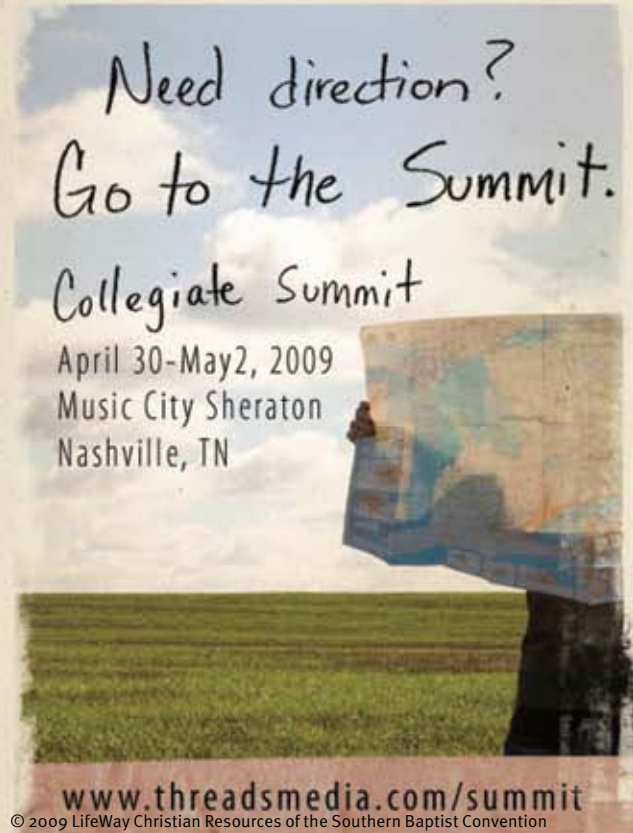


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Need direction?
Go to the Summit.
Collegiate Summit
April 30–May 2, 2009
Music City Sheraton
Nashville, TN

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APRIL 2009 TEACHING PLANS

THE PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH AND MICAH

LASTING TRUTH

Life as a prophet must have been pretty rough at times. Often people didn't want to hear what they had to say — and the rest of the time? No one believed them. Such was the life of Isaiah and Micah, messengers of God, who spoke both difficult and life-saving truth to the people of Israel and Judah. And much of the truth they spoke of is still being revealed today.

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

The goal of the *Collegiate* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. Here's a breakdown of what's inside: *Getting Started* helps introduce the topic and get your students engaged in the lesson. *Need to Knows* highlights the main characters, historical context, and key verses of each lesson. *Explore the Bible* leads your students through the Scripture passages of the lesson, helping them understand the text, its historical and cultural context, and what it means to them today. *Apply to Life* gives you ideas for furthering the application of the Scripture, so students can take active steps to process what they're learning and how it impacts their lives. Be sure you also utilize the commentary provided (threadsmedia.com/collegiate) to help with your preparation and personal study of the lessons.

As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know what we could do better and how these teaching plans could be even more relevant to your students and your ministry.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

At the end of March, we're launching a new *Collegiate Blog* at threadsmedia.com/collegiate, a place where we can communicate with each other about what's going on, what's coming up, and how we can better serve the college students around you. Be sure to check it out and provide your individual insight!

Need more ideas for leading college students? Check out the **Collegiate Summit** in Nashville, from April 30 — May 2, 2009. Go to threadsmedia.com/summit to sign up. Spots are filling up fast. The *Collegiate* staff is looking forward to meeting you!

Lindsey Bush
editor, *Collegiate*
lindsey.bush@threadsmedia.com

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 35 OF THE SPRING ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "IN CHRIST ALONE" BY BETHANY DILLON AND MATT HAMMITT, FROM THE ALBUM *IN CHRIST ALONE — MODERN HYMNS OF WORSHIP*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson covers the vicarious suffering of God's Servant. The emphasis is on the adequacy of the Servant's sacrifice on behalf of sinners.

FOCAL PASSAGES

ISAIAH 53:2-12

KEY VERSE

ISAIAH 53:6



THE SACRIFICE OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "In Christ Alone" by Bethany Dillon and Matt Hammitt playing in the background as students arrive.

The following job requires 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will be paid nothing, though the rewards are immeasurable. It's generally a thankless job, though there may come a point after many years that your patrons begin to appreciate your contribution. Sacrifice will be a major part of what you do. You will need to cut corners in the areas of your own wants and needs to meet the needs of your patrons. You'll lose sleep. You'll be compelled to cry and pull your hair out. But there will be joy and laughter, and a great sense of satisfaction.

