

I said a Little Prayer

By Mary Kane

I was in great need of encouragement, so I said a little prayer. "God I really need to hear from you. Your Word says You love me and I'm trying to hang on to that truth. I just need to hear from You today. Would You please send me an unmistakable message of Your love for me maybe, through a song on the radio or a special Bible verse? Thank You."

After I finished praying I tried to ready myself and my classroom for the day. It's hard to be a good teacher when my mind is preoccupied with challenging issues. I pasted a smile on my face, which I did not feel and checked over my lesson plans. Shelly, one of my students, walked into my classroom before class and said, "I left you a present on your desk. I made it myself." I thanked Shelly for her thoughtfulness as she walked out the door to join the other early arrivals in the cafeteria. Excitedly, I walked to my desk to see what she left me. On my desk was a long keychain made of colorful beads. Tears came to my eyes as I read the message that God purposely sent me, written in purple-lettered beads, "God! loves u Mary." I paused a few moments to savor the wonderful gift God sent me and to soak in His message to me. I also thanked Him for answering my prayer so clearly and tenderly.

A little later, when the students were released from the cafeteria, I thanked Shelly for her gift and told her how God had used her to bless and encourage me. I always keep my keychain in my Bible case so it travels with me most of the time. I like to take it out and look at it to ponder on how much God loves me. I also like to share with others how God used a young girl to answer a prayer spoken in a time of need.

Please pray for the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and read Mark 11:20-24.

What had happened to the fig tree?

Why did the fig tree dry up from the roots?

Look back at verse 13 and record *why* Jesus cursed the fig tree.

The fig tree dried up from the roots because Jesus spoke to it. His words are living and powerful. Remember, He spoke the world and all creation into being.

Also notice that this is an example of Jesus working a miracle by bestowing a curse rather than a blessing. Matthew Henry stated that the withering of the fig tree symbolized the elimination of the priesthood as God's means for the atonement of sin.

"And now, by a contrary miracle, the expiration of that priesthood was signified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests that had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, and scarcely credible, that the Jews, who had been so long God's own, his only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned; they could not imagine how that *fig-tree* should *so soon wither away*: but this comes of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him" (*BLB, Matthew Henry*).

Every reference I checked stated that fig trees develop fruit before they develop leaves. Several references also said that fruit should have been left over on the tree from the last harvest as well. Jesus certainly could have expected to gather fruit from this tree. It's season for gathering was over. Please read the following information from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*:

"The miracle of our Lord which occurred in the Passover season, about April, will be understood (as far as the natural phenomena are concerned) by the account given above of the fruiting of the fig-tree, as repeatedly observed by the present writer in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. When the young leaves are newly appearing, in April, every fig- tree which is going to bear fruit at all will have some taksh ("immature figs") upon it, even though "the time of figs," i.e. of ordinary edible figs—either early or late crop—"was not yet." This taksh is not only eaten today, but it is sure evidence, even when it falls, that the tree bearing it is not barren. This acted parable must be

compared with Luke 13:6-9; now the time of judgment was surely coming, the fate of the fruitless Jewish nation was forcibly foretold."

Read verse 21 again. What do you think Peter was feeling in verse 21?

I think that Peter was surprised that the tree was thoroughly withered.

What was Jesus' response to Peter?

Jesus told Peter to have faith; faith is the main lesson of the fig tree. I used to worry about having faith. On some days my faith feels very strong and at other times I've been assailed by niggling doubts and fears. I was very relieved the day I figured that the power in my Christian life does not depend on having faith in my faith; it rests on having faith in God. Keeping the fig tree lesson in mind, please consider verses 23-24.

What does Jesus speak to in these verses?

Oros the original word for mountain in this verse means to rise, to rear, a mountain. *Oros* is also related to another Greek word *airo*, which means among other things "to make doubt." Sometimes doubts can seem very mountainous. Mountains can also refer to huge problems that impede our progress or stand in the way of the path we are traveling. In order for us to progress on our journeys, mountains must be dealt with.

In reference to what we just learned about the fig tree and the mountain, please answer the following questions.

Are you facing an insurmountable problem right now? Do you have any hindrances or obstacles in your life? If so please list them in the space provided.

Do you struggle with any unfruitful habits?

Is there something that you have been trying to gain control over for a very long time?

In verses 23 and 24, what does Jesus say to do about these mountainous, unfruitful issues in our lives?

Jesus tells us to do three things: pray, speak and believe. These three concepts are all intertwined; you can't do one without the others. First, we must **believe** in God and that He is truth. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Second, when we have a problem or a need we need to take it to our Father in **prayer**. Tell Him what you are facing and ask Him to deal with the problem according to His will. Third, after you've taken your concerns to God, find a scripture that deals with the issue you are facing and **speak** it into your prayer. For example, if I'm struggling with stress I might pray out loud, "God, Your Word says, 'You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You.'" Don't just think the verse in your mind—say it out loud. There is power in the spoken Word of God!

As recorded in Genesis 1:3, "God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light," God commanded the world into existence by speaking, He didn't command it into being by thinking. Also, God has given us His Holy *Word*—not His Holy *Thoughts*. When Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan, He defeated Satan by *speaking* His Word to the enemy. The speaking of His Holy Word depends on our belief in the power of His Word; we will not speak it if we doubt its power.

Please write the main idea of each Bible verse in the space provided:

Mark 4:39:

2 Cor. 4:13:

Now please read Matthew 4:1-11 and record the strategy Jesus employed to defeat the devil.

Following the wisdom of God's Word, we can use scripture to:

- Dry up unfruitful habits or activities and they will dry up and wither away. (Mark 11:13-14).
- Bear fruit in seemingly barren seasons of drought in our lives (see Psalm 1).
- Move obstacles that block our walk with the Lord and they will be utterly removed (Mark 11:23-24).
- Defeat the plans of our enemy (Matthew 4:1-11).

Jesus used scripture to defeat obstacles and temptations, to heal, to reveal, to create, to teach and to encourage. You can probably think of other ways Jesus used His Word to minister while on earth. Let us follow His example and "Word-up" so we will be ready for whatever situation comes our way!