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NOTES

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL – what is it?

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mark 16:15)

The gospel is mentioned many times in the Bible; however, it is never followed by a definition, nor is it a word commonly used in our setting. **Go to blueletterbible.org (or another online Bible study resource) and enter the word gospel in the search bar (any version should do). In the results that appear under the concordance bar below, click on the number attached to the word gospel. According to the *Outline of Biblical Usage*, what does the word “gospel” mean?**

Historically (outside of the Bible), the word “**gospel**” (Hebrew: *euaggelion*) was used to describe a proclamation of good news, often related to a country’s well-being or the victory or ascension of a good leader.

At the Village, when we speak of the **gospel** of Jesus Christ, we are referring to three ideas: the **story** of Jesus Christ, the **identity** that people receive when they embrace His story, and the **kingdom** of God that is emerging as a result of this story.

Story

Read 1 Cor 15:3-5. This is a very basic biblical account of Jesus’ **story** [although the entire Bible is a creative telling and retelling of these ideas re: Jesus the Messiah. For other examples, look at John 1, Acts 7, Acts 26, the whole of the four “gospels” (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), and the Bible in its entirety]. **From this brief account, what are the main points of Jesus’ story?**

If you were to tell the story of Jesus to another person, which ideas would you want to include in your narrative? What parts of His story are most significant to you?

How have your experiences with Jesus changed the course of your own story?

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL – what is it?

Romans 10:9-10 says, “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

According to this passage, what must we believe? What must we proclaim (declare/profess)?

What are the results of these choices?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. According to this passage, when we tell the story of Christ to people who don’t know it and/or its implications, what are we doing?

What are the keys to a person being an effective ambassador of reconciliation...

To a spouse?	
To a child?	
To a friend?	
To a coworker?	

Identity

Let’s start with God’s **identity**:

Excerpts from John 14:6-26 *Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him.... If you love me, you will obey my commandments. Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you. I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you. In a little while the world will not see me any longer, but you will see me; because I live, you will live too. You will know at that time that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you.... I have spoken these things while staying with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you.”*

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL – what is it?

Although the Bible never mentions the word “trinity,” the idea of God existing as a single entity in the form of three persons dwelling together in eternal loving community (1 John 1:3) is widely communicated through the Scriptures. **According to this passage, who are the three persons of the trinity?**

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What are their roles in relation to each other and to us?

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What else do you know from Scripture about the triune God’s *identity*?

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Moving on to our identity in Christ...

Romans 8:14-16 says, *For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.*

In a legal sense, what do children gain when they are adopted into a new family?

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Spiritually, what do we gain when we are adopted into God’s family?

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CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL – what is it?

Take a moment to reflect on your status as a son or daughter of God. What are you grateful for in your own child-parent relationship with God?

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12. According to this passage,

...what identity is given to those who follow Christ?

...what are God's people called to do?

What does the world gain from our choice as God's people to avoid sinful desires and live with good conduct?

What sinful desire is God specifically asking you to avoid?

What are some categories of good conduct that express the *kingdom* of God to the world?

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL – what is it?

Kingdom:

Revelation 21-22 (excerpts follow) predicts a time when God will dwell with His people, bringing an end to all wrongdoing and suffering. He will be the king and this new civilization will reflect His traits and values rather than human traditions. This is the fulfillment of the kingdom of God that we look forward to:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had ceased to exist, and the sea existed no more. And I saw the holy city – the new Jerusalem – descending out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “Look! The residence of God is among human beings. He will live among them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more – or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist.” And there will no longer be any curse, and the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city. His servants will worship him, and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, and they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever.

How is life in this future city described?

Jesus speaks several times of the kingdom of God (a.k.a. the kingdom of heaven), which was inaugurated by His coming.

Mark 1:15 *He [Jesus] said, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!”*

While we look forward to life in the tangible, fully realized kingdom of God, we currently live in a time when the kingdom of God is experienced by faith. As God’s people live under His rule and by His values in the present day, the **kingdom** of God becomes evident in and around us.

Luke 17:20-21 *Now at one point the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was coming, so he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”*

Read Philippians 2:3-16. According to this passage, what attitudes and actions should characterize our lives as children of God?

Whose example are we to follow? What attitudes and actions might this call for?

CHAPTER 1: THE GOSPEL – what is it?

To sum this all up, what would you say is the story of the gospel?

What identity does the gospel impart?

How do we now live in the kingdom of God as a result of the gospel?

