

Small Group Guide: "Lessons from the Fig Tree"

Based on Mark 11:12-14, 20-25

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by thanking God for His Word and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and application.

Ice Breaker

Share about a time when you had to wait for something to "bear fruit" in your life (a relationship, a project, a spiritual discipline). What did that waiting period teach you?

Sermon Overview

Pastor Virgil taught on Jesus cursing the fig tree, using it as a metaphor for Israel's spiritual fruitlessness and drawing five powerful lessons about the Christian life. The sermon challenges us to examine what kind of fruit our lives are producing and how we can live in the power God has given us.

Key Takeaways

1. **Power in the Word of God** - God's Word has inherent power to accomplish His purposes
 2. **Power in Faith in God** - True faith rests in God Himself, not in our circumstances or resources
 3. **Power in Prayer to God** - Prayer is our direct connection to move God to action
 4. **Power in Belief in God** - We must truly believe God will do what He promises
 5. **Power in Forgiveness from God** - Forgiveness releases us and opens the door to God's forgiveness
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Mark 11:12-14, 20-25 together.** Why do you think Jesus cursed the fig tree? What was He really addressing beyond just a tree without fruit?
2. The pastor mentioned that Israel was meant to be "a city on a hill" proclaiming God's glory to the nations. In what ways had they failed to produce spiritual fruit?
3. How does aligning our will with God's will affect the power of our prayers? (Reference Matthew 6:9-10)

Personal Reflection

4. **The Fig Tree in Your Life:** The pastor showed pictures of his fig tree—beautiful on the outside but producing bitter, unripe fruit. Are there areas of your life that look good externally but lack genuine spiritual fruit internally?
5. **Faith vs. Self-Reliance:** The pastor joked about having "faith in your 401k" instead of faith in God. What are some things you're tempted to trust in more than God? (finances, health, relationships, abilities, etc.)
6. **Prayer with Heart Before Hands:** The pastor taught about the ACTS prayer model (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication). How often do you come to God with your "hand out" versus your "heart open"? How might changing this pattern transform your prayer life?

Going Deeper

7. **When Prayers Aren't Answered:** The sermon addressed the difficult reality that sometimes our will doesn't align with God's will, even in painful situations like praying for healing. How do you reconcile verses like John 14:13-14 ("whatever you ask in my name, this I will do") with times when prayers seem unanswered?
8. **The Power of Forgiveness:** Jesus says in verse 25 that we must forgive others so that our Father will forgive us. Why is unforgiveness such a barrier to our relationship with God? Who in your life might you need to forgive (even if you can't forget)?
9. The pastor mentioned that "the fruit of the Christian life is what's going on inside me." How do we cultivate internal fruit rather than just external religious activity?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose **one or two** of these to practice this week:

1. Practice ACTS Prayer Daily

- Spend 10 minutes each day praying using the ACTS model:
 - Adoration - Praise God for who He is
 - Confession - Confess your sins
 - Thanksgiving - Thank God for what He's done
 - Supplication - Ask for what you need
- Journal about how this changes your prayer life

2. Align Your Will Assessment

- Write down 3-5 things you've been praying for
- Honestly evaluate: Are these requests aligned with God's will or your own desires?
- Pray specifically for God to align your will with His

3. Forgiveness Action

- Identify one person you're holding a grudge against
- Follow Matthew 5:23-24 and seek reconciliation
- If direct reconciliation isn't possible or safe, release them in prayer and choose to forgive

4. Fruit Inspection

- Read Galatians 5:22-23 (the fruit of the Spirit)
- Rate yourself honestly on each fruit (1-10)
- Choose one to intentionally develop this week through specific actions

5. Word Power Practice

- Choose one promise from God's Word mentioned in the sermon (John 14:13-14, Matthew 7:7, etc.)
- Memorize it and pray it back to God daily
- Watch for how God moves when you stand on His promises

Group Activity Option

The Fig Tree Exercise: Give each person paper and markers/crayons. Have them draw a tree representing their spiritual life:

- **Roots** = What feeds your faith (Bible study, prayer, fellowship, etc.)
- **Trunk** = Your core beliefs and identity in Christ
- **Branches** = Different areas of your life (work, family, church, etc.)
- **Fruit** = Evidence of God's work in each area

Share your trees with the group and discuss:

- Where do you see good fruit?
- Where are there just "leaves" (external appearance without substance)?
- What needs to change for more fruit to grow?

Memory Verse

Mark 11:22-24 - "And Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.'"

Closing Reflection

The pastor shared that "the real sweetness, the real fruit, isn't what's on the outside. It's what's on the inside."

Final Question: What is one specific way you want God to transform your heart this week so that genuine fruit can grow?

Closing Prayer

Pray together as a group:

- Thank God for His Word and the lessons from the fig tree
- Ask for faith to believe His promises
- Pray for alignment between your will and God's will

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- Ask for power to forgive those who have hurt you
 - Request that God produce genuine fruit in each person's life
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Before Next Week

- Complete at least one practical application challenge
 - Be prepared to share what God taught you through it
 - Reach out to one group member during the week for encouragement
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"No matter what jam in life may come our way, we have the ability and the power to overcome it." - Pastor Virgil