- Do you want the job?
- Any guesses what it is? (Parenting)
- Have you ever thought about what your parents have done for you in this light?
- What kinds of sacrifices have they made for you?

Alternative: In *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan, the great lion, takes the place of Edmund, surrenders himself to the white witch, and dies in his place. Watch this scene together and then discuss the following:

- **What makes Aslan's sacrifice so incredible?** (It's voluntary; it's for a boy who betrayed his family for Turkish Delight; and he gave his life willingly, without a fight.)
- **Who do you think is the most grateful for this and why?**

VERSES TO CHECK OUT

The crucifixion accounts:

- Matthew 27:32-55
- Mark 15:21-41
- Luke 23:26-49
- John 19:16-37

RECOMMENDED READ

Charles Spurgeon preached 22 sermons on Isaiah 53. Five of them are available in their entirety at spurgeon.org, including "The Death of Christ."

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1). UNRECOGNIZED SACRIFICE (ISAIAH 53:2-3)

READ ISAIAH 53:2-3.

²He grew up before Him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or splendor that we should look at Him, no appearance that we should desire Him. ³He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like one people turned away from; He was despised, and we didn't value Him.

In this prophecy of the Suffering Servant, it becomes clear that in many ways He and His sacrifice will be unrecognized.

- How do these verses describe Him?
- What reasons might God have had for not making Jesus' life and death more of a big show? For example, Jesus was born in a manger and not in a palace. Why is that? (shows His humility and that He came for all, including the poor.)
- How might the Suffering Servant's humble beginnings keep people from believing that He is the true Savior?

2). COSTLY SACRIFICE (ISAIAH 53:4-6)

READ ISAIAH 53: 4-6.

⁴Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. ⁶We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all.

- Take a few moments to discuss the prophesied suffering of the Servant of God. What kinds of things was He sent to endure?

- What does it mean to you that these specific prophecies have come true and with such incredible accuracy?
- We often throw around words like “transgressions” and “iniquities.” What do these words really mean in the context of our daily lives?
- What implications do these acts have on our future if we choose to not view them as serious issues?
- Do you honestly think a little lie here or a little temptation there makes a difference in the long run? If not, then what's the point of concerning ourselves with the details?
- When you read about our going astray (all of us) and our iniquities being placed on Him, how does that make you feel?

3). VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE (ISAIAH 53:7-9)

READ ISAIAH 53:7-9.

⁷He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth. ⁸He was taken away because of oppression and judgment; and who considered His fate? For He was cut off from the land of the living; He was struck because of My people's rebellion. ⁹They made His grave with the wicked, and with a rich man at His death, although He had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully.

- What is this passage implying by the Lamb's “silence”? (He went voluntarily, not kicking and screaming, when He was being led to His death.)

- In the past when you've been asked to sacrifice your time or money to help someone, did you volunteer whole-heartedly? Or did you grumble at how much you were having to give up for someone who wasn't as deserving?

In the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, a group of U.S. soldiers in WWII are assigned to locate and bring to safety a young man whose brothers died in the war. The group perseveres in the midst of seemingly unending danger to fulfill their mission. While the soldiers were obeying a direct order, they still had the option to back out.

- What were the soldiers sacrificing in order to rescue Private Ryan?
- Had they been sent to rescue an entire battalion, would that have made their mission any more important?
- While the soldiers did question the value of their efforts as more sacrifice became necessary, what things were gained as a result of their completing the mission?

This passage points to the fact that Jesus was innocent (had done no violence) and yet willingly chose to die for our sins. Let that sink in for a minute. In His innocence, He willingly chose to die for your salvation, for your forgiveness, to pay for your sins.

- At the end of the movie, Tom Hanks' character tells Private Ryan to “earn this,” referring to the amount of sacrifice it took to save his life. Have you ever stopped to personally consider that Christ made an even bigger sacrifice for you — knowingly and innocently enduring torture and an agonizing death so that you would have the opportunity to live?
- While the debt is already paid, how are you actively “earning” your brief time on this earth?

THINK ABOUT THIS

- Consider the meaning of Christ’s sacrifice to you personally. Have you surrendered your will to that of God’s by placing your personal faith in Jesus Christ?
- If you’ve never made the decision to trust Christ, read “Free to Move” at the back of the spring issue of *Collegiate* magazine to learn more.

