten

1/2 cup buttermilk.

1 cup crushed walnuts

1/4 cup melted butter

Preheat oven to 375°F and spray two 6-cup muffin tins or fill with liners. In a large bowl, mix together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, mix the melted butter, banana, egg and buttermilk. Fold wet mixture into dry mixture and stir until just combined.

Fill muffin tins. Sprinkle walnuts on top. Bake for about 25 to 30 minutes, or until muffins are turning golden brown on top.

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Craft

Wheat Centerpieces

Supplies: Mason jar, dried wheat stalks, ribbon

Tip: Dried wheat stalks can be purchased in the floral section of craft or discount stores.

Arrange a few stalks of wheat in the Mason jar (or glass vase.) Tie a ribbon around the top of the jar.

Wheat Weaving

This is a fun activity to do with your kids.

Supplies: three dried wheat stalks, water, twine or ribbon

Soak the wheat in water for an hour. Hold the three heads together and braid the stems of the wheat stalks. Curve the ends to make a circle or bend in the shape of a heart.

Tie with twine or ribbon. The stalks will hold their shape as they dry.

These can also be made at Christmas to decorate the tree.

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HEAVEN'S KITCHEN

LESSON FIVE FRUIT: TASTE TEST

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PREP TIME

prep time

When I was five years old, we moved from Virginia back to Alabama. My grandma came from Kansas to help my mom with my sister and me as Mom drove the car and Dad drove the moving truck. The day before we were to leave, I was playing outside and noticed that the tiny apple tree we had in the far corner of the large yard had apples on the ground around it. I ran over and lifted the hem of my dress to make a carrying spot and started gathering apples. So excited, I ran to the house entering in the back door that led to the kitchen. Mom and Grandma were there. I looked at them with all my five year old enthusiasm, and dropped my skirt, allowing the apples to plummet to the ground and roll across the kitchen floor, "Look what I found!"

cooking up
God's word

Grandma was ecstatic. A true product of the depression, any find such as this was not one to be ignored. She declared, "We can make apple jelly!" I was exhilarated. Yes! Score one for the five year old.

time to eat

But later in life as I was telling this story, I found that my mom was not quite as excited as I was. She was about to embark on a huge move and now the day before the move she was stuck in the kitchen with Grandma, straining apples through cheese cloth with glass jars and rolling pots of steam surrounding her. She was appalled. And yet, like a good daughter-in-law, she went along with the venture. Whenever I think about apples, often my mind goes to that Virginia backyard.

dinner party

notes

Fruit seems to bring up geographical memories in my mind. I think of juicy peaches that we would get from the peach orchard when we lived in Georgia. I think about the huge, flavor filled strawberries we acquired at a roadside stand in California straight from the strawberry patch. I remember the pineapple I tasted in Hawaii. I think about the oranges my husband brought me from Florida when he was there on a business trip. Yes, those were the oranges that got left in our car while visiting family in Oklahoma with below freezing temps. Talk about disappointment when I found them frozen and not edible the next day. But I digress. Fruit, for me, is refreshing, sweet, full of hints of summer (I live in Minnesota and we thrive on hints of summer) and places I have visited and above all else, simply nutritious.

What memories or thoughts pop in your head when you think about fruit?

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COOKING UP GOD'S WORD

prep time

Even though at the time I did not understand the consequences of my seemingly good act of dropping a skirt full of apples onto my mom's kitchen floor, I can look back and know with surety a few things. I know that the tree in the backyard was an apple tree. Why? Apples came from it.

cooking up
God's word

Apples do not fall from an orange tree. I know that the tree was a good producing tree. Why? It would not have produced good fruit if it had not been a good producing tree.

Jesus talked about a tree and the kind of fruit it produced.

Read Luke 6:43-45.

Write the contrasts you find below:

time to eat

Who produces good? _____ Where does it come from? _____

Who produces evil? _____ Where does it come from? _____

dinner party

Eventually whatever is truly in your heart is going to show itself. We can hide behind a mask but eventually our actions will speak for themselves.

There are two points of view when looking at this parable:

notes

1. How we see others

Read Matthew 7:20. Write it below.

This verse is referring to false teachers. Circle how you will know a false teacher.

What kind of fruit will a false teacher produce?

We need to be careful around those who claim to be Christ followers but whose actions never line up with that claim. If we accept teaching from leaders who do not have integrity and who do not produce good fruit, we can find ourselves believing false teaching about Scripture.

On the other hand, we must be careful about not being too judgmental. Even good, solid Bible teachers have bad days. We even yell at our kids at times. And (horror) our husbands.

2. How we see ourselves

Write Matthew 12:34 below.

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We need to pay attention to the fruit that we produce ourselves. That includes the things we say.

