

CLEARS

MARK 11:12-25

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. Have you ever backed out of your garage, driven about a block, and began to question whether you closed the garage?
2. How many of you have gone back to check only to find that you had closed it?
3. Do you remember closing your garage door when you left home today?
4. Have you ever caught yourself just going through the motions either at home, at work, during quiet time, or during corporate worship?

Sometimes actions become so automatic that we don't even realize we're doing them. It's like our minds are on autopilot.

5. What makes simply going through the motions so dangerous? (The activity has lost its significance. There is no meaning to your actions.)

CONTEXT! Read Mark 11:12-14

It is important to note that the two encounters with the fig tree form "bookends" for the cleansing of the Temple. The fig tree is representative of the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. Jesus would use that symbolism to speak to the barrenness of His people who were rejecting their King during the week of Jesus' passion.

ZEALOUS! Read Mark 11:15-17

(Display Temple area map if available.)

The court of the Gentiles was the entry point for anyone going into the Temple area to worship and was a very high traffic area. It was the only area open to the Gentiles, and it was originally intended as the place for Gentiles to pray and worship.

1. Why was Jesus angry? (Animals and doves for sacrifice were being bought and sold. There were also money changers set up so you could exchange your currency for the Temple Shekel, which was the only currency that could be used to purchase an animal for sacrifice. History tells us that it cost to exchange currency and the animals that were sold for sacrifice were overpriced. As the old phrase goes, "they got you coming and going.")

The commercialization of worship angers Jesus. These people were cheating the people and taking large profits for themselves.

2. Why was Jesus angry? (It wasn't what they were doing but where they were doing it that angered Him.)
3. What did Jesus say was the proper use of His house? (A house of prayer for all nations. Jesus quoted from Jer. 7:11 and Isa. 56:7. Remember Mark wrote his Gospel aimed at the Gentiles.)
4. What is the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger? (Righteous anger reacts against actual sin. The sin of abortion is one example. But there is a right way and a wrong way to react. To pray and protest and go to court is one way but to bomb and kill doctors who perform abortions is a sin in itself.)
5. What are some ways we can gradually move away from approaching God with reverence? (We use our Prelude music time to visit rather than preparing our hearts to worship. Moving around during the worship service like we were at a ball game. Inappropriate dress.)

Jews appeared to be going through the motions simply because they were Jews, not because they viewed the temple as a place set aside for prayer and worship.

6. How might my “going through the motions” of worship hinder others from approaching God? (Distracting them by playing on my phone or talking to the person next to me, sleeping, etc.)

JEALOUS! Read Mark 11:18-19

1. What motivated the response of the chief priests and scribes? (They were fearful of losing power and influence.)
2. What did the chief priests and scribes decide they needed to do? (Get rid of Jesus.)
3. Why wouldn't they do anything to Jesus at that time? (Jesus seemed to have the support of the crowd.)
4. What is the connection between jealousy and human pride? (I deserve to be recognized above that person. He has what is rightfully mine.)
5. How can jealousy get in the way of prayer? (We become very selfish and self-centered. We don't pray for God's best for others, only for self.)
6. What can we, as believers, do to help others find God and to have space to worship Him? (Have a selfless attitude toward all while sharing the gospel.)

Jesus taught with boldness, passion, and authority. Jesus threatened their authority and their lucrative money-making schemes. With the following of the people a revolt against the scribes and/or Rome could come about.

At the end of the day, Jesus and His disciples went back to Bethany. They were probably staying at the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary.

MIRACULOUS! Read Mark 11:20-25

1. What is the point of this?

It is NOT that Jesus “lost His temper,” either with the fig tree, or in the temple. Rather there are some lessons for us to learn from this incident of the fig tree:

—Many believe the fig tree represents God's people, Israel. He looked for fruit from them, of representing Him in the world, and reaching out to “all the nations” like Isaiah prophesied—but they didn't do it. So, He cursed them. Judgment was coming upon them. And it DID—in 70 A.D. the Romans would come and destroy Jerusalem, and level the Temple to the ground, and the Jews would be scattered for almost 2000 years.

2. Is there an application for us individually? What are the conditions under which God will hear and answer our prayers? (Ask in faith, believing, ask for God's will, and forgiving those who have wronged you.)

“**Unforgiveness** is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.” I wonder if it works like this:

“**Forgiveness** is like drinking poison for someone else and you both live.”

“The hardest part about forgiveness is when the person who is wrong doesn't ask for it. We should give it anyway. If we don't, we'll have the poison of unforgiveness flowing through our veins and making our whole life feel sick. Forgiveness isn't like drinking poison; it's more like giving you both the antidote. Forgiveness is an invitation to humble ourselves and turn toward the people who have hurt us.”—Bob Goff

This doesn't mean you lose your salvation; it simply means you have built a wall between you and God until you get it resolved. You have clouded your relationship with God like a fog, keeping you from close, clear fellowship with Him.

3. Is there anyone against whom you are harboring resentment; anyone you've said, “I can't forgive them?” If so, you need to forgive them TODAY! Right now. YOUR own spiritual health—and the answer to your prayers—depends upon it!
4. Is motive important in your prayers? (Read James 4:3.)

CHALLENGE!

- We should seek to remove distractions from prayer; both for ourselves and others.
- We must be diligent to make sure our prayers are not hindered by jealousy.
- We should pray with faith out of a forgiving heart.

1. Is there anything about our group that would create an obstacle for newcomers seeking God?
2. What is the biggest hindrance to your prayer life?
3. How can you remove the obstacles that keep you from praying more effectively?