

☐ *Before the Session*

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Have the Tree Time Lapse video ready to view.
- Optional: have small tree plants or seeds for each person.
- Encourage your group to listen to the podcast for this session (Share the link via email or social media)

☐ *Intro*

Show the tree seasons time lapse video and invite the group to silently contemplating the tree. Invite them, as they look at the tree video, to think about how the tree got there; what it might have been like for it to grow in that environment; what may have happened in the world during its lifespan; what threats to its existence it might have faced; and what it might look like in the future. If needed, show the video more than once to allow the group ample time to consider these perspectives.

Ask questions like:

- How often do you really stop to consider trees and why? What trees in your life have a special significance to you?
- In what ways can we connect with living things that potentially have such long life spans?
- If trees could talk, what kinds of stories might they tell? What might they think of the world around them? What can they tell us about us?

☐ *Content*

Read together Ezekiel 17:22–24 and watch the Bible Background Video. Ask questions like:

- What kinds of things do you think make it difficult for us to take a longer view when we're going through hard times, and why?
- How does the perspective of a long life affect the way we typically respond to either petty annoyances or major setbacks?
- Does it factor in differently depending on the nature of the problem?
- How might someone best cultivate patience, despite the urgency of their situation?
- In what ways does an awareness of the larger arc of History affect our response to today's problems?
- Where do we find God enter the conversation when we think about a larger view of the universe and how does that relate to the immediacy of our relationship with God?

□ *Closure*

(Optional) Give each group member a seed or sapling from which a tree might eventually grow and invite them to plant it today.

- Return to the tree video used earlier. Invite members of the group to take a few minutes more to think about trees and the situation that they feel their world is in today.
- Invite volunteers to share briefly the things that they hope their tree might see in its lifetime, and of things that they might see themselves doing as they age along with the tree.

Close with a shared prayer that includes the various hopes and visions of the group members.

By David Adams