

EMPTY – TREE

ABOUT THIS WEEK

This week your group will discover how an empty tree fig relates to their relationship with Jesus.

ITEMS NEEDED

- Prayer Journal Bibles Pens

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- Pray for the group Print Discussion Guide Refreshments (optional)
 Clean meeting area Clean bathroom Crack open front door

OPENING (5-7 MIN)

Briefly welcome everyone and say: Before we get into today's discussion, let's have some fun and ask:

IF YOU COULD GROW ANY KIND OF FRUIT TREE IN YOUR BACKYARD, REGARDLESS OF CLIMATE, WHAT KIND OF TREE WOULD IT BE?

After a discussion, say: The point of a fruit tree is to give us fruit, a point that we'll see in today's story from the life of Jesus as we continue our series called *Empty*.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Say: But first, can someone start us off with a brief prayer for our time together?

AN ORAL TRADITION (2-4 MIN)

After the prayer say: We heard on Sunday that the early Church grew because people told the story of Jesus. It was an oral tradition first, before the eyewitnesses ever wrote it down. But even after writing it down, it remained an oral tradition because people who didn't have Bibles to read or Audible to listen to.

Let's recreate the experience this idea of the oral tradition together.

FIRST, EVERYONE TURN TO MATTHEW 21:12-20 AND LET'S READ IT TOGETHER, EACH OF US TAKING ONE VERSE AT A TIME.

NOW, ONE WILL READ MATTHEW 21:12-20 ALOUD FOR US AGAIN WHILE THE REST OF US CLOSE OUR BIBLES AND OUR EYES AND LISTEN.

FINALLY, EVERYONE CLOSE THEIR BIBLES AND CAN I GET A BRAVE VOLUNTEER TO TRY AND TELL THE STORY AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE, FROM MEMORY, FROM MATTHEW 21:12-20? AS THEY DO, THE REST OF US CAN JUMP IN IF THEY MISS A DETAIL OR GET A DETAIL WRONG.

After the exercise, say: One of the powerful concepts of the oral tradition is the collective wisdom of the group. Imagine the early Church sitting around in living room and telling the story together.

WHAT INSIGHTS DID THAT EXERCISE GIVE YOU TO THE IDEA OF GOD’S WORD, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH, OR MEMORIZATION? (OR SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY?)

BEARING FRUIT (15-20 MIN)

Say: Aside from the experience of the oral tradition, there’s the lesson in the story of the empty fig tree. The idea of God’s followers bearing fruit for God.

WOULD SOMEONE READ JOHN 15:1-8 ALOUD FOR US? AND SOMEONE ELSE READ JOHN 15:16 ALOUD FOR US?

After the reading, say: On Sunday we heard about how we are planted where we are to give fruit to others that they may experience eternal life.

DOES ANYONE HAVE A STORY OF BEING A FRUITFUL PART OF SOMEONE ELSE’S SALVATION STORY?

DOES ANYONE HAVE A STORY OF TRYING TO BE A PART SOMEONE ELSE’S SALVATION STORY BUT THEY HAVEN’T COME TO FAITH (YET)?

AS A CLOSING QUESTION, WHO IS SOMEONE YOU’D LIKE TO INVITE TO ONE OF OUR EASTER SERVICES?

GOSPEL REMINDER (1 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Sometimes we can try to bear fruit for God as if it all depends on us, but that’s where John 15:5 gives us a great reminder when Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” Be encouraged—your job is to faithfully abide in Jesus, it’s God’s job to give faith!

ANNOUNCEMENTS TO SHARE (2-3 MIN)

Say: Before we get to our prayer requests, just a few quick announcements—

- Maundy Thursday Service – Thursday, March 28, 6:30 PM
- 24-Hour Prayer Vigil – Thursday, March 28 through Friday, March 29. There are only a few spots left!
- Good Friday Service – Friday, March 29, 6:30 PM
- Easter Egg-Stravaganza – Saturday, March 30, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Petting zoo, games, Easter egg hunt. Bring your kids and invite kids you know!
- Easter Worship – Sunday, March 31. There’s a traditional sunrise service at 7:00, with regular services at 8:15 AM, 9:30 AM and 10:45 AM.

CLOSING PRAYER (5-7 MIN)

Say: We're going to close in prayer by first naming the people we're inviting to Easter and then we'll move into our regular prayer requests.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

After writing the prayer requests in your group's prayer journal, ask if someone would like to close the group in prayer. If not, Host, close the group in prayer.