APPLY TO LIFE

- What is it about the sacrifice of Jesus that speaks the loudest to you?
- Contemplate how costly it was that Jesus laid down His life voluntarily for us and that His suffering effectively atoned for the entire world (or all who would accept it).

COUNTERCULTURE

Matthew Sleeth was the head of an ER. He was a successful doctor who had a large house and a fast car. His commitment to Christ and his concern for the health of his “neighbors” has compelled him to sell his big house and move into a house the size of his former garage. He sold his fast car and traded it for a more fuel efficient car. Why? He realized his lifestyle choices have an impact on the environment. The pollutants and amount of energy he used affected others around him. With the rise of pollution and the rise of asthma and cancer, he added two and two together and decided to make a change. His sacrifice may appear small, but his influence is enormous.

“Certain it is that the reason there is so much shallow living — much talk but little obedience — is that so few are prepared to be, like the pine on the hilltop, alone in the wind for God.”

— Amy Carmichael, Irish missionary to India (1867–1951)

“In a world where success is the measure and justification of all things, the figure of him who was sentenced and crucified remains a stranger.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian, pastor, and martyr (1906–1945)

PRAY ...

Get into groups of three and share what you feel Jesus might be calling you to sacrifice, and pray for each other in doing so.

BEFORE NEXT TIME

RE-READ “WORSHIPING JESUS AS MY LIVING LORD” on page 39 of your *Collegiate* magazine.

DOWNLOAD THE SONG “Jesus the Lord My Savior Is” by Sandra McCracken, from the album *The Builder and the Architect*, to play next week.

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 39 OF THE SPRING ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "JESUS THE LORD MY SAVIOR IS" BY SANDRA McCracken, FROM THE ALBUM *THE BUILDER AND THE ARCHITECT*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

Today's passage is about Jesus' resurrection and the disciples' worshipping Him in Galilee. The lesson emphasizes reasons for worshipping Jesus as the living Lord and encourages us to worship Jesus daily.

FOCAL PASSAGES MATTHEW 28:1-17

KEY VERSE MATTHEW 28:17A



WORSHIPING JESUS AS MY LIVING LORD

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Jesus the Lord My Savior Is" by Sandra McCracken playing in the background as students arrive.

Open the session with prayer, thanking God for His risen Son and the opportunity we have to know Him.

If it's available, show a clip from the movie *Contact*. There is a scene in the middle of the movie where a priest (Matthew McConaughey) is talking with a scientist (Jodie Foster) regarding the existence of God. In the clip, the scientist basically says if you can't prove God, then God must not be real. The priest responds by asking her if she loved her father. She says "Yes." Then he replies, "Prove it." The point being, there are things in which the evidence is very strong, but cannot be proven. We must base our belief in faith, in the evidence.

- What do you think about the priest's argument for the existence of God?
- Does his appeal to other areas of life that lack "proof" resonate with you regarding embracing the mystery of God? Or is this a part of your faith journey that is a struggle for you?
- If you know the rest of the movie, express the struggle the scientist has to produce proof for the things she experienced. How does this affect her?
- Make a list of things you believe, even though you have never seen or experienced them yourself. Then discuss what has led you to believe these things are actually real.

Today we'll discuss the sound reasons we see in Scripture that compel us to worship Jesus as our Lord.

Alternative:

- What does the word "Lord" mean?
- Would you agree that perhaps the nearest word to it in our language is boss? How is Jesus our "Boss"? How does this word fall short of explaining what it means for Him to be our Lord?
- What does the word "worship" mean? (to honor, or give weight to someone, adoring reverence)
- How does Jesus being our "Lord" lead us to worship Him?

VERSE TO CHECK OUT

1 Peter 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

RECOMMENDED READS

For someone struggling to believe Jesus is the Son of God:

- *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell
- *Basic Christianity* by John Stott
- *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis
- *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1). THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT (MATTHEW 28:1-7)

READ MATTHEW 28:1-7.

¹After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. ²Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his robe was as white as snow. ⁴The guards were so shaken from fear of him that they became like dead men.

⁵But the angel told the women, “Don’t be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here! For He has been resurrected, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell His disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead. In fact, He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there.’ Listen, I have told you.”