Who is God inviting you to tell the story of Christ to? Imagine how this person's life might change if they became reconciled to God. What might it look like for them to experience true freedom and to live in their true, God-given identity? Take a moment to hope and pray for this possibility.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2: ISAIAH – the author and the book

A Brief History

Although God was always the true king of Israel, He responded to His people's request for a human king with Saul, followed by David and his son Solomon. Following this brief period of stability, the nation of Israel divided into two nations – Israel (the larger northern kingdom) and Judah (the smaller southern kingdom, which held the capital city of Jerusalem and the Temple) – each with its own monarchy. The years that followed were characterized by the rise and fall of many evil kings who led Israel & Judah into idolatry and dangerous ties with foreign countries and the occasional good king who would follow God and point the people back to Him.

Throughout the rule of kings and preceding it all the way back to the life of Moses (in Exodus), God sent a string of prophets. These people were called to speak the words of God both to the kings and the nation as a whole, about present and future realities.

In an internet browser, type *StudyLight.org*. In the “*Study Resources*” section on the left side of the page, click on *Dictionaries*. Click on *Holman Bible Dictionary*, then “*I*” and select *Isaiah*. Read the historical background re: the prophet Isaiah and jot down any information you find important. Make a rough timeline of Isaiah's life and the kings who reigned during his ministry, particularly those of the Judean kingdom – where Isaiah lived and prophesied.

Exile

Isaiah's life in Judah is shadowed by the power of nearby Assyria. [The northern kingdom of Israel had already been thrown into Assyrian exile around the time of Isaiah's birth.] Isaiah speaks about the current state of affairs and also predicts the coming period when the people of Judah will be dispersed in exile under the Babylonians (chapters 40-55). The end of the book looks beyond this time to a day when the kingdom of Israel will be restored, the people will return to their land, and the true worship of God will take place in Jerusalem.

According to Psalm 137, what is the experience of a Jewish person living under Babylonian exile?

1 Peter 2:10-12 reveals the contrast that God's people experience in the present time: “*You once were not a people, but now you are God's people. You were shown no mercy, but now you have received mercy*” shows that in believing, we have gained a true, corporate identity. However, in the next verse, we are referred to as “foreigners” and “exiles.” How is it that in following God, we become exiles?

As a follower of Jesus in Tucson, how have you experienced exile?

CHAPTER 2: ISAIAH – the author and the book

Read Ephesians 5:1-20. What traits characterize children of God (kingdom values) vs. those who do not inherit the kingdom of God (worldly values)?

Kingdom	World

To further explore this contrast, consider how the Six Ways we have been discussing at the Village might be practiced in the *kingdom* (God-focused) vs. how these are often practiced in a worldly (self-focused) context.

	Kingdom	World
Listening:		
Storytelling:		
Celebrating:		
Eating:		
Blessing:		
Resting (Sabbath):		

As we at the Village have considered our status as exiles to the world but citizens of the true **kingdom** of God, we have taken **Jeremiah 29:4-7** to heart as a message to us in Tucson:
The Lord God of Israel who rules over all says to all those he sent into exile to Babylon from Jerusalem, “Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and allow your daughters get married so that they too can have sons and daughters. Grow in number; do not dwindle away. Work to see that the city where I sent you as exiles enjoys peace and prosperity. Pray to the Lord for it. For as it prospers you will prosper.”

