

PART ONE: The Dangers of Fruitlessness

Mark 11:12-12:12

Read Mark 11:12-26.

1. What caused Jesus to notice the fig tree from afar? (v. 13)

2. What did the leaves suggest to Jesus about the tree? (v. 13)

Being hungry, Jesus noticed this surprising fig tree¹. While out of season, this tree said otherwise. Its lush leaves advertised the presence of fruit! This tree, seen from afar, offered hope to the hungry.

3. How did Jesus respond to the tree's treachery? What did the disciples do? (v. 14)

4. Verse 15 says they came to Jerusalem and went to the Temple. Read the following verses and record what you learn about the Temple, its purpose and its location.

2 Chronicles 3:1

Genesis 22:1-14

1 Kings 6:7

¹ The fig tree is often used to represent Israel. (Jeremiah 8:13; Hosea 9:10; Nahum 3:12)

1 Kings 6:11-13

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

Isaiah 56:7

There is not enough time to fully explore the Temple and all that it represents. However, it is important to understand that everything about the Temple pointed to Jesus and the work He came to do. The Temple showed God's desire to be with His people. It demonstrated the seriousness of sin and the holiness and mercy of God. High on a hill for all to see, the Temple clearly showed the consequence and cost of sin while pointing to the hope of Jesus!

5. What made the fig tree and the Temple noticeable from afar?

6. What did the fig tree and the Temple seem to advertise? (What would one expect to find based on their outward appearances?)

7. Upon closer inspection, what was found at both? (v. 13 and 17)

8. How did Jesus deal with the treachery taking place at the Temple? (v. 15-17)

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9. The Temple was the place where people came to worship God through acts of prayer and sacrifice. If Jesus were to physically show up in your life, would Jesus be pleased with your personal acts of worship? Explain.

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10. **THINK:** Think about how the disciples reacted to Jesus cursing the fig tree versus how the Scribes and chief priests reacted to Jesus' actions in the Temple. What can be learned from this? (v. 14 and v. 18)

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11. Verse 20 tells us that the fig tree dried up from the roots. Do a little research and record everything you know/learn about the function of a plant's roots.

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12. Isaiah 11:10 describes Jesus as the "Root of Jesse." How is Jesus like the root of a plant?
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A good root brings forth a good vine, which produces healthy branches that produce good fruit, but a bad root is unable to support the plant, which in turn leads to bad fruit or no fruit at all. The fig tree and the Temple could both be seen from afar, offering hope to the physically and spiritually hungry, but upon closer inspection, there was nothing good to be found. At this point, Jesus turns to His disciples and teaches them through this powerful visual how to be a true and fruitful disciple.

13. Read verses 22–26 again and record all the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples.

v. 22 _____

v. 24 _____

v. 25 _____

14. Now go back and record the reasons why they should do each of these things. Note that Jesus says, “Have faith in God,” not “Have faith in yourselves and your own abilities.”

Why? _____

Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them.

Why? _____

Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him.

Why? _____

True disciples of Jesus who are rooted and grounded in Him will put their faith in God alone, not in a tree out of season or in a religious system that has lost sight of its true purpose. Faith in God brings with it, His power to overcome unsurmountable obstacles.

15. **THINK:** What does it mean to put your faith in God alone?

16. What unsurmountable obstacles are you facing today? What about mountains of unforgiveness? Record each one, and then make a plan for how you will have faith in God for each victory.

Peter was astonished when they returned the next morning to see that the seemingly healthy fig tree had withered from the roots up. Jesus sought to teach His disciples that when people look at the life of a believer, a true disciple of Jesus Christ, they should find evidence of authentic and genuine faith in God – a changed life, one who prays according to the will of God and sees their prayers answered, and one who models the forgiveness of God in their own life and relationships.

17. In verses 27-33, Jesus had a direct encounter with the chief priests and scribes. They wanted to know by what authority Jesus did the things He was doing. Use the following verses to go back and look at what they had already been told about Jesus and His authority.

Mark 2:5-11 _____

Mark 2:27-28 _____

Mark 3:22-23 _____

Mark 11:9-10 _____

Mark 11:17 _____

Their question had already been answered. The more important question was, what would they do with the information they had been given? Reaching all the way back to the beginning of His ministry and the work of John the Baptist, who proclaimed His coming, what would they choose to believe about Who Jesus is and where His authority comes from?

