

Approaching Easter

A Devotional Series: Week of March 13

“... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...” (Phil 3:10a)



Day 1 | Read Acts 8:26-40

Appetizer

Would you rather preach the gospel in front of 600 people or share the gospel with a random person at a coffee shop? Why?

Big Idea

The Ethiopian is reading **Isaiah 53**. And he's confronted with a WHO and a WHAT. Most of us know the story. Jesus is the WHO, and everything He accomplished is the WHAT. But as we begin this month-long journey towards Easter, let us ponder not just the outcome of Jesus' coming, but the manner in which He came, lived, and died. This deepens our understanding of WHO He is, how we should live, and our ability to share Him with others.

Main Course

1. What "tools" and knowledge did Philip have for evangelism? What does **Acts 8** teach you about effectively sharing the good news about Jesus?
2. Write down a list of all the things that **Acts 8:32-33** teaches you about Jesus. How many did you find?
3. The encounter with the good news about Jesus left the Ethiopian rejoicing. Do you share his joy? Why or why not? Add a reminder to your calendar or phone for Thursday, April 13 that says **"ACTS 8:39: REMEMBER. REJOICE!"**

Dessert

Time for a family activity! First, pick a writer. Take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. On the left side, write the title "US", and on the right side write the title "JESUS". Then, pick a reader. Have the reader read **Isaiah 53** out loud. As you hear things about Jesus, shout them out, and have your writer put them in the "JESUS" column. As you hear things about people, put those in the "US" column. Review together the things the passage says about us—and the things it says about Jesus. When you're done, hang your page up in a prominent place.

Acts 8:26-40

Day 2 | Read Isaiah 52:13 - 53:4

Appetizer

Think of a time in your life when you felt extremely powerful, and a time when you felt utterly defeated. In which case were you most dependent on God?

Big Idea

Ever since God redeemed His people with an outstretched arm (**Exodus 6:6**), they had lived in an up and down state of looking for that “arm”. When things were easy, they stopped looking. When things got tough, they cried out for God’s power to be displayed again. But few of them were looking for it in the way Jesus showed it. Focus today on the humble, suffering Servant of God. God’s power is displayed in humility.

Main Course

1. When did you believe the message of Jesus you had heard? How was it presented like the message of **Isaiah 53**? How was it different?
2. Both **Isaiah (8:14)** and the apostle Paul (**1 Corinthians 1:23**) refer to the work of Jesus as a “stumbling block”, especially to the Jewish people. After reading **Isaiah 53**, why do you think this was the case?
3. In what ways does reading **Isaiah 53** deepen your understanding of the attitude of Jesus? What specifically is God calling you to do with this attitude? What example has Jesus set for you?

Dessert

Some religious traditions place a big focus on giving stuff up before Easter. But how is not eating sugar making you a servant? What can your family do this season to reinforce serving others? Google it. Ask your small group. Connect with our deacons at church for ideas. Then make a list. Pick the best one. And do it.

Isaiah
Isaiah 52:13 - 53:4

Day 3 | Read Isaiah 53:5-12

Appetizer

Would you rather have your spouse or closest friend know EVERY sin you've ever committed — or EVERY person know the 3 worst sins you've ever committed? (Disclaimer: All sins separate us equally from God, but not all sins have equal consequences. That's what we mean by "worst".)

Big Idea

Few things are more insulting than being called a "sheep". And then we read **verse 6**: all of us have gone astray, every one of us. That doesn't leave any room for anybody to not be sheep. BUT - God decided to lay all of that—every last, twisted ounce of iniquity—on Jesus.

Main Course

- Verse 10** speaks of Jesus' "offspring". We know that Jesus did not marry and have children. So what is this verse talking about?
- Verse 11** says that Jesus will make many righteous. Is righteousness a state of being or a way of living?
- Verse 12** uses the word "intercession". **Hebrews 7:25** says that Jesus lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God. How did Jesus intercede for you on the cross? How is He interceding for you now?

Dessert

Grab the list you made from the Day 1 activity that talks about US and JESUS. Then, read through **Mark 15** together. When you find something in Mark that fulfills something prophesied in **Isaiah 53**, write the reference from Mark next to the item from Isaiah. The goal is making the connection between Isaiah and the gospels. Talk about how Isaiah knew all that would happen to Jesus.

Isaiah
Isaiah 53:5-12