CHAPTER 2: ISAIAH – the author and the book

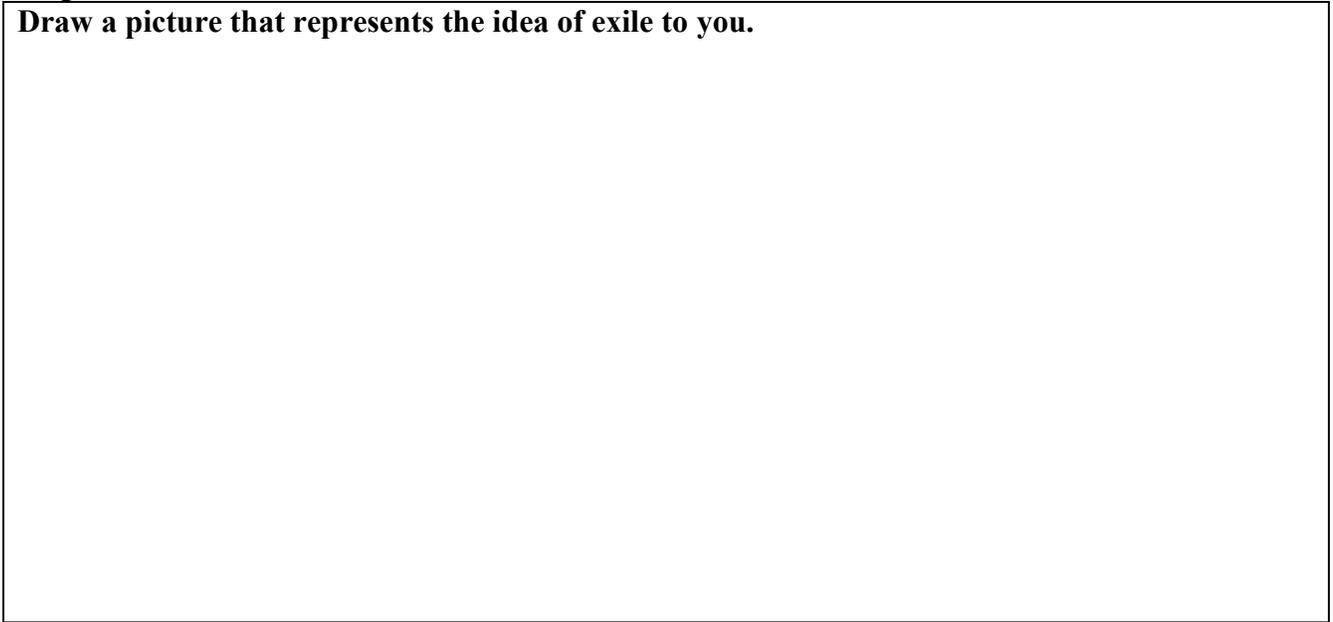
Imagine

As we live under God’s way of life in Tucson, how might we see the kingdom of God expand around us? Based on your study of Chapter 1 in this book, how might Tucson prosper as God’s people:

Proclaim His <i>story</i> ?	
Embrace their true <i>identities</i> ?	
Live out <i>kingdom</i> values?	

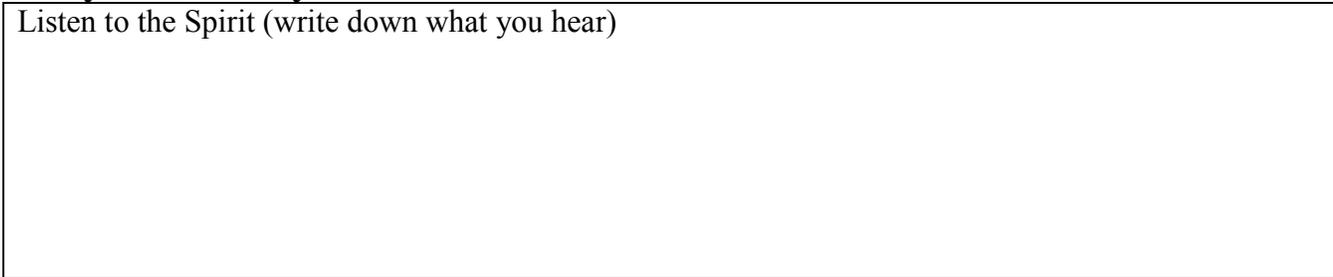
Express

Draw a picture that represents the idea of exile to you.



Pray for the city.

Listen to the Spirit (write down what you hear)



NOTES

Chapter 3: INTRODUCING – the right to speak

Isaiah 61:1a *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me.*

Eric's Rewrite: *The Holy Spirit of the Master God is upon me, because the in-Charge has set me apart and equipped me for a special purpose.*

Your Rewrite:

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit is active all through the Old Testament. At creation, the Spirit of God hovers above the waters. When the Israelites flee Egypt, in the time of the first kings, and during the ministry of the prophets, the Holy Spirit is active. But despite the Holy Spirit's work during all of this period, what the Old Testament believers saw was just a small example of what was to come.

Read Numbers 11, verses 16-17 and 24-29.

In vs. 16-17, what does God tell Moses He is going to do?

In verses 24-29, what happens?

Who are the missing elders? What happens to them?

How frequently do the elders prophecy?

What is the long-term purpose of this Holy Spirit experience?

In response to Joshua, what does Moses' wish for God's people?

Chapter 3: INTRODUCING – the right to speak

This story from the beginning of the Old Testament illustrates the nature of the Holy Spirit's presence during this time:

- 1) It was *few*: the Holy Spirit came on little more than a few hundred men in the thousands of years that encompass the Old Testament. This gave it a definite “wow factor.”
 - 2) And *far between*: The event was not permanent – the Holy Spirit came and went. And yet there was a hope, a promise, that one day all of the Lord's people would be prophets and the Lord would put His Spirit on them.
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The Holy Spirit according to Jesus

According to **Luke 4:14**, Jesus emerges from his time of testing in the wilderness and enters public ministry “in the power of the Spirit.” His life's work is marked by this presence of the Spirit.

Before Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, He tells His disciples, “*It is for your good that I am going away*” (John 16:6). **Read John 16:5-15. Why is it better for Jesus' followers to have the Holy Spirit than to have Jesus in person?**

According to this passage, what will the Holy Spirit do?

