

# ONE MORE CHANCE

LESSON 175 → Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8

*When his dad offered to help, Colton decided not to give up on his strawberry patch.*

**C**olton threw down his hoe in disgust. What was the use? These strawberry plants were overrun with weeds. You had to get down on your hands and knees and dig around to find a single strawberry . . . and those you did find were so shriveled they were hardly worth the effort.

*So much for his great thoughts* about earning some extra money this summer by selling his super crop of strawberries! Colton flopped down on the grass beside his garden patch and stared gloomily up into the sky. That warm sun felt so good—these strawberries should just be soaking it up and thriving. Instead they looked like they had given up and died a month ago.

*The seed catalog that got this* whole project started was a real joke, he thought bitterly. They made it sound so easy. And the strawberries they showed were huge and looked so delicious he could almost taste them just by looking at the picture!

*Besides this drastic crop failure,* he was out the thirty-five dollars he'd spent on seed, fertilizer, and a couple of garden tools. This was his project and he had to pay for the whole thing. Dad had made that clear from the beginning. I could have bought a new video game, he thought disgustingly. Or I could have bought that Lego set I've been watching on eBay—and still had a couple of dollars left!





KEY VERSE

## GOD EXPECTS SOMETHING FROM ME.

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

*I guess I'll just dig these plants up, he thought.* It's a cinch I'm not going to be able to sell a single berry off of them. The plants are just cluttering up the backyard the way they are now. Mom might as well have a few more feet of space to plant her lettuce and beans.

*Colton got to his feet, brushed the grass off the seat of his pants, and picked up the hoe.* Just as he was starting to dig up the first plant his dad came around the corner of the house. "Working on the strawberry plants, Son?"

*"Nah," Colton said, his disgust with the whole project edging his voice.* "Just look at this mess! I'm just going to dig them up and get rid of them. They aren't doing any good, and Mom might as well have the space for her things."

*A somewhat amused but sympathetic look* crossed his father's face. "They don't look too healthy, do they?" he commented as he looked down at the plants in front of them.

*"No, they don't." Colton replied.* "I don't know why I ever started this in the first place. Anyway, I've wasted too much time and money on them."

*"Oh, now wait a minute, Son," his dad restrained* him. "I've been watching your plants, too. I think perhaps we can salvage them. Remember, I did mention to you once or twice that the weeds around them were getting pretty high and that strawberries do need regular watering when the rainfall is as light as it has been this summer."

*"Yeah," Colton looked a little sheepish.* "I didn't really see what harm the weeds would do, and I have watered them . . . off and on."

*"Let's try something. I'll give you a hand at clearing* out the weeds from around these plants if, in turn, you'll give me your word that you'll keep the weeds out from now on. Also, you will have to remember to water the plants more often, and on a regular basis."

*Colton looked doubtful.* "Aw, Dad. Do you really think they're worth it? I think they must have

been bad plants to begin with. Look at those scrawny little berries. They aren't anything like the big beautiful ones in that picture in the seed catalog!"

*"You're right about that," his dad chuckled.* "But with a little work I believe we can still make your investment pay off. How about giving it a try?"

*"Well, okay," Colton finally said, still a bit reluctant.* "I'll give them one more chance. But if these plants aren't producing some edible strawberries in short order, I'm giving up on them once and for all."

