

The Branch and Beyond

1. The Branch

Welcome (10 mins)

What is the most memorable tree you've ever encountered?

Pray at this point for the rest of the evening, committing it to God.

Worship & Word (40 mins)

Setting the scene

This week's session breaks our usual format a bit as the main chunk is both worship and word combined. The main aim is to give your group a simple theological awareness of The Branch as a concept in Scripture which will help them to participate in God's vision for our Branch here. Try not to get bogged down in detail or historical setting etc. This session is designed to be more inspiration than exposition.

Prep

You'll need a big piece of paper (A3 or stick 4 pieces of A4 together) and a bunch of sticks with/without leaves - whatever you have. Coloured pens.

Note: If you're meeting online you'll need to have one person building the picture for everyone else to see (you could just draw it if necessary), and probably do all the references as a whole group, unless you are able to use the breakout room function on Zoom!

Way in

Start by asking how many people have heard James and Bill's talks on The Branch.

Q) Did anything surprise them or stick with them in particular?

Activity

Explain that tonight we're taking an even broader view, to build a picture of Jesus and his kingdom together.

Divide people into 2's/3's and divide up the scriptures below depending on how many groups you have.

Isaiah 11.1-5 Isaiah. 4.2 Zech. 6. 12-13

Jer. 23. 5-6 Zech. 3.6-8

Ask each group to find the passage, read it together and then consider the questions below. It's fine if some are not relevant to a particular passage, just move on. They might like to jot things down as they go. (15-20 mins)

Q) What is the *character* of this Branch?

Q) What will he *do*?

Q) *Who* will be affected by this Branch? *How*?

Now ask people to **share** these things. As each person shares a word or phrase, they can **take a stick** and put it on the paper to start to **form a tree**.

Someone else in that group should **write the word** or short phrase somewhere near the stick, as if it were a leaf/shoot/bud etc. The aim is not to be artistic and beautiful (though you may be!) but to meditate on the nature of The Branch and **build up a picture together**. This can be done quite prayerfully.

When everyone is finished, take a moment of quiet to bask in the glory of who Jesus is and the picture you've put together.

Read Dan. 4.10-12 out loud as a summary and prayer for all of this.

Witness (10 mins)

Pray together for the people mentioned here and those on our hearts who we know need to meet this Jesus. Pray also that we would grow in this character and nature - that we would each become branches reflecting the true vine.