

Weekly News

16th September 2026



How is your reading of Mark going? If you're a visual learner you might like to check out this film of the gospel free on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/rh9yjReuWH0?is=HP4otcEKAzx8YKHt>

This week's questions have been asked by two people: Why does Jesus curse the fig tree in chapter 11?

This has historically been viewed as a difficult passage, so it's no surprise that some find this a confusing episode. It's the only 'negative' miracle in the gospels, where Jesus does not bring life or restoration.

The general consensus among scholars is that the fig tree is symbolic of Israel, which has failed to bear appropriate fruit when the messiah arrived. In the Old Testament we find several references to support this, often coupled with God pronouncing judgement (Hosea 9:10, Micah 7:1, Jeremiah 8:13). So Jesus is drawing upon these prophets and using an actual fruitless fig tree to point towards his identity as the messiah and God's disappointment with Israel for both its failure to recognise him and its lack of Godly fruit.

As is often the case with Mark, we should also look at the broader context of where this fits in his writing. The fig tree passages sit alongside the cleansing of the temple and questions about Jesus' authority. It's a deliberate choice to place these stories together to make the bigger point about recognising who Jesus is.

What about the 'out of season' comment in verse 13? There are two things to consider here. The first is about appearance without substance. The tree is in full leaf, enough to suggest possible fruit. But the tree looks good without actually producing what it's supposed to produce. It's a metaphor Paul later uses in Galatians 5 when he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit.

The other angle some have argued is linked to Mark's use of time. In 1:15 '*the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is near*' Mark uses the Greek word *kairos*. This is used to describe the right moment, rather than describing a measurement of time (that would be *chronos*). In 11:13 he uses *kairos* again to describe the time for figs. Some argue this is a deliberate move and is suggesting that the time of the messiah is not the time of the fig tree (or indeed the temple, which the tree represents). While this is a good argument, it's not definitive because Mark uses *kairos* differently across his gospel (eg: 10:30 "this present age" and for the harvest season in 12:2). All of which means you can be forgiven for finding this passage difficult!

I don't understand the link to prayer which Jesus makes in verses 22-25? There are several interpretations to this passage. The one which makes most sense to me is that Jesus is speaking on the road from Bethany, with the temple in sight in the distance. The temple is the mountain that faith removes. This inverts Zechariah 4:7, where a mountain is levelled for a temple to be built.

In the broader context of the chapter, when Jesus condemns the temple for failing to be a house of prayer for all nations, it makes sense that those who pray and forgive are empowered to do what the temple had done. Instead of the temple sacrifice enabling forgiveness, Jesus accomplishes that upon the cross, so all who pray through him can both forgive and be forgiven.



QUESTIONING JESUS

SCAN THE QR CODE
TO ASK A QUESTION



Notices



Church Meeting

Our next Church Members Meeting is this Sunday 20th September following the morning service. Papers are in the members area of the website. If you have problems accessing them, please speak to Emma.

PLEASE READ THE REPORT RELATING TO A SECOND MINISTER, AS WE WILL DISCUSS IT IN GROUPS.

Logos Hope

If you missed the OM Ship Logos Hope when it visited London in the summer, there is another chance to go on board. It is currently docked in Cardiff Bay until 27th September. All details of the events and activities as well as its location can be found here <https://www.uk.om.org/waves-of-hope-cardiff>

Church Barn Dance

Dust off your dancing shoes and join us for a Harvest Barn Dance on 3rd October at 6pm.

Everyone welcome - no dancing skills required! There will be two sets of dancing, and in the middle we'll share a Ploughman's Supper together. Please book your place [here](#) before the end of September.

We are also looking for some volunteers to help with preparing the ploughman's and putting chairs away after the event. Please speak to Steve or Emma if you can help.

CAP Money Coaching

CAP Money coaching is a free service designed to empower you with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to better manage your finances. It is a free course open to all. Wednesdays, 10am-12pm on 7th, 14th and 21st October. Book online [here](#). Contact David Clark or Helen Andrews for further info.

CTNA Joint Service

Join in with others from churches in Newbury on 18th October for a joint service to conclude the UK National Week of Prayer. The service will be held at St Nicolas Church at 6pm.

NBC Bake Off

NBC's popular Bake Off is back! Bake a cake and bring it along on October 18th. Our very own Prue Leith and Paul Hollywood will judge and award prizes! All donations will go to Newbury Street Pastors. Each cake must have a completed entry form including a list of ingredients. Please collect from the office.

Shoe Bags 2026

Please pick up a bag to fill for our "Christmas in a Shoe Bag" appeal. Each bag contains instructions and suggested gifts which will be collected and sent to children in Ukraine.

Made for you Conference

If you are going to the conference on Saturday 26th September and would like to lift share please WhatsApp or email Julie with your address: julieb@newburybaptistchurch.org.

Prayers



Praying for Ignite

Our teenagers have now started back at Ignite, and it's lining up to be an especially busy term for several of our young people (and their leaders!)

Please pray for a number of our older teens who will be attending a young leaders course on Friday evenings. Pray too for a group who have expressed an interest in baptism and will be undertaking baptism classes this term.

Plans are also advancing for the annual Youth Weekend at St. Cassian's, so please pray for our team and for the weekend to be full of fun and meaningful encounters with Jesus.

Newbury Show

With the Newbury Show taking place this weekend it is a good opportunity to pray for it and more widely for our farmers and agricultural workers.

For many years NBC was involved in hosting a 'Rest Tent' at the show, serving teas and providing an opportunity for attendees to sit and rest in a quiet atmosphere. This eventually became a shared responsibility with the Newbury and District Council of Churches, once the show extended to two days in 1976. A minister was always available to listen and pray for people if needed, and so it is in that spirit of support that we pray for all attending the show and the wider farming community.

Prayer for farmers:

Creator God we thank you for the Newbury Show and for the Christian conversations and prayer which have taken place there over the years. We pray that the show will be fun, successful and safe.

Lord please be with all those who work on farms to provide our food. In particular send your Comforter to be with farm workers who often work alone in isolated places, in all weathers, often operating dangerous machinery.

In a time where costs are escalating and budgets are tightening, we pray for those farmers whose livelihoods are looking increasingly fragile. Grant them wisdom as they make difficult decisions, and open the eyes of our government to respond to these challenges with fairness and generosity. Be with our farmers as they struggle with the consequences of our recent weather. Help and inspire our agricultural industry as it seeks ways to adapt to our changing climate.

We thank you for the hands that toil the earth, raise livestock, and transport food across the country. We thank you that ultimately you are the great provider of all our needs, and we bring these prayers to you in the name of Jesus, the hope of the world. Amen.