

GOD'S VINEYARD

(Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80)

1. **REMEMBERING** Share a situation when you were optimistic for a good outcome, but ended up extremely disappointed. What went wrong?
2. **REFLECTING** How did you handle the disappointment and how did it handle (impact) you?
3. **DISCOVERING:** Read each passage aloud and answer the questions.

I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ²He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. ³“Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? ⁵Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ⁶I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” ⁷The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. (Isaiah 5:1-7)

- Where does the metaphor refer to God as vineyard owner, the vines as God's people, and the people's bad behavior as bad fruit?
- What are the most tender aspects of the owner's care for his vineyard?
- What are the most stinging aspects of the drastic consequences described?

Be aware of the time frame of these passages. Isaiah predicts the judgment that will happen to God's people in the future. In Psalm 80, that prediction has come true—judgment is in the past—and the people pray for their current need, to be restored and have God renew his work among them...

You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. ¹⁰The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. ¹¹Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. ¹²Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? ¹³Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it. ¹⁴Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, ¹⁵the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself. ¹⁶Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish. ¹⁷Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. ¹⁸Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. ¹⁹Restore us, LORD God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. (Psalm 80:8-19)

- Again, where do we see God described as the vineyard owner, the vines as God's people, and the numerous consequences to the vineyard that have resulted from God's judgment on his people?
 - How did God bless his people? What historical events are alluded to in verses 8-11?
 - How are the most stinging aspects of God's judgment described?
4. **CONNECTING** How might the modern-day church—and our church, the Mount Joy Church of God—avoid repeating the mistakes of God's people Israel and possibly suffer similar consequences?
 5. **RESPONDING:** What steps can we take in the weeks and months ahead to avoid these mistakes and produce good fruit, more fruit, and much fruit?

What part of *their* prayer should be *our* prayer?

I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.

- Jesus, John 15:1