In **John 14:15-21**, Jesus makes it clear that in His physical absence, His people will still see Him and experience His presence through the Holy Spirit within them. That is why Jesus can say, ‘Surely I am with you always’ just as He is leaving His disciples (Matthew 28:20). During His time on earth, Jesus was limited to a human form. He could only be in one place at a time. That is no longer true. We now experience the totality of the promises and blessings of the Holy Spirit. While we wait for Christ's return and long for His appearing, we lack nothing of the Spirit's presence and therefore Christ's presence with us.

Chapter 3: INTRODUCING – the right to speak

God’s Identity in Isaiah 61

Isaiah 61 begins with a reference to God which in the Hebrew is transliterated, “Jehovah Adonai.”

The name “Jehovah” carries the implications of sovereignty, holiness, and omni-presence.

It is what we mean when we use the term “God.”

The word “Adonai,” is often translated “Lord” or “Master.”

In the following passages, we see the extent to which God is sovereign:

1. He is master over creation. Psalms 33:4-9
2. He is master over nature. Psalms Psalm 107:25-31
3. He is master over the nations. Jeremiah 32:17-34
4. He is master over man. Daniel 4:28-33
5. He is master over Satan. Luke 22:31

From these five facets of God’s sovereignty, which is the hardest for you to accept? Why? Which aspect of God’s sovereignty do you find comforting?

“Anointing” in the Old Testament

Medical Use: Sick people and their wounds were “anointed” with olive oil (Isaiah 1:6).

Practical Use:

People rubbed oil onto the leather of shields and armor to make them supple for war.

Isaiah 21:5 refers to this practice as “anointing the shield.”

Hospitality: Jews anointed themselves and their guests with oil as a way of refreshing their appearance (2 Samuel 14:2; Psalms 104:15).

Liturgical Uses: For the Hebrews, the act of anointing with oil was significant in designating a person or item for a holy or sacred purpose: for example, the anointing of the high priest (Exodus 29:29; Leviticus 4:3) and of sacred vessels (Exodus 30:26). In the same way, Kings and Prophets were also anointed. In fact, anointing a king was equivalent to crowning him (2 Samuel 2:4).

The Anointing of Isaiah

When Isaiah says, “the Lord has anointed me,” he is referring back to the event of his calling, which he recounts earlier in the book. Read Isaiah 6:1-10.

How is God described in this vision?

How is Isaiah cleansed for the work ahead?

Chapter 3: INTRODUCING – the right to speak

What is Isaiah's response to seeing God in His splendor?

What does God send Isaiah to do?

The Anointing of Jesus

Read Luke 4:14-21. What is your initial response?

Jesus takes Isaiah's proclamation as true of himself. Read Luke 3:21-23 and describe how Jesus was anointed by God.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 as a way of introducing Himself at the beginning of His public ministry. Why does He choose this prophecy as His introduction? How does it characterize what's to come?

The Holy Spirit Sent

The Anointing of Jesus' Followers

After Jesus' ascension, His followers waited for this promise of the Holy Spirit to be fulfilled. Read Acts 2:1-4. On what feast day did the Holy Spirit come to the believers? What happened?

Chapter 3: INTRODUCING – the right to speak

In response to the confused people who witnessed this event, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 and declares that this prophecy has just been fulfilled. **Read Acts 2:16-41.** In verses 29-39, Peter tells a story of the gospel. **What does it consist of?**

According to verse 41, what was the result of this evidence of the Holy Spirit and Peter’s gospel proclamation?

Chapter 3: INTRODUCING – the right to speak

Trinitarian Prayer Exercise

Isaiah 61:1a *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me.*

Reflect back to the Father your understanding of His Sovereignty. Tell him what you hope you are anointed to for. Tell Him what you are afraid off. Then ask Jesus (the son) what He is doing in your life to develop you. Last, ask the Spirit to speak to you. Write it down.

The Father	
The Son	
The Spirit	

CHAPTER 4 – PROCLAIMING – a whole lot of yelling . . .

Isaiah 61.1-2a (*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...

Eric's Rewrite:

... to proclaim, announce, and talk about the good news, or “the big meal,” with the mentally destitute, the emotionally distraught, the hungry, and the financially poor. God has directed me, a villager, to care for people who have been destroyed by the evil in the world by helping them put their hearts back together, He has also told me to announce the light of Jesus to those who are enslaved by addiction, hatred, and the enemy himself, Satan. I've been instructed to tell everyone that Jesus has come into the world to make all things new, and that He will return to judge all people.

Your Rewrite:

Because we are followers of Jesus, His mission and ministry has become our own. The final words at his departure, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation*” makes this clear. As we consider the message of Isaiah 61 which resounds through the words and work of Christ, we hope to recognize how this message might better define our lives and guide our paths into living in and carrying out the kingdom of God.