- Why did the Pharisees choose to have a dead man’s body guarded?
- What caused Jesus’ tomb to open?
- How did the guards respond to this? Did they carry out their duties assigned to them?
- Who did the angel first announce Jesus’ resurrection to?
- What makes this announcement to the women significant? (provides more evidence; made to the socially downtrodden; God’s honor and respect for women was greater than society’s)

It’s important to note here that this first announcement was made to women. Women were not held in high esteem in the ancient world. Their testimony was not considered that valuable then. The angels first telling this to women and the disciples recording it this way was significant because it validates the truthfulness of what

happened. You see, if the disciples were making this up, the story would have more punch if the first people to hear of the resurrection were men. It would have created a more “believable” story, following cultural norms. The very fact that they record this first announcement to women tells us they were recording the events as they happened and not as they would’ve perceived they should’ve happened!

- When the angel spoke to the women, what evidence did he offer concerning his message of Jesus’ resurrection? (see vv. 6-7)

READ MATTHEW 26:32.

³²But after I have been resurrected, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

- What do you think went through their minds as they heard the angel speak of Jesus meeting them in Galilee?

2). THE APPEARANCE (MATTHEW 28:8-10)

READ MATTHEW 28:8-10.

⁸So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell His disciples the news. ⁹Just then Jesus met them and said, “Good morning!” They came up, took hold of His feet, and worshiped Him. ¹⁰Then Jesus told them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see Me there.”

- Verse 8 speaks of their mixed emotions. Can you remember a time when you were simultaneously afraid and excited?
- What did Jesus’ appearance do for the women who had just heard this strange but joyful announcement?
- How did the two Marys respond to seeing Jesus raised to life?

- Has there been a time when you’ve been compelled to worship Jesus? What led you to do so?
- Why were Jesus’ instructions for the women important?

3). THE AUTHORITIES’ MOTIVES (MATTHEW 28:11-15)

READ MATTHEW 28:11-15.

¹¹As they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money ¹³and told them, “Say this, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping.’ ¹⁴If this reaches the governor’s ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

- Why do you think the chief priests lacked faith?
- Note that in the Roman Era, guards who failed at their task could be executed. How did the chief priests help them?
- What was the cover-up?
- What “gaps” in the story of Jesus’ body being stolen do you see? [The tomb was guarded with armed guards; the disciples were fishermen, not warriors; the tomb had a large boulder over it and was sealed; the disciples came to the tomb to look for themselves (Peter and John); if the disciples somehow stole the body, why was it never recovered and produced as proof?]
- Take a moment to reflect on what you might say to one of your friends if they said to you, “The body was probably stolen by His disciples.”

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

4). THE RIGHT CHOICE (MATTHEW 28:16-17)

READ MATTHEW 28:16-17.

¹⁶The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted.

- When the disciples saw Jesus, how did they respond?
- Is it surprising to you that some doubted? Why or why not?
- Although some doubted, what did most of the disciples do in response to seeing the resurrected Jesus?
- What is it about Jesus' resurrection that compels us to worship Him?

Lined writing area for student responses.

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 40 OF THE SPRING ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "YOU GAVE ME A PROMISE" BY FIREFLIGHT, FROM THE ALBUM *UNBREAKABLE*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

Today's passages are about the Lord's plan to use Cyrus to return His people from exile in Babylon to the land of promise. The emphasis is on living with confidence that the Lord is working in the world at all times to achieve His purposes.

FOCAL PASSAGES
ISAIAH 45:1-7,9-13

KEY VERSE
ISAIAH 45:7



GOD IS AT WORK IN THE WORLD

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "You Gave Me a Promise" by Fireflight playing in the background as students arrive.

Watch the flood scene at the end of *Evan Almighty*. Evan is a modern-day Noah who God nudged forward to accomplish His will. Initially, Evan was upset and distraught at his call, but in the end he realized how much what God had asked him to do helped his community and his family.

- Can you think of any other reluctant followers of God? (Jeremiah, Moses, etc.)
- Have you ever looked at the call to follow Jesus and felt hesitant? (Look at Jesus' call to die to self in Luke 9:23 or the cost of discipleship in Matthew 10.)
- What is it that compels you to follow Him despite the cost?

Alternative: Consider the following events: 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the tsunami in Thailand.

- What kinds of questions do these events raise for you?
- What good have you seen after or as a result of these events?
- How do you see the hand of God in the midst of such horrific events?

WORD STUDY

SOVEREIGNTY (noun) — Biblical teaching that God possesses all power and is the ruler of all things. God rules and works according to His eternal purpose, even through events that seem to contradict or oppose His rule.¹

1. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1523.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1). GOD'S PURPOSES (ISAIAH 45:1-2)

READ ISAIAH 45:1-2.