A few years ago I was invited on a girl's weekend away. We were standing outside our suite while one of my friends told a story that I had heard before. And in that moment, I felt like I had heard it a million times. And I said so. I snapped at my friend in an unkind, unprovoked, terrible, wish-I-had-not-done-that kind of way. Everyone stopped and looked at me, shocked. I made some lame excuse and went inside while she finished her story in the hall.

Later she came to me. Was I upset that someone else had stayed in her room? No, absolutely not. What was wrong with me? I had no clue. I apologized and all was well.

Later as I reflected on that weekend, I realized that there was something else deep inside that was bothering me; something that I had never dealt with when it came to this friend. Some unresolved anger that just flowed out of me in a weird moment. I learned that weekend that if we keep things bottled up inside of us, it can turn to bitterness. And that bitterness will eventually seep out of us. It certainly will not seep out as good fruit, either.

Read James 3:11-12.

Fill in the blanks with the verse:

Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both _____ and _____ water?

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Can a fig tree bear _____ or a
grapevine produce _____?
Neither can a _____ pond yield
_____ water.

We might try to act like we are something we are not. We might even get by with it for a while. But eventually, our true self will come out. We will make our hearts known, whether through our actions or our words. Our motives will be laid bare by the fruit that we produce.

We should pay attention to the words we say. They are often a clue to our hearts. If we find ourselves backbiting friends, what does that say? If we are nagging our husbands or kids, what does that say? If we fly off the handle daily, again, we need to examine our hearts.

The word used for fruit in this parable comes from a Greek word, kalos, which means “an outward sign of the inward good.” It denotes a meaning of noble and honorable character. Good fruit shows on the outside a good character on the inside.

A danger here is to think that every grumpy statement speaks of a poor condition of a heart. That would be ludicrous. We all have grumpy days. The condition of the heart is reflected in the overall picture of the life lived, not one or two statements made on a bad day. If our hearts are right as soon as we realize we have been hurtful with our words, we will move to apologize and make it right. If the statement points to an attitude or behavior that is not Christ like then we should be asking Jesus to transform our heart on that matter.

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Time to Eat

Have you ever known someone whose fruit did not match with who they said they were? (Don't dishonor anyone by writing names.) If that person was in the role of teaching or giving advice, would you have been apt to listen to them? Why or why not?

Think about your own life. Is there an area that you are not producing good fruit? Why do you think that is?

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Have you had any words come out of you lately that should have been red flags to areas that you need to work on? What areas would that be?

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Action Point: Think of an area in which you are not producing good fruit. Pray and ask God to transform that area of your life. Write it on a card to remind yourself to pray about it each day this week. Example: Problem with gossip

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Dinner Party

Fruit Popsicles

Ingredients:

3 cups fruit (Try different mixtures of chopped strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, halved grapes, pineapple, kiwi, orange slices, chopped peaches.)

1 ½ cups fruit punch

Directions

Mix the fruit together in a bowl. Spoon the mixture into eight popsicle molds. Pour punch into each mold to the fill line. Add the popsicle stick and freeze for at least 4 hours.

Fruit in Waffle Cone

Ingredients

2 medium peaches, chopped

1 cup fresh strawberries

1 cup fresh blueberries

2 tablespoons mashed fresh strawberries

1 teaspoon finely chopped crystallized ginger

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 cup whipped topping

4 ice cream waffle cones

Directions

Combine peaches, whole strawberries and blueberries in a bowl. In a different bowl, combine mashed strawberries, ginger and cinnamon. Fold in whipped topping.

In each waffle cone, layer fruit mixture and whipped topping mixture.

Serve immediately.

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Fruit Pizza

Ingredients:

refrigerated sugar cookie dough roll
8 oz. package cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup sugar
approximately 4 cups assorted fruit (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, kiwi and blackberries.)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Roll out cookie dough on the center of a baking stone or nonstick cookie sheet. Cover the pan. Bake 18-20 minutes or until golden brown.

While crust is baking, wash and slice fruit. Take creamed cheese out of refrigerator to soften. Combine cream cheese and sugar until smooth. After cookie is cool, spread mixture on the cookie. Arrange fruit in a pattern on top of the mixture.

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Craft

Fruit Gift

Supplies: Burlap, twine, shipping tag (office supply store), typewriter (optional), fruit (orange, apple, pear)

Place a piece of fruit in the middle of the burlap. Cut a large square around it. Pull up the corners, cinch and tie at the top of the fruit with the twine. Typewrite (or print) a message on the shipping tag and attach at the cinched top.

Have fun being creative with the messages:

You are the apple of my eye.

We are quite a pair. (pear)

You are my main squeeze. (orange)

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