

The Suffering Servant Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Who is the first person you remember having a crush on?
2. Describe a time when something you looked forward to for a long time finally came to pass. Was it as good as you hoped? Explain.

Read the following passages: Mark 8:27-30; Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12.

Very soon after confirming that he was, in fact, the Messiah, Jesus began to make it clear that he was not the kind of Messiah his disciples were expecting. The disciples, like most of their Jewish contemporaries, were looking forward to the day when the Messiah would defeat their Roman oppressors. What they did not expect was a Messiah who would deal with the “Rome” in their own hearts. Isaiah 53, although written centuries before Jesus was born, provides a powerful picture of Jesus’s sacrifice for us. It describes Jesus’s mistreatment, his vicarious death for sinners, his resurrection, and his exaltation. Years after Jesus’s crucifixion, Peter reflected on Isaiah 53 in a letter to believers scattered across the Roman Empire, writing:

24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 25 For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:24-25

The cross transformed Peter’s life, and it has the power to transform our lives.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Read Psalm 2. How might psalms like this one have shaped the people of Israel’s expectations concerning the Messiah?
2. Why do you think Peter protested so strongly when Jesus began telling his disciples that he (Jesus) would be rejected, suffer, and die? Have you ever felt frustration with God because of the direction your life is going? Explain.
3. Even though Jesus explained multiple times that he would suffer and die, Peter still responded violently when an armed crowd came to arrest Jesus. Can you think of any times when you tried to force things to go in a direction that God didn’t want them to go? Explain. When did you realize that the direction you were pushing things was not what God wanted?
4. Most of us try to be God in one way or another. Which of the following are you most prone to?

- A need to be in control of everything
 - A need to always get it right
 - A need to have all the answers
 - A need to be there for everyone
 - A need to have everyone's approval
5. Read Isaiah 6:1. Why is it significant that Isaiah 52:13 says that God's servant will be "will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted"?
 6. With Isaiah 53 in mind, how would you describe what God did through Jesus on the cross in order to save us?
 7. Many of us struggle with shame, anxiety, or an inability to love ourselves. Explain why our separation from God, described in Isaiah 59:1-3, is an even more fundamental problem. How might being reconciled with God help us address shame, anxiety, or an inability to love ourselves?
 8. After Peter's disastrous denial of Jesus, Jesus graciously restored him. Have you ever had a moment when you honestly admitted your sins and asked God to forgive you? Explain.

Pray