¹The LORD says this to Cyrus, His anointed, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him, to unloose the loins of kings, to open the doors before him and the gates will not be shut: ²"I will go before you and level the uneven places; I will shatter the bronze doors and cut the iron bars in two.

- What does the word *anointed* mean?

Have students look up the word in their concordance and do a mini word study, asking each person with a Bible to read two or more verses that include anointed in order to get a picture of the meaning.

- Ask one person to read the dictionary definition (Bible Dictionary if you have one) of *anointed*.
- What is the overall picture of the word?
- How do these verses describe Cyrus and what God was doing through him?

2). GOD'S PRESENCE (ISAIAH 45:3-5)

READ ISAIAH 45:3-5.

³I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches from secret places, so that you may know that I, the LORD, the God of Israel call you by your name. ⁴I call you by your name, because of Jacob My servant and Israel My chosen one. I give a name to you, though you do not know Me. ⁵I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God but Me. I will strengthen you, though you do not know Me, ..."

- What's unusual about God using Cyrus?

- What does this tell us about God and what (or who) He chooses in order to accomplish His will?

There's no record of whether Cyrus ever decided to follow God. But what we do know is that God may use nonbelievers to accomplish His sovereign will.

- What potential benefits do you see from God using someone who does not believe in Him?

3). GOD'S POWER (ISAIAH 45:6-7)

READ ISAIAH 45:6-7.

⁶so that all may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is no one but Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷I form light and create darkness, I make success and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

- To what extent is God revealing Himself to people all over the world that they may know He is God?
- How does bringing "success and ... disaster" reveal God's power?
- What makes verse 7 so hard to stomach?
- Why is it necessary for God to display His power?

4). GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (ISAIAH 45:9-13)

READ ISAIAH 45:9-13.

⁹"Woe to the one who argues with his Maker—one clay pot among many. Does clay say to the one forming it: What are you making? Or does your work say: He has no hands? ¹⁰How absurd is the one who says to his father: What are you fathering? or to his mother: What are you giving birth to?" ¹¹This is what the LORD, the Holy One of Israel and its Maker, says: "Ask Me what is to happen to My sons, and

instruct Me about the work of My hands. ¹²I made the earth, and created man on it. It was My hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. ¹³I have raised him up in righteousness, and will level all roads for him. He will rebuild My city, and set My exiles free, not for a price or a bribe," says the LORD of Hosts.

- How do we go to God with questions and at the same time not quarrel with Him?

Think of how ridiculous it is for a pot to talk back to the potter. Now come up with a list of your own pictures of this kind of hilarity (i.e. a trigonometry student telling his PhD professor how to solve a problem, a child telling their parents how to read, etc.).

- How do you deal with questions of trusting God and His plan when facing hard circumstances that appear to have no happy ending?
- College life is full of questions when often answers seem distant. What tips can you offer others in the group on waiting for God's sovereign will?

→ THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 41 OF THE SPRING ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "LOVE CAN" BY DECEMBERADIO, FROM THE ALBUM *SATISFIED*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.
- DEPENDING ON THE INTRODUCTION YOU CHOOSE, YOU'LL NEED INTERNET ACCESS, TO DOWNLOAD THE SONG "ME AND JESUS" BY STELLAR KART, OR A TV/DVD AND A COPY OF THE MOVIE *LES MISÉRABLES*.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

THIS LESSON DISCUSSES THE RESTORATION OF BELIEVERS WHO HAVE SINNED TO CLOSE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. THE EMPHASIS IS ON THE LORD'S COMPASSION AND STEADFAST LOVE.

FOCAL PASSAGES

ISAIAH 54:1-10

KEY VERSE

ISAIAH 54:10



THE REDEPTIVE LOVE OF GOD

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Love Can" by Decemberadio playing in the background as students arrive.

WATCH

To see God's redemptive power at work, watch "Cardboard Testimonies," a YouTube video from a service at Hillside Christian Church in Amarillo, Texas.

- What are you currently struggling with in your life that makes you doubt a happy ending?
- Do you ever question God's will?
- How has He been faithful in the past?
- Whose cardboard testimony struck you the most?

Alternative 1:

- Listen to the song "Me and Jesus" by Stellar Kart.
- What is the band trying to communicate about their relationship with Jesus?
- Describe your relationship with your closest friend. Why are you so close to this person, and how do you maintain that close relationship?
- Have you ever worked through a broken relationship? How has your effort (or lack thereof) impacted the relationship?
- How would you compare and contrast your relationship with this close friend to your relationship with Jesus?