18. How did they answer Jesus? (v. 33) _____

But they did know. They had heard His teachings, seen His miraculous works, and still refused to acknowledge the truth.

19. Read and record the truth of Romans 1:18-21, then consider why Jesus refused to answer them.

Read Mark 12:1-12

Jesus refused to answer the chief priests and Scribe's question, but in chapter 12, He begins speaking to them in parables.

20. Based on the context of all Jesus had been trying to teach His followers about Him and His Father, see if you can identify who is represented in this parable. If you are unsure, you can use www.gotquestions.org as a resource.

The man who planted the vineyard (Israel) _____

The man's son _____

The man's servants _____

The vinedressers _____

The tenants _____

The tower _____

The other tenants _____

21. Summarize what Jesus was saying in this parable about the Jews, their religious leaders, and the coming Gentile church.

22. **THINK:** If Jesus is the son of the landowner and the vinedressers are religious leaders, what do you think the inheritance was that they sought to take from Him?

In verse 10, Jesus describes Himself as “the stone.” To the Jews, He was the stone that they rejected, but to the Gentiles, He would become the cornerstone on which the church would be built.

23. How did the religious leaders react to this teaching parable of Jesus? (v. 12)

24. The Jewish religious leaders make it obvious that a person can know all there is to know about God and still reject Jesus. Take a moment to ask yourself, “Who is Jesus to me today?”

25. If you claim to be a true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ, how can you choose to glorify Him in your day-to-day life? Be specific.

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

- Psalm 118:22-24

PART TWO: A Focused Look at Unforgiveness

Mark 11:25-26

Read Mark 11:25-26

God’s Word is extremely clear that we must live a life of forgiveness.

26. What must we do when we pray?

27. What is the outcome if we forgive or do not forgive?

28. Read Matthew 5:23-24. What did Jesus ask of those who had come to give a gift at the altar?

29. Read Matthew 5:43-48. What is being asked of us in this passage?

30. If we should love even our enemies, how much easier should it be to forgive your own brother?

In Mark 11:25, we are instructed to forgive **anyone** we have something against. In Matthew 5:23-24, we are instructed to be reconciled with our **brother**, and in Matthew 5:43-48, we are instructed to love our **enemies**. Being in right relationship with others is God's will for our lives.

31. Read Matthew 22:36-39. What is the second greatest commandment?

<p>Neighbor - according to Christ, is any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet.</p>
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32. Read Matthew 6:9. How does the Lord's Prayer begin? _____

Take note that the prayer does not begin with "My Father" but "Our Father." We are all part of God's family. Unity is essential.

True prayer involves forgiveness as well as faith. I must be in fellowship with both my Father in Heaven and my brethren on earth if God is to answer my prayers.

- Warren Wiersbe

33. Look up the following verses and write down what they teach you about unity.

John 13:35

1 Corinthians 1:10

Romans 12:16

34. Think about the command to love our neighbor and the importance of unity. Why does this make forgiveness so important?

Throughout Scripture, we see an emphasis on *one another*.

35. Look up the following verses and write down the *one another* phrases. Then note how you can do the same with/for/to your brother, neighbor, enemy, or anyone else.

Romans 15:7

Galatians 5:13

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:13

36. Read Mark 11:25-26 again. What are we commanded to do?

Forgive - to let go, give up a debt, to remit.

Forgiveness is a command. It is neither optional nor conditional. But let us remember that forgiveness does not mean what was done to you is okay. It does not make a wrong right. It is simply removing the debt from the account of the one who caused you harm. However, it will set you free. Free from bitterness.

37. Read Colossians 2:13-14. What has Jesus done for you?

As we mature in Christ, we not only learn about the incredible sacrifice He made for us, but we also grow in our recognition of our responsibility to forgive others. **So that** we can love, exhort, encourage *one another*, and dwell together in unity. When we forgive, we not only show God's love to those whom we have forgiven, but we also demonstrate God's love to all those around us.

The proof that you and I are forgiven is that we forgive others.

- D. Martyn Lloyd Jones

38. Consider the vastness of God's forgiveness for you. The next time you pray, stop and ask yourself, "Is there anyone I need to forgive?"

Commit today to having a heart of forgiveness and a desire for unity with *one another*!