

Mental

A Mysterious Tree



☐ *Prepare in Advance*

Facilitator: In advance of the session:

- Retrieve, review, and have ready the article, "This Tree Produces Forty Types of Fruit" (links are provided on this session's webpage).
- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.

☐ *Introduce*

Begin by reading Romans 11:1-32 out loud. Watch the *Bible Background Video*, then use the following questions to guide discussion.

☐ *Understanding the Text*

Say: This passage is lengthy and complex, like most of Romans. Let's begin by working to understand what Paul is saying.

Now use the following questions to encourage discussion.

- Earlier in Romans Paul has been speaking about the importance of the Gospel among the Gentiles (non-Jews). Why do you think he finds it important, in the midst of this, to reaffirm God's love for the Jewish people?
- Try to summarize Paul's argument in verses 1-12. How does he prove that God's not finished with the Jewish people?
- Explain what Paul might mean (especially vs. 11, 14) that the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Kingdom might actually help bring the Jewish people to faith?

☐ *Discussion*

Share the article, "This Tree Produces Forty Kinds of Fruit" and use the following questions for discussion.

- What are the parts of this tree in Paul's analogy? Who is the root? Who is the original tree? Who are those grafted in? (drawing this might help)
- Where did the grafted branches come from (v. 17), and what benefit do they have from joining the tree?
- Why are branches broken or cut off a fruit tree? What eventually happens (or might happen) to these lost branches, according to Paul?

- Why, according to Paul, does God allow disobedience (v. 32)?

☐ *Hearing the Message*

Say: Now let's explore what God is saying to us through this passage:

- Where are we in Paul's analogy? What messages does he offer us as Gentiles – why should we be thankful?
- What is our tendency, and what warning does Paul offer us in vs. 19-21?
- Perhaps a loaded question... According to Paul, what is our relationship as Christians to the Jewish people... and to the Jewish faith? Should our relationship with them be any different than our relationship with others? Should our response to anti-Semitism be any different than our response to other racial prejudices and discrimination? Explain.
- In the end, why is it important for us to remember our place on the tree, and Who is the Root?

Close with prayer.

By Jon Parks

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