PROCLAIM

The first thing we are called to do is proclaim. To proclaim is simply to announce something, or to tell someone about an impending event. While this word is not used frequently in our society (where proclamations are accomplished by tweets, news flashes, and e-vites instead of people yelling in the streets) its Hebrew root, “qara,” shows up 735 times in Scripture. This term means to utter a loud sound. Some lexicons say that it means “to accost” a person – to come beside them and vigorously invite them to participate. The passage says we are anointed to “accost” the poor about the Good News.

The Big Meal: Good news to the poor

Because meat was rarely served in ancient times, the term “good news” used in Isaiah 61:1 (Hebrew: *basar*) came to be associated with the feasting that would accompany a joyous proclamation. Therefore, the picture painted in the first statement is that a big dinner of celebration has been put together for all those who don't have food, and you are trying hard to compel them to come. But the word that is translated “poor” (Hebrew: *anav*) means so much more than being without money and food. When you read “poor” think: “emotionally, spiritually, economically, and/or physically afflicted.”

CHAPTER 4 – PROCLAIMING – a whole lot of yelling . . .

In light of these ideas, how is the Gospel (in its facets of Story, Identity, and Kingdom) good news to each area of poverty? Explain.

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How could you use your story as a way of announcing the good news of the Gospel? What area of poverty has the gospel transformed in your life? When you read “poor” think: “emotionally, spiritually, economically, and/or physically afflicted.”

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How might you use the concept of a feast to announce the gospel to your family and friends? How could you tailor what you say about food to address what people are struggling with in other areas of their lives?

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To Bind Up

Because anointing was used to designate people for a specific task, the idea of being sent to accomplish a certain purpose often followed. Isaiah was anointed and sent to the people of Judah, Jesus was anointed and sent to the Jews, and His followers are anointed and sent to the ends of the earth (Mark 16:5). This particular passage speaks of being sent to bind up the brokenhearted. The word here for binding (Hebrew: *chabash*) means to set a broken bone. We are literally being called to set broken hearts. The pain that we as people feel shapes the way we view life and God.

CHAPTER 4 – PROCLAIMING – a whole lot of yelling . . .

What are some things that cause brokenheartedness?

Choose a place in your own life where your heart has been broken. **Describe the experience using the metaphor of a broken bone. How did the pain shape the way you interacted with God?**

Use the Hot Seat Model to show how Jesus has interacted with you about this experience: How did you experience it emotionally?

What false identity did it affirm?

What did you do to find relief from the pain or anxiety?

How has Jesus invited you to repent at the Table of Decision?

CHAPTER 4 – PROCLAIMING – a whole lot of yelling . . .

What true identity is Jesus calling you to embrace?

How does following Jesus in this way bind up your broken heart?

In a broader sense, the **Gospel** itself brings healing to the broken heart.

How does the *Story* of Jesus address our brokenness?

How does our new *Identity* in Christ change what we believe about ourselves?

How does our standing as children of God living in His *kingdom* give us meaning and purpose?

Freedom

Romans 6:15-18 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

CHAPTER 4 – PROCLAIMING – a whole lot of yelling . . .

All of us are held captive by something or someone. That captivity may actually be physical, but often it is based on a mental assent to the power of a person, value system, or belief. In fact, when people are freed from literal forms of captivity, they often continue on various levels to live as though they were still enslaved because of beliefs they have developed.

Reflect on the things, ideas, or people that you feel enslaved to. What do you organize your life around that holds you captive as a prisoner to the darkness?

1 John 2:16 says that the things of the world consist of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. **How do these things of the world hold you captive?**

Hebrews 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Favor and Vengeance

How did Jesus' presence on earth initiate the year of the Master's (Lord's) favor?

How did Jesus experience the vengeance of God on our behalf?

NOTES

Chapter 5 – COMFORTING - the art of provision

Isaiah 61:2b-3a *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.*

Eric's Rewrite: ... to intentionally offer comfort to those who weep because of loss, and give them a special place in God's Kingdom – to continually add beauty where there is sorrow, to offer salvation instead of darkness, and hope to all who are lost.

Your Rewrite:

Because the people Jesus was speaking to at the synagogue were very familiar with the Old Testament, to the point of having large sections of it committed to memory, it is assumed that the quoting of one portion of Scripture alluded to the rest of it. And, indeed, if we continue past the quote Jesus reads, we find both a picture of what the church is equipped to do in the present day and of what reality will become when Jesus makes all things new in His second coming.

How does Jesus' death and resurrection comfort those who mourn and provide for those who grieve? Pause to thank Him in prayer.

Following is a description of the early church, shortly following the ascension of Christ.
Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What strikes you about this passage?

Chapter 5 – COMFORTING - the art of provision

How does this passage describe the church as a gathered people offering comfort and provision to themselves and others?

