

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
DECEMBER 21 2024

the servant hero

Scripture Story: Isaiah 53; 61; Zechariah 7; 8.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 59.
Key Text: Isaiah 53:3.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The prophecies of Isaiah and Zechariah look beyond Israel's present troubles—oppression by foreign nations, exile in Babylon, the attempt to rebuild the homeland after exile. They look forward to a time of peace and prosperity in which all nations look to Israel as a source of truth and enlightenment. At the center of these prophecies is the figure of the Lord's Servant as described in Isaiah 53 and other passages. The Servant is not the conquering Messiah who will defeat Israel's enemies in battle, but the humble Leader who suffers on behalf of others.

When Jesus came, He was not the kind of Messiah Israel was hoping for. Their hope was for deliverance from their immediate problem—political oppression. Jesus came to be a different kind of Leader. His type of leadership was foretold in the prophecies of the suffering Servant, and His kingdom was to be the peaceful kingdom prophesied by Isaiah and Zechariah—not just the kingdom of Israel, but a kingdom for those of all nations who worship the God of compassion and peace.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize the portrayal of Jesus in the Old Testament prophecies. *(Know)*
- Desire to follow Jesus as a leader rather than the world's idea of a hero. *(Feel)*
- Choose to follow Jesus' example of loving service to others. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4: "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. . . . He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things." (Isaiah 53:4-6; Daniel 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17-19; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

On a whiteboard or chalkboard, draw a Venn diagram. Brainstorm with the students a list of qualities that are desirable in heroes. List their com-

ments in the Venn diagram in the following way:

On the left side of the first circle, list attributes of people whom the world esteems as heroes but that are not found in people who reflect Christ's character. In the right hand side of the second circle, list qualities that Jesus and godly people throughout history had in common but that do not correspond to the world's idea of fame and popularity usually associated with heroes in secular society. In the section created by the intersection of the two circles of the Venn diagram, list qualities that all heroes have in common.

After this exercise, engage students in a discussion and highlight the importance of making wise choices that God would approve when selecting role models, knowing that people whom we admire eventually influence who we become. Human heroes, no matter how great they might be in some ways, all possess character flaws and weaknesses. But if Jesus becomes our hero, the more we think of Him and admire the beauty of His character, the more we will become like Him: 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 12:1, 2.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Heroes often come from humble or ordinary backgrounds. Jesus came from a simple peasant family and grew up to use His divine powers to help and heal people. One important distinction exists between Jesus and all other great heroes. They triumph through strength—using force to destroy their enemies. Only Jesus triumphed through self-sacrificing love, knowing that by suffering and dying for the sins of the world He could save the human race from the penalty of sin, that is, from eternal death.

"Love for sinners led Christ to pay the price of redemption. No one else could ransom men and women from the power of the enemy. His life bore no taint of self-assertion. The world honors position, wealth, and talent, but the Son of God would present none of these. The Messiah was not to use any of the means that people employ to win allegiance. The Bible foretold his renunciation of self:

'He shall not cry out, nor raise His voice,
Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.
A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench' (Isaiah 42:2, 3, NKJV)" (*Royalty and Ruin*, p. 244).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The prophets gave the people of Israel hope throughout hard times. But people focused on the message they wanted to hear—that someday their nation would be great again, that foreign oppressors would be overthrown. They overlooked some of the shadows in the picture of the future that the prophets painted—a picture of a Messiah who would conquer through suffering, who would redeem others by dying for them. When Jesus came, they didn't see in Him the Messiah they were expecting. Sometimes our own expectations of how we would like God to work blind us to what God is actually doing in our lives.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Direct students' attention to the activity in Sunday's lesson. Divide the class into groups of three or four and have them write a description of the mission of the Messiah based on the Bible passages in the lesson. Encourage group members to suggest other Bible passages—particularly from the Gospels—that could be used to add to the description of the Messiah. Then give each group poster board and art supplies and ask them to describe and illustrate the role and mission of Messiah, using several Bible texts drawn from the lesson and from other parts of the Bible.

After the posters have been done and shared with the whole group, ask: What kind of Messiah were the people of Israel looking for? What kind of Messiah did God send them? Was Jesus what they really needed? Why did most people not recognize Him as the true Messiah?

