

Living the Story

A Study through Scripture

Introduction:

Today's lesson is a time of evaluation. In some sense, it is a very simple question: How are we doing? Yet, as we often experience, the answer is not quite as easy to determine.

Our journey through *The Story* brings us to the book of Isaiah. It is a long book, difficult to read through and quickly grasp all of the things happening in Isaiah's life. The calling of Isaiah (chapter 6) always captivates me (Especially when read while listening to a Vineyard Music recording of "I See the Lord." There are several versions and they are all good, but I like the one off of *The Very Best of Winds of Worship*.) and I recommend you read it before this week's lesson.

Isaiah is called to preach about the impending disaster for the people of Israel, but then also about the Servant of the Lord who would redeem those very same people. It is in the latter part of the book, when Isaiah speaks of redemption, that we pick up the story. When Jesus begins his public ministry in the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 4.14-21), this chapter serves as the centerpiece for the ministry that is about to happen. *This*, Jesus says, is why I am here and about to do what I am about to do. This is why I came to the earth and the lens through which my ministry should be evaluated.

Because we, God's people who make up the church, are called to carry on the ministry of Jesus, my question is this: how are we doing?

Preparing for the Group Time:

Spend some time in preparation for this week thinking about the different groups of people mentioned by Isaiah and Jesus. People who are brokenhearted or captive may take a little more time to identify and so your thinking on this will help your group as you discuss this.

Also think about ways we do—and should—address the needs mentioned here. While I do not think this is the *only* thing we need to be about, if we are not looking to do these things, I think we look away from the things Jesus found foundational to his purpose for being on this earth.

LESSON #17

Date: 1/13/2013

Text: Isaiah 61.1-3, 10-11; Luke 4.14-21

The Story: Chapter 16

The Big Picture: How well do we follow the instructions of Isaiah, considered foundational by Jesus to his ministry, today? Does it define how we "be" the church? Does it determine what we do every day? Should it?

Materials Needed: none

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Lesson #17

Text: Isaiah 61.1-3, 10-11; Luke 4.14-21

Lesson Outline:

Start your group time this week with the question: When is a time you have felt the presence of God more than any other time? (You might even read through the first part of Isaiah 6 to help people get a feel for the presence of God, at least through the eyes of Isaiah.) What do you think caused this? What was your reaction to experiencing God in this way?

Let your group know that as Jesus began his public ministry in the book of Luke, he started with these words—these words were foundational for who Jesus came to be.

Read Isaiah 61.1-3.

Go through the discussion questions with your group.

Close in prayer as described below.

Discussion Questions:

What specific groups of people does Isaiah (and Jesus) identify in our text for today?

If you were asked to make a list of these groupings of people as you see them today, who would be on your list? Where would we find these people, if we were looking for them?

I think we all recognize that we as the church are called to continue the ministry that Jesus begun. If this is true, then we should also be about the things Jesus says he is doing here in Isaiah 61. How are we doing? In what ways do you see us addressing the needs that Isaiah/Jesus identifies here?

How does Jesus' fulfilling these needs experienced by people affect how and why we go about addressing them?

In what specific, tangible ways can we do a better job addressing these areas?

Living the Story:

I think the take-away from this lesson will be painfully obvious, even if it is difficult to undertake. My prayer is that as your group goes through this list in Isaiah 61, there will be areas that you see as needs yet to be addressed. I then pray that your group can come up with some specific ways to be about addressing those needs ... and then, obviously, go about doing so. Your opportunity to live out this story comes from the ways you see unmet needs through this text.

Prayer Time:

I love Isaiah's response to God in the latter part of Isaiah 61 (verses 10-11) and I think this would make a great opening statement in your time of prayer. Start with these verse to open your prayer, then allow people an opportunity to add their own voices to what is being said here.

Next Week:

Next week's lesson will be from *The Story* chapter 17.