

Youth Teaching Resources

March 24, 2019



Epiphany (January 6-March 3)

Not Your Typical Teacher

Luke 9:28-43 – “Climbing Higher”

Lenten Season (March 10-April 14)

Deliberate Devotion

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 – “A Joyous Confession”

Genesis 15:1-21 (RCL 1-12, 17-18) – “A Hair-Raising Prediction”

Isaiah 55:1-9 – “A Stunning Invitation”

Joshua 5:1-12 (RCL 9-12) – “A Cutting Reaffirmation”

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A Stunning Invitation

Isaiah 55:1-9

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

The relationships that students have are complex. They get even more complex when the students don't understand the type of relationship they are in, the person with whom they are in relationship, or if the two parties don't agree on what type of relationship they have. The best way to help your students through this time is to model healthy relationships. The next best thing is to listen. If they ask for your advice, give it, but trying to force them out of the relationship usually doesn't work. Be present and listen.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin the session by showing the clip "Jake's Apology" from *Never Back Down*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why does Jake apologize?
- 2) Does his apology sound sincere? What convinces you? What convinces his trainer?
- 3) What reasons does Jake give for his action?
- 4) Is it harder to apologize or receive and accept an apology? Explain.
- 5) How does your faith impact how you view apologizing to someone? Receiving an apology from someone?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Isaiah 55:1-9. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Where was the prophet speaking? What do you think the passerby's response was to the prophet?
- 2) Why do you think the prophet used the metaphor of bread in the marketplace?
- 3) What was the prophet trying to get the people to do?
- 4) How did the prophet say that people should seek God when their temple had been destroyed?
- 5) What is the good news that comes from this passage?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why is this passage such an important passage to the people of Israel and modern readers?
- 2) How does Isaiah's offer to come to the table remind you of how Jesus offered others to come to the table?
- 3) What does God promise in these verses?
- 4) How are we to seek God?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": How can "word" and "deed" be the same thing?

Transformation

As the third week of Lent we have another spiritual discipline for the group. Remind the group to practice this discipline throughout the week. During this session, lead your group through the spiritual discipline of Praying in Color. Familiarize yourself with the discipline before leading the larger group. To continue the theme from the passage from this session, have the students focus on people that they need to apologize to or those people that have apologized to them. When you have led the group through the discipline, ask the students how this discipline helped them with their relationships that are causing them strife.

Close with a prayer thanking God that we are forgiven seven times seventy.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Growing the text—The Old Testament lectionary text for this week encompasses only Isaiah 55:1-9, but the oracle extends through v. 13, the end of the chapter, so we’ll consider the entire chapter.

Isaiah 55 is such a meaningful text that portions of it appear several times over the course of the lectionary’s three-year cycle.

Isaiah 55—Isaiah 55 concludes the second of three major sections in the book of Isaiah: chapters 1-39 belong mainly to the pre-exilic period of the late eighth and early seventh centuries BCE, calling Israel’s people to repent and trust God lest they be carried into exile. Chapters 40-55 belong to a later period, and are addressed to the sixth century exiles, living in Babylon, paying the price for the people’s ongoing failure to worship Yahweh only. The final section, chapters 56-66, appears designed to encourage those exiles who returned to Jerusalem and surrounding areas after Babylon was defeated and the Persian king Cyrus allowed the captives to return home.

While the namesake of the book was Isaiah of Jerusalem, at least one and possibly two later prophets contributed to the book during and following the exile, about 150 years after the original Isaiah’s death.

Today’s text may belong to the period immediately following Cyrus’s edict of 538 BCE, which gave the exiles permission to return home and rebuild Jerusalem. Today’s text may best be understood as a call for Israelites to leave their homes in Babylon and undertake the arduous journey back to Jerusalem. Many Hebrews wondered why they should do so: the Babylonians had allowed the Israelites a considerable amount of freedom to carry on their business and even to accumulate property. Few remained who remembered Jerusalem, and apparently there was no great rush of people anxious to leave what they had worked for in Babylon and return to an uncertain, hostile existence in a new Persian province consisting of Jerusalem and its immediate environs.

Come to the table—Isaiah’s free offer of food and drink is not unlike Jesus’ parable of the great supper, in which God invites all people to come and eat at the heavenly table (Luke 14:15-24, John 7:37-38, Rev 22:17). Both are freely offered, yet many are hesitant to accept. Why do you think this is so?

Digging Deeper *continued*

God's promises—God's offer in v. 3 promises nothing less than life, continuing a long string of imperative verbs: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live" (v. 3a). In Hebrew thought, the concepts of "listening" and "obeying" were closely linked: to truly hear was to obey. Here, the repetition of "incline your ear" and "listen" implies that the hearers must not only hear the prophet's words, but obey his teaching, if they are to experience the life he promises.