What kind of Savior, God, or hero are people looking for today? Does Jesus fit the expectations of the people? How can we help people be more aware of their need for Jesus and how He fulfills their needs?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

"The prophecies concerning the Savior led the Hebrews to live in a state of constant expectancy. Many believed and 'confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth' (Hebrews 11:13, NKJV). The promises repeated through patriarchs and prophets had kept alive the hope of His appearing. God had not at first revealed the exact time of the first advent; and even when the prophecy of Daniel made this known, not everyone interpreted the message correctly. Century after century passed. Finally there were no more prophets. . . . But heaven's council had determined the hour for the coming of Christ. 'When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman' (Galatians 4:4, 5, NKJV). . . .

"When the Savior finally appeared 'in the likeness of men' (Philippians 2:7, NKJV), Satan could only bruise His heel, while by every act of suffering Christ was bruising the head of His adversary. The anguish that sin has brought was poured into the heart of the Sinless One. Yet Christ was breaking the slavery that had held humanity. Every pang of anguish, every insult, was working out the deliverance of the race.

"If Satan could have gotten Christ to stain His perfect purity by one act or even one thought, the prince of darkness would have triumphed and gained the whole human family. But while Satan could distress, he could not contaminate. He could cause agony, but not defilement. He made the life of Christ one long scene of conflict and trial, yet with every attack he was losing his hold on humanity. . . .

"Through death Jesus destroyed 'him who had the power of death, that is, the devil' (Hebrews 2:14, NKJV). This act made the plan of salvation secure forever. In death, in rising again, Jesus opened the gates of the grave for all His followers. Our Redeemer has opened the way so that the most sinful, the most needy, the most oppressed and despised, may find access to the Father" (*Royalty and Ruin,* p. 246). Could it be that having both the Old and New Testaments to learn from, we still

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Using "Pop-Culture" References in Teaching

This week's lesson asks students to reflect on the idea of Jesus as a leader, or hero.

- Be sure to point out differences between the values of our culture and the values of the Bible. While similarities can be useful, we should be aware of the differences, too. For example, superheroes triumph through strength and the use of force, while Jesus triumphed through self-sacrifice.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

don't fully appreciate Jesus' ministry of peace, humility, and servanthood? We should turn to the Bible to deepen our understanding of Jesus' ministry and be willing to follow Him on the narrow way of self-sacrifice and total surrender that He might fulfill His purpose in our lives.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Say: This week's and last week's lessons have talked about how the promises of Jesus' coming brought hope to God's people in dark times, and how those same promises can bring hope for us today.

Hand out a 3" x 5" index card to each student. Write on a chalkboard or whiteboard at the front of the room:

"Jesus gives me hope because . . ."

Ask each person to fill out the card with their own reasons why Jesus provides them with hope. Next have them turn to their partners and share the hope Jesus offers them.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God promised His people a Deliverer who would bring them out of darkness and into light. That promised Deliverer was Jesus. He was a humble servant who met suffering people where they were, helped them, and shared in their suffering. In the end, He shared the worst of all human experiences—a painful death He didn't deserve.

Jesus triumphed through suffering. He was great because He was humble. He led by being a servant. He promises hope to all of us in our darkest times, but He also calls us to serve others and to suffer just as He did. It's a big promise, and a big challenge. Let's pray we're all ready to be led by Jesus.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*),* chapter 59.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Isaiah 53; 61; Zechariah 7; 8.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 59.

the servant hero



PEARL/LIGHTSTOCK

flashlight

"For more than a thousand years the Jewish people had waited the coming of the promised Saviour. Their brightest hopes had rested upon this event. For a thousand years, in song and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, His name had been enshrined; and yet when He came, they did not recognize Him as the Messiah for whom they had so long waited" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 710).

key text

"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem."

(Isaiah 53:3, NIV)

what do you think?

What makes a great hero?

Create a list of character traits, qualities, and skills that you think heroes possess:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

did you know?

Isaiah 53, one of the passages we're studying this week, is one of the sections of the book of Isaiah usually known to Bible scholars as the "suffering servant songs." These poems describe a servant of the Lord who will bring deliverance and peace to God's people through His own suffering.

During Jesus' ministry on earth, the prophecies of Isaiah were among the most important scriptures that He used in explaining His mission and role to His followers. The Gospel writers used quotes from Isaiah to show that the Scriptures pointed forward to Jesus.