If you lived in this community, what would be hard for you?

Comforting and providing for others who grieve requires a great deal of intention – we cannot comfort or provide for people unless we choose to be around those who are distressed or in need. This also requires us to set aside, at least for a time, our own need to be comforted and cared for by others.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

To offer comfort to others, we must develop a deep awareness and gratitude for the ways God has comforted us and provided for all our needs. Our gratitude can then overflow in generosity based on a responsive love for God, who will supply whatever we need and whatever we extend to others.

Look back over your life. How has God comforted you?

How has He provided for you?

Take time to reflect on these things in God’s presence.

Intention

Hebrews 10:24, 25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

People cannot experience true, lasting comfort or healing outside of intentional community focused on the worship of Jesus. The writer of Hebrews makes it very clear that this involves purposeful consideration of others. We need to think about people, and these thoughts need to be directed towards spurring (ouch) them toward love and good deeds.

Chapter 5 – COMFORTING - the art of provision

Considering Others

If you have trouble considering others because you avoid people and relationships, what is it about relationships that is frightening to you?

If you have trouble considering others because you tend to be lazy when it comes to paying attention to their lives, what is it that you are focused on instead?

What other reasons do you avoid careful consideration of the people in your community?

Pick one person in your Pilgrim Group and write down everything you know about them (this will not be shared publicly). Prayerfully consider how you could give comfort to this person. Do they have needs you could provide for? How could you encourage this person by spurring him/her on toward love and good deeds?

Chapter 5 – COMFORTING - the art of provision

Words

Words have the power to comfort or destroy. A large part of comforting and spurring others along has to do with what we say.

- Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue
- Proverbs 12:25 Good words can make an anxious heart glad
- Proverbs 15:4 A soothing tongue is a tree of life
- Proverbs 16:4 Pleasant words are sweet to the soul and healing to the bones
- Proverbs 25:11 Like apples of gold in setting of silver, is a word spoken in right circumstances.
- Proverbs 25:20 indicates that happy words spoken at in-opportune times can be *discouraging* (“like one who takes off a garment on a cold day”).

Write about a time that someone effectively used words to encourage you.

What was the result in your life?

Beauty, Joy, Praise

Note that the three phrases given (“*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*”) indicate the passage a person in ancient times would take when they had gone through a time of mourning and were emerging from it with exuberance. At the time Isaiah 61 was written, it was common for people in mourning (or during a time of fasting) to cover themselves in ashes, to wear rough clothing, and to cease the use of cosmetic oils. They bore a very physical sign of their grief and devastation. A decisive time also often followed when a person would move past this period of mourning. They would return to tending a healthy, beautiful appearance, wear normal clothing again, and use oil to care for their complexion.

Chapter 5 – COMFORTING - the art of provision

Using these phrases metaphorically, how has God given you an *identity* which crowns you with beauty instead of ashes?

The oil of joy instead of mourning?

Salvation (story)

A garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair?

Life in the kingdom

NOTES

Chapter 6 – RESTORING – the construction of hope

A History

King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem around 586 BC and destroyed it, burning it with fire and demolishing the Temple. He drove many Israelites into captivity in Babylon. When the time of captivity came to an end, as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, Cyrus king of Persia (a pagan ruler) made the following proclamation: *“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem,”* (Ezra 1:2, 3).

Psalm 126 is called a song of ascents. It is thought to be written by an exile upon his return (ascension) with other Israelites to Jerusalem after this seventy years of captivity in Babylon (vs. 1-2):

When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Do you see how this Psalm captures a picture of a people who have received an amazing gift? Their deep joy is reflected in song and laughter. They have experienced true restoration and freedom.

Isaiah 61:3b-6 describes what people will do upon their return from exile. It is also a good description of what happens to people when they decide to follow Jesus:

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

Eric’s Rewrite: They will be called big, strong trees, telling everyone about the Master.

Your Rewrite:

On Oaks

Oaks (actually "terebinth") were a symbol of stability, rooted-ness, and strength. This describes the condition of God's people upon their return to Jerusalem. Most of Palestine is a desert brush land, and large trees are rare. The passage says that we will be “Oaks of Righteousness.” This word “righteousness” is used in reference both to God and people and means “justice” or “rightness.” These people that Isaiah describes will be rare, strong individuals who stand up for what is right. But righteousness is also connected to salvation. We are saved because we are made right by God through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Chapter 6 – RESTORING – the construction of hope

Reflect on Ephesians 3:10-11:

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How are the followers of Christ, the church, oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor?

Write out a part of your story that illustrates how God has made you into an oak that He intends to display. Use earlier parts of this study to help you.

Why would it be difficult for you to proclaim what Jesus has done in your life?