The latter part of v. 3 is difficult to translate, though it clearly refers to God's promise to David described in 2 Samuel 7:8-16, 23:5; 1 Kings 8:23-26; and Psalm 89. Literally, the text says "I will cut for you (plural) a covenant everlasting, my steadfast love (to) David confirmed." The word behind "confirmed" is a reflexive participle from the verb *'aman* (English "amen"), meaning "to confirm" or make sure. Thus, it could be translated as an adjective such as "sure." NRSV renders it "I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David."

The awkwardness comes from the lack of any preposition or comparative associated with the name of David, which stands alone. Most scholars believe the intended sense is that the promised covenant is to be "like" God's sure promises to David. In essence, then, Isaiah promises that God's everlasting covenant with David has been transferred to the people, who are now free to return to Jerusalem in hopes of building a new and lasting kingdom.

It's imperative—Notice the piling up of imperative verbs in this text. Isaiah calls on the people to "come" (twice), "buy" (twice) and "eat" (v. 1); to "listen carefully," "eat," and "delight yourselves" (v. 2); to "incline your ear," "come to me," and "listen" (v. 3), to "see" (vv. 4-5), to "seek the LORD" and "call upon him" (v. 6). What does the use of imperative verbs suggest about the need for human response in God's offer of redemption?

Seeking God by seeking justice—Perhaps Amos, a contemporary of the eighth century Isaiah, put it most clearly, calling on Israel to "seek me and live" by practicing true justice rather than by going to the temple while mistreating others (Amos 5:4-12).

Micah portrayed a court case (Mic. 6:1-8) in which God found fault with Israel, but the people argued that they already worshipped faithfully, and sarcastically asked if God wanted more and more sacrifices, even human sacrifices. Micah replied that God's expectations were for the people do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8).

Later, Jeremiah challenged Israel to call upon Yahweh, promising "When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart ... and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations ... and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile" (from Jer. 29:12-14).

Digging Deeper *continued*

Seeking God by repenting—To “return to the LORD” (v. 7) means to repent. Indeed, the Hebrew word for “turn” or “return” is the very same word used for “repent.” To repent is to turn about, to turn away from a self-oriented life to a God-directed life, from a sinful life to a righteous life.

Memorial trees—The Haas Promenade, a memorial park overlooking Jerusalem, features trees reminiscent of Isaiah’s promise.



The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

How can “word” and “deed” be the same thing?

We mentioned above that in Hebrew, the same term can be used to mean “word” or “deed.” It can, for that matter, also mean “thing,” though generally in the sense of a thing that is done. The word is *dabar*, and it can be used for words and deeds of humans or of God.

Isaiah 55:10-11 makes maximum use of this dual meaning: God’s promised word and God’s actions are interconnected. As Claus Westermann has put it, “God’s word is a word that does things.” (*Isaiah 40-66*, Old Testament Library [Westminster Press, 1977], 289).

This thought dominates prophecy in both the Old and the New Testaments. Hebrews 4:12 declares “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ...” John’s gospel likens not only Christ’s work, but Christ himself, to the word of God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things came into being through him ...” (John 1:1, 3a).

The prophets’ declaration of God’s word was risky, because it was not grounded in tradition or in the temple: it had nothing to stand on but the word itself, and its fulfillment. The very nature of this risk, however, made its pronouncement a bold and meaningful act.

The authentic declaration of God’s word, by its nature, will be fulfilled. It may not always be fulfilled in the way we expect: Isaiah’s promise of a rose-garden reception for the returning exiles did not happen, but the point of the prophecy was that Israel would be delivered from their bondage in Babylon, and that promise was fulfilled.

As Westermann notes (p. 290), we must be careful not to get the wrong idea and assume that God’s word is on some sort of autopilot, to be fulfilled with or without our cooperation. Isaiah proclaimed a word of deliverance and restoration to Israel, but they had the responsibility of hearing and acting upon it: God would not set them on a magic carpet and whisk them off to Jerusalem without their cooperation and consent.

Nor would God’s fulfillment of the word necessarily follow the precise pattern envisioned by the prophets, who often spoke in metaphorical language. We have no record of mountains singing or trees cheering as the exiles made their way home, but they got there.

“The only thing that is absolutely certain is that prophecy inevitably results in fulfillment,” Westermann writes. “The word never returns void.”

“But,” he reminds us, “the God who fulfills his promises is always one whose thoughts and ways are immeasurably greater than those of men” (p. 291).

The Hardest Question *continued*

God's words and deeds are inextricably bound together, and our response is a third strand in the rope. As we work together, God's word is accomplished and sure. As the author of Ecclesiastes said, "A three-ply cord is not easily broken" (Eccl. 4:12).