Jews in Jesus' time were expecting a superhero Messiah—one who would defeat the occupying Roman forces and establish Himself as king of Israel. But Jesus showed that the Messiah was to be God's suffering servant—a humble leader who conquered by showing love and suffering on behalf of others.

The prophecies of Isaiah and the later prophecies of Zechariah look forward to a future time when love and peace will draw people from all over the world to learn from Israel's God. Those prophecies were partly fulfilled with the coming of Jesus, and will reach their final fulfillment when He comes again.

INTO THE STORY

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor."

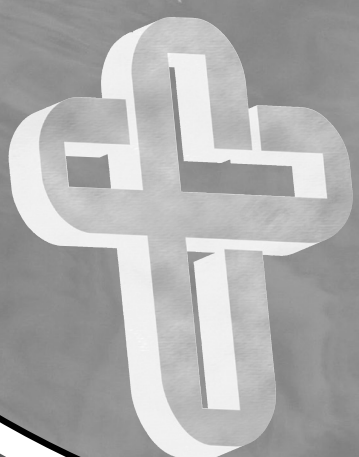
"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. . . . He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

". . . After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."

(Isaiah 61:1-3; 53:2-11, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

According to Isaiah 61:1, what was Jesus' mission?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What effect would Jesus' ministry have on the people of Israel?

_____
_____

According to Isaiah 53, how would people feel about Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

What would Jesus' suffering accomplish for Israel?

_____
_____
_____

How many ways can you think of in which the prophecies in these passages were fulfilled by Jesus during His life here on earth?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What does this passage say to us regarding the suffering that we experience?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope" **(Isaiah 42:1-4, NIV).**

"[Jesus] said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" **(Luke 24:25-27, NIV).**

further insight

"On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life's hardships and misery."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 719

"The message of hope and mercy is to be carried to the ends of the earth."

—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 719

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 53:2, 3.

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. . . . He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things" (Fundamental Belief 4, The Son).

Some heroes are admirable because they're good-looking, strong, powerful, or have amazing abilities. What does today's Bible passage say about Jesus?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Jesus wasn't your typical superhero. People weren't attracted to His good looks or His amazing strength. Instead, it was His compassion that drew people to Him—His ability to suffer along with people. He was no comic book superhero, but a true servant leader.

Sunday

Read Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 61.

Based on what you read in today's Bible passages, write a description of the mission of the Messiah:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read Isaiah 53:3; Luke 10:21; John 15:11; and John 17:13.

The *Key Text* says that the Messiah would be "a Man of sorrows" (NKJV).

What quality of Jesus is mentioned in today's Bible passages? _____

_____

How could Jesus be both a joyful person and also a "man of sorrows"? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read John 1:11 and Isaiah 53:2.

The *Flashlight* section of our lesson tells us that even though the Jews had been looking forward to the Messiah's coming for more than 1,000 years, they didn't recognize Jesus as the Messiah when He came. Why do you think they didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah? What did they expect their Messiah to be and to do? Why do you think they had those expectations?

_____

_____

_____

Sometimes God's answers to our prayers don't look like what we expect, either. Like the Jewish people in Jesus' time, we can get so hung up on expecting God to work in a certain way that we don't even recognize His answers when they come.

Wednesday

Read Isaiah 42:1-4 from the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson. This passage is another of the "suffering servant" songs in Isaiah. Look back at your Messiah job description in Monday's section of the lesson. What could you add to that description after reading Isaiah 42?

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read John 14:12-14.

Jesus' life demonstrated how a servant could also be a leader. No, He didn't kick out the Romans and reestablish the throne of Israel. But through suffering, and caring for those who were suffering, He changed the world forever.

Jesus calls us to follow His example—to lead by caring for others, even if it involves suffering ourselves. What is one practical thing you can do today to help others who are suffering? What will it cost you to do it?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Mark 11:24.

Take a look back at what we said about expectations in Tuesday's lesson. Can you think of a situation in your life in which you have been expecting God to act in a certain way? What did you expect God to do for you?

_____

_____

Is it possible that God might have a different plan than you expected? How can you keep your eyes and your heart open for God's leading? Remember that if the Jews of Jesus' time had read the prophecies of Isaiah more carefully, they might have been prepared to accept a Messiah who was going to suffer for them. Studying the Bible will help you recognize God's answers to your prayers, even if they don't fit your expectations!

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 59.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it by going to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and clicking on "Conflict of the Ages series." By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.