



Links Players

Nathanael---“Where’s Your Fig Tree?”

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” (John 1:48, NIV)

A number of famous trees are situated on America’s golf courses. Over the years, Augusta National was home to several of these, such as The Eisenhower Tree. Until 2014, this loblolly pine was situated on the left side of the fairway about 210 yards off the tee of the 17th hole. It was Ike’s nemesis.

Equally renowned is the 150-year-old oak tree sitting in front of the clubhouse where the world of golf gathers when they visit the course.

At Inverness in Toledo, Ohio, the “Hinkle Tree” was planted between the first and second rounds of the 1979 US Open. Its position to the left of the 8th tee prevents players from taking a shortcut down the 17th fairway.

Trees also play a vital role in the Bible’s teachings. One tree, the fig tree, is mentioned in 44 verses in the Bible. It is often used as a symbol for Israel (Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 8:13).

To sit under the plentiful shade of your own fig tree is the epitome of safety, peace, and prosperity in many Biblical passages (I Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4; and Zechariah 3:10). Tradition tells us that the rabbis’ favorite place to study and read the Torah was under a fig tree.

Do you have a “fig tree” like Nathanael? Where do you go when you want to spend your quiet time with God?

The fig tree was commonly planted outside people’s small houses to provide fruit and shade. Because these one-room homes had little space for anything besides a place to sleep and cook meals, a fig tree was a place where a person could go to think or study quietly.

Before Philip invited Nathanael (also known as Bartholomew) to “come and see” Jesus, he was sitting under a fig tree. We do not know for sure what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree, but he was most likely thinking, meditating, and praying.

Several commentators have suggested he could have been studying the teachings about the coming Messiah.

Do you have a “fig tree” like Nathanael? Where do you go when you want to spend your quiet time with God? Do you have a special place you regularly use to read, study Scripture, do daily devotionals, listen to worship music, or pray and talk with God?

In the Gospels, we learn that Jesus had a special place to pray. Luke tells us, “Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives...to pray.” (Luke 22:39) Mark relates that “...early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went to a solitary place where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35)

Over the years, I have found my “fig tree” at my desk in my home office with the lights turned low, my computer turned off, my phone silenced and out of reach, and a comfortable chair. Here, in the early morning, before anyone else gets up, I can focus my thoughts on Jesus and the study of Scripture. I try to remove all distractions so that my full attention can be directed to my Father in heaven.

If you currently do not have a “fig tree,” I encourage you to find one where you can, like Nathanael, spend time with God and his Word. Reading and studying scripture, contemplating daily devotionals, and talking with God in prayer is a wonderful way to start each day.

PRAYER - Heavenly Father, help us to find our own “fig trees,” where we can spend quiet time with you each day.

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