On Rebuilding

We see here that the restored and elevated status of God's people is not just for their benefit. They are to be the "light to the nations," the means by which God will reveal Himself, His wisdom, His salvation, and His blessings to the world.

Isaiah 61:4

*They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.*

Eric's Rewrite: They will rebuild in the desert and reconnect with their land; they will put back together the broken homes of a city long forgotten.

Chapter 6 – RESTORING – the construction of hope

Your Rewrite:

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Rebuilding through Storytelling: The Israelites were storytellers. They constantly wove a narrative of the reality of faith in which they lived. We are also storytellers. During the course of our lives, we participate in a multitude of stories. Some are important enough for us to remember and tell over and over again and others are just small parts of our days.

Whether it is the baby who cries, telling the story of his hunger, the teenager who rebels, telling the story of her frustration with life, or the husband who rushes home to tell the details of his day, the stories of our lives reveal the framework of our identities. These stories also reflect our understanding of reality, faith, and our identities.

Our stories are what connect us to one another. Without them, we are simply an empty book with a plain cover. At the Village we believe that Jesus’ story, the Gospel, has the power to save and restore us. We believe that when we communicate how Jesus has transformed our stories, we will see lives changed, cultures transformed, and cities rebuilt.

Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and ascension are life transforming aspects of the Gospel **story**.

Briefly explain how each of these has rebuilt a part of your life that was broken.

Life	
Death	
Resurrection	
Ascension	

Chapter 6 – RESTORING – the construction of hope

On Wealth

Isaiah 61:5 *Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.*

Eric's Rewrite: Servants will take care of your children and tend to your home. And you will shepherd the Master's people, and you will be called his ambassadors. Because of your service, the wealth of all people will be yours.

Your Rewrite:

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In ancient, agricultural communities, people were wealthy if they could afford to hire people to work in their fields and tend their flocks. Notice that in this passage, wealth facilitates the calling to priesthood and ministry. This is in line with the laws re: the Levitical priests in the Old Testament. They did not own land, and their provisions and food came from the other tribes, whom they served. All through scripture, it is clear that our wealth is given to us so that we might serve God and others.

How do you spend your money? Does it free you to help rebuild the brokenness of our world?

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How does the way you spend your money affect:

Your Church	
Your Family	
The Poor	

Chapter 7 – SHAME – the garden’s gift

Isaiah 61:7-9 *Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours. “For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.”*

Eric’s Rewrite: Instead of being laid to waste by foreign gods, you will be called the first-born. Instead of being identified with filth you will be given great wealth. Your inheritance will be that of the oldest child, and you will write happy songs. For I, the one in-charge, am deeply connected to what is right; I deplore evil. I am true to my word. I will give my people what they are due, and I will make a forever promise to them. Their future children will be legends among all people. All who have heard of them will say, "they are people who are blessed by the Master."

Your Rewrite:

Shame

Guilt is a feeling that everyone has experienced. It can be described as a “troubled conscience” or a “feeling of fault for wrongdoing.” We feel guilty when we are accountable for an action that we regret. People may feel ashamed, unworthy, or embarrassed about actions for which they are responsible. We might refer to this as “true” or “legitimate” guilt. However, people can also feel guilty about events for which they are not to blame. This “false guilt” can be very destructive. In this study, we will focus on shame that emerges from actual wrongdoing.

Although shame is an emotion that is closely related to guilt, we need to recognize how they are distinct. Shame can be defined as an agonizing emotion caused by awareness of guilt or shortcoming. We feel guilty for what we *do*, but we feel shame for what we *are*. Shame, therefore, is often a much stronger emotion than guilt. It is connected to our very identity – our basic character. This is best illustrated in Adam and Eve’s interaction with God after they disobeyed: *Genesis 3:8* *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was **naked**; so I hid.”* Both shame and guilt can have intensive implications for our perceptions of self and our behavior toward other people, particularly in situations where consequences seem imminent.

The word for shame in Hebrew is directly connected to the word for “Baal.” Baal was the name used for the various fertility gods of the nations surrounding Israel. The connection between these words is a result of the heinous worship practices related to Baal, including the sacrifice of children, which were in direct opposition to the ways of God and intrinsically shameful. The Israelites were exiled largely as a consequence of their Baal-worship. Therefore, their return home would have been marked by a graphic

Chapter 7 – SHAME – the garden’s gift

remembrance of their sins as well as both the shame of having participated in such things and of having caused destruction to their families and their society as a whole.

Reflecting on Adam and Eve and the Israelites’ experience of shame, try to identify some areas of life where you have had similar experiences, where guilt and shame have resulted from actual wrong choices on your part (not experiences where you were abusively forced to comply with wrongdoing). These areas might have to do with pornography, finances, childhood playground experiences, words towards parents or friends, responses to peoples’ expectations, physical problems, mental problems, etc.:

Describe how these experiences have influenced your view of yourself.