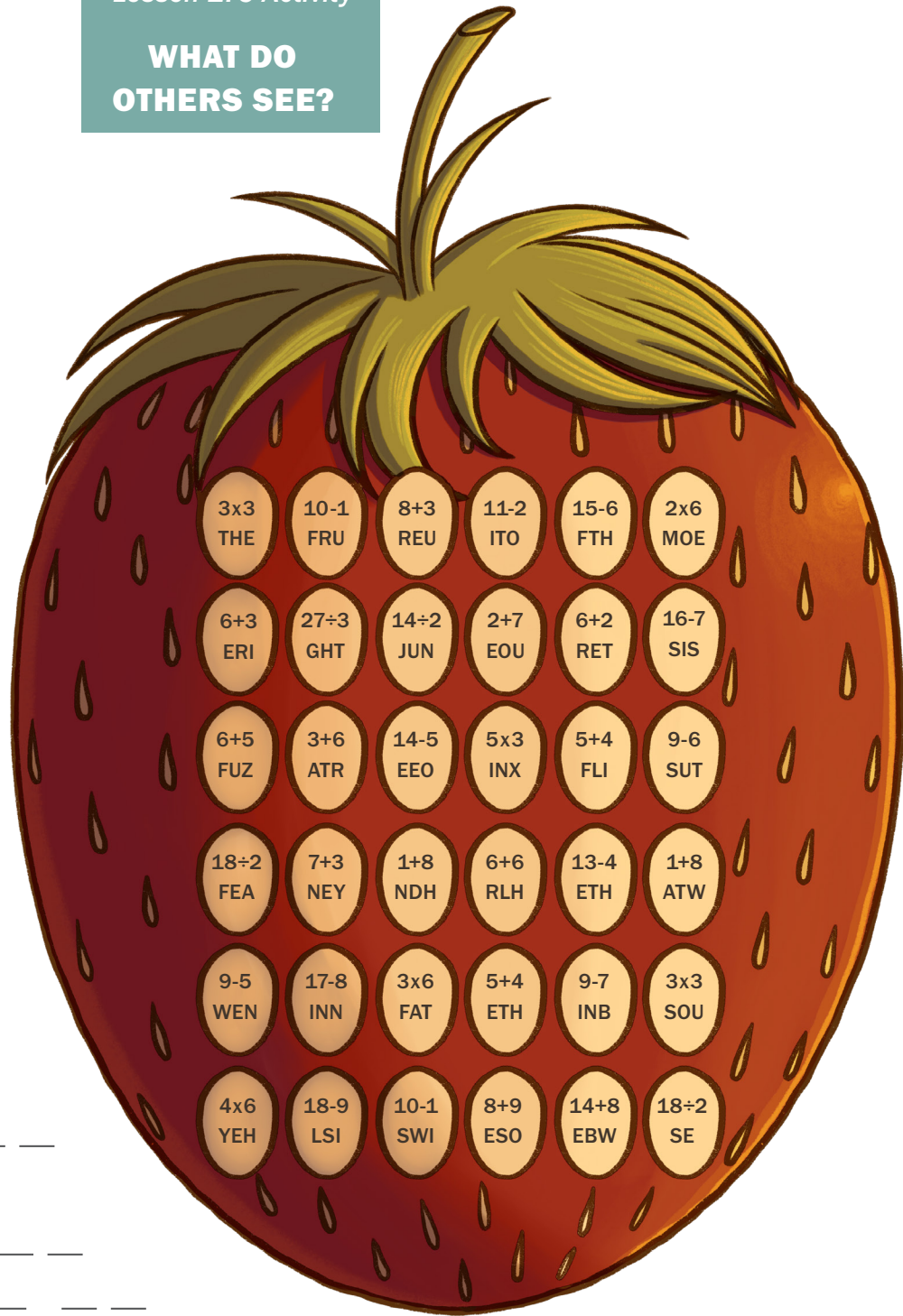
*Does this story remind you of the one we studied* in our Bible text this week? Jesus told a parable about a man who was dissatisfied because his fig tree wasn't producing fruit. He was ready to chop it down until the dresser of his vineyard asked for one more year to cultivate and fertilize it.

*Jesus wasn't just teaching a lesson about sticking* to our gardening attempts. He wanted the people listening to see the importance of bearing spiritual fruit; in other words, acting and looking and living like a true Christian. We might compare the dresser of the vineyard to Jesus Christ. If He sees that one is not doing everything he should as a Christian, He wants to work with that one and help him produce the kind of "fruit" that a Christian should be producing.

*Think about it: are you showing the kind of spiritual* development God is looking for in your life?

**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 “seeds” in the strawberry where the math problem does not equal nine. Then write the letters from the “seeds” that do equal nine on the lines below.



-----

-----

-----

-----

-----;

-----

-----.