Alternative 2:

Watch the first scene of *Les Misérables*. The first five minutes of the movie has a powerful interchange between the priest and the main character, Jean Valjean. In this the priest offers an act of redemption and generosity that forever impacts him Valjean.

- What makes the priest's actions so incredible?
- How does Jean Valjean react?

If you know the rest of Jean Valjean's story, share what happens in his life due to this very important moment. He is completely changed. He is no longer an angry and bitter person. Instead he is a caring individual who helps people, even at great sacrifice.

- How is this act of redemption comparable to what Jesus has done for us?

VERSES TO CHECK OUT

Psalm 71:23-24a

"My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to You, because You have redeemed me. Therefore, my tongue will proclaim Your righteousness all day long."

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1). GOD PROVIDES A FUTURE (ISAIAH 54:1-3)

READ ISAIAH 54:1-3.

¹“Rejoice, barren one, who did not give birth; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the forsaken one will be more than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD. ²“Enlarge the site of your tent, and let your tent curtains be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your ropes, and drive your pegs deep. ³For you will spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will dispossess nations and inhabit the desolate cities.

- Paul asks for prayer concerning the gospel before he asks for prayer about his own safety. What does that reveal about his character?

The “barren one” here is a picture of Jerusalem that poetically stands for God’s people. The people of Israel have been exiled and experienced great shame and humiliation. Similarly, a barren woman in this culture would feel shame for not producing heirs for her family. God is painting a picture of the way His people have felt in exile and the changes He is bringing to His people. He is going to expand them far beyond what they would’ve expected had they not experienced their shame. Chapter 54 is a song of hope to the exiles in Babylon as God describes their future blessing.

- What was the result of Israel’s disobedience?
- What is God planning to do/show His people as He speaks of their future?
- What does this teach us about God and His relationship with His people?

Although the people of Israel would experience judgment for walking away from God, they would receive mercy and be restored to a glorious future.

- How does this portray hope for us in our relationship with God?

2). GOD FORGIVES THE PAST (ISAIAH 54:4-5)

READ ISAIAH 54:4-5.

⁴“Do not be afraid, for you will not be put to shame; don’t be humiliated, for you will not be disgraced. For you will forget the shame of your youth, and you will no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood. ⁵For your husband is your Maker—His name is Yahweh of Hosts—and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.

- What response is God communicating to His people as He speaks of them no longer experiencing shame, humiliation, and their forgetting their past? (forgiveness)

Ask for volunteers to read Psalm 103:12, Jeremiah 31:34, and Micah 7:19.

- What do these Scriptures teach us regarding God’s forgiveness?
- In Isaiah 54:5, God refers to Himself as Israel’s husband and redeemer. What do these titles communicate about who God is and how He relates to us?

3). GOD LOVES EVERLASTINGLY (ISAIAH 54:6-8)

READ ISAIAH 54:6-8.

⁶For the LORD has called you, like a wife deserted and wounded in spirit, a wife of one’s youth when she is rejected,” says your God. ⁷“I deserted you for a brief moment, but I will take you back with great compassion. ⁸In a surge of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but I will have compassion on you with everlasting love,” says the LORD your Redeemer.

- In this passage we see phrases like “deserted you” and “in a surge of anger.” What happened to evoke this kind of strong reaction from God?
- As God speaks of His justice, He also communicates His compassion and everlasting kindness. What does this tell us about God?
- As God shows us how much He longs to be in intimate relationship with us, what must we do to be in intimate relationship with Him?
- What does it take to develop intimacy in a relationship? How does God demonstrate what it takes to achieve intimacy? (forgiveness, compassion, commitment)

4). GOD HONORS HIS COVENANT (ISAIAH 54:9-10)

READ ISAIAH 54:9-10.

⁹“For this is like the days of Noah to Me: when I swore that the waters of Noah would never flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. ¹⁰Though the mountains move and the hills shake, My love will not be removed from you and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,” says your compassionate LORD.

- What promise is God making to His people?
- What’s the comparison to Noah? (Just as He promised not to flood the earth again, He is promising to not turn away from His people again.)

God’s promise to never take away His love from His people is echoed for the church in the New Testament.

- What does it mean to you that God promises to never stop loving His people? (See Romans 8:37-39.)