Restoration: Privileges of the Firstborn

An entire Bible study could be written on the “firstborn” concept and its importance in Judaism. For the sake of brevity, we’ll just summarize it here. According to God’s law, the firstborn male of a family was ceremonially given to the priest at birth and then purchased back, or “redeemed.” The firstborn was given a **double inheritance**, or double portion, and was responsible for all unmarried sisters and younger siblings if the father passed away. Whenever the family would gather, the firstborn was given the place of honor and respect.

Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

In light of the “firstborn privilege,” what is this passage saying?

Describe the contrast revealed in this passage.

Chapter 7 – SHAME– the garden’s gift

According to Isaiah 61, who will get to receive the inheritance of a double portion?

Those who follow Jesus are taken from a place of shame with its inheritance of death. They receive instead a seat of honor as co-heirs with Christ (the ultimate firstborn – see Psalm 89:26-27, Colossians 1:18) to receive the kingdom of God (Romans 8:17). **Take what you wrote earlier about the shame in your own life. Contrast your shame identity with your new *identity* in Christ.**

What part of your shame-formed identity is hard for you to let go of?

According to Ephesians 1:3-10, what are the attributes of an honored co-heir to the kingdom of God?

God's Promise

“For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.”

These verses describe our Father’s **identity**. God, through Isaiah, is assuring us that no matter how difficult things are around us, God is always about what is good and right and is committed to our future good. God is not going to abandon His people or their children. This is a stark contrast to the path of Baal we just discussed, where people’s descendents were literally cut off!

Chapter 7 – SHAME – the garden’s gift

Below, write about the kind of family you grew up in. Was it a Jesus-following family? Are you the first to follow Christ? What kind of values were passed down to you? What would you like to pass on to your children and to the world?

[Eric’s Example: My Father and Mother are first generation Christians. Jesus called them into the Kingdom. They responded, and spent a lot of energy resisting the enemy. I was born a Kingdom kid, and I thank God for my parents often. I take seriously the gift my parents have given me as well as the promise of God's faithfulness to us. Because of their faith, I hope people will look at me and say, “he is blessed by God.”]

In a world that is often unjust, how would you teach your children about God's justice?

How have you experienced God's faithfulness in your life? Give examples.

Chapter 8 – SINGING & GROWING – joyous bean sprouts

Isaiah 61:10-11 *I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.*

Eric's Rewrite: I have much to thank the Master for. He has wrapped me in a rescue parka and made everything right with me. I am an honored guest at His dinner table and I feel giddy like a girl on her wedding day, because the Master is a good gardener. He has caused compassion and singing to grow before the eyes of my friends and neighbors.

Your Rewrite:

Clothed with Salvation

“For he has clothed me with garments of salvation”

How does this phrase summarize the *story* of the Gospel?

In Genesis 3:21 we see that after the sin of Adam and Eve is exposed, *“the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”*

Reflect on a time when you experienced shame. How has God's clothing of salvation covered your shame?

Chapter 8 – SINGING & GROWING – joyous bean sprouts

“and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness”

How does this phrase describe our *identity* in Christ?

What *identity* has God given you?

The Bride and Bridegroom

This idea of the Israelite being exalted by God in attire for a wedding is first introduced in the chapter we have been studying (this is the only place it is found in the Old Testament). But it resonates through the New Testament, first with Jesus referring to Himself as the bridegroom in Matthew 9:15 (also recorded in Mark 2:20) and then with Revelations 21 fully expanding on the vision of the bride’s presentation at her wedding. Let’s explore these references.

Jesus as Bridegroom

Read Matthew 9:14-15. The disciples here are followers of John the Baptist, who facilitated Jesus’ anointing (chapter 3 of this study). How does Jesus refer to Himself?

Why do you suppose the other Jews are fasting?

Why are Jesus’ followers not fasting?

Read John 3:27-30. It is John’s reply to his disciple who is upset that people are turning to Jesus instead of to John. What two words does he use to describe Jesus?

How does John refer to himself in this metaphor?

[Continue on to John 3:31-36 for yet another concise explanation of the gospel **story** and the interaction of the Trinity.]

Chapter 8 – SINGING & GROWING – joyous bean sprouts

The Bride

The Isaiah 61 idea of the bride is not fully illuminated until the last two chapters of the Bible. **Read Revelation 21:1-4.**

Note that at the beginning of this section, Isaiah 65 is integrated, where God says, “See, I will create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” The end of this section draws from Isaiah 25:8 “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces.” **Why did the author of Revelation find it important to refer all the way back to Isaiah?**

Read Revelation 21:9-10.

Who is the husband?

Who is the bride?

What is the significance of