

# GOSPEL COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Mark 11:12-25



REDEEMER  
ROUND ROCK

## CONNECT, REVIEW, PRAY

~5-10 minutes

- Announce any church activities/events and handle any housekeeping for the GC
- What are you thankful for / have struggled with this week?
- How did you apply or share what we learned last week?
- How can we pray for each other?

## READ & RE-TELL

~5-10 minutes

- Have someone read out loud from the ESV translation.
- Have someone read out loud from a different translation.
- Do we need to define any confusing/unknown/curious words or phrases?
- Ask one person to re-tell the passage in their own words (different from the person reading).

## ASK, LISTEN, LEARN

~30+ minutes

- What does this passage tell us about the character and nature of God?
- What does this passage tell us about ourselves/humanity?
- What does this passage tell us about the relationship between God and people?
- Review “FURTHER APPLICATION” questions.

## APPLY, OBEY, GO

~10+ minutes

- Does anything in this passage change how you should live, or how you view God / people / yourself?
- Does this passage reveal a specific sin in your life?
- How can you live differently this coming week, with what you’ve learned?

## FURTHER APPLICATION

1. In the sermon we learned that the fig tree story and the temple story are very connected. How are they connected and what do they reveal about how Jesus viewed the current situation in the temple?
2. Jesus comes to disrupt and disorient dead religion. What are some examples of “dead religion” we see in the text and in the culture around us?
3. There are many things we can rest our life on as “pillars” which hold us up. What are some of those things in your own life that you are depending upon to uphold your identity, faith, and joy?
4. Are there any of these pillars that you are depending upon to gain a right standing before God?
5. In what ways does the life, work, and resurrection of Jesus offer you the standing before God and identity you think you are gaining from those “pillars”?

## **5 HELPFUL GROUP DISCUSSION RULES**

1. *If you talk a lot, allow space for someone else to speak up.*
2. *If you don't talk as much, work on sharing more.*
3. *Focus on what this passage is saying, don't stray too far from it. Seek not only to understand more about God through the passage, but also how it specifically applies to your own life as a Christian.*
4. *Give other people time to respond, silence is ok.*
5. *Respect your GC family and exercise grace.*

### **COMMENTARY EXCERPT:**

#### **\*Mark 11:12-26**

Jesus is challenged in the temple (cf. Mt. 21:12–22; Lk. 19:45–48). When Jesus confronted the merchants in the temple court, it was not that he, in irritation, was striking dead a healthy tree; he was giving a sad assessment of the tree's true condition. God's judgment on Israel would be the same. That is why the story of the clearing of the temple is 'sandwiched' by Mark between the two halves of the story of the fig-tree, to make the solemn warning to Israel plain.

When Jesus entered the temple, he probably came into the Court of the Gentiles, the only place in the whole complex where non-Jews were allowed to enter and worship. But worship had become impossible; the court had been turned into a typical bazaar area, with buyers and sellers and stalls everywhere. Birds and animals for sacrifice were sold there, and foreign money could be changed into the only currency accepted in the temple, one without the hated figures of Roman emperors and heathen gods. In one sense, all this was a service to the worshippers, but the noise and bustle made worship impossible. To make matters worse, this court was used as a short-cut by merchants bringing goods from the Mount of Olives to the city itself.

We know from other sources that the worshippers in the Jewish temple were exploited by the merchants, who charged high prices for the sacrificial animals, and the money-changers, who offered unfair exchange rates. We also know that this trade was controlled by the priestly aristocracy who profited greatly at the expense of ordinary pilgrims.

Jesus justified his action of driving out the stall-holders and their customers by showing that God's plan was for his temple to be a centre of worship for all nations, not just the Jews (17). That must have brought great encouragement to Mark's non-Jewish readers.

Jesus' disruption of the temple trade must have increased the chief priests' hatred for him, and they began looking for a way to kill him (18). They, above all others, should have recognized their king by what he did. All good kings of Judah had purified the temple, as Mal. 3:1–4 says that the coming one would do. If Jesus acted like this to the old earthly temple, how will he act towards the new temple that is his body, the Christian church?

Peter used the word cursed of the fig-tree (21); it is important to realize that in the Bible 'blessing' and 'cursing' do not have the same meaning as today. They are God's solemn judgments, his pronouncements of the results of either pleasing or displeasing him; he does not act without reason. The Bible knows nothing of magical curses; and we do not need to fear them, for they cannot harm the Christian. Likewise, blessing is not something that others can give us magically; it will come to us, if we remain in Christ (Jn. 15:4).

Jesus and his disciples seem to have spent the nights during their time in Jerusalem in their 'safe house' at Bethany. That is why Peter pointed out the withered fig-tree on the way back to the city next morning. Mark does not stress the application of this acted parable to Israel; the structure of his gospel has made that plain enough already. Instead, he shows how Jesus used the withering of the fig-tree as an example of the results of believing prayer (23). But it also shows that we cannot pray in faith for anything that we like. In this matter, Jesus was 'thinking God's thoughts after him' and willing his father's will. That sort of prayer, if asked in faith, will always be answered, for it is praying that God's will may be done (as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane). We can only move the mountains that God wants removed, not those that we want moved. 'Moving mountains' was a phrase used by the rabbis to describe overcoming seemingly impossible difficulties; we must not of course take it in the literal sense. If we pray in this way, we can give thanks for the result before we see it, for the answer is sure in the will and purpose of God.

There is one other condition for effectual prayer: we must freely forgive others, as God forgives us (25). If we do not, how could we pray 'in Jesus' name', that is, in the way in which he would and did? This verse may indicate that Mark knew the Lord's Prayer, though he does not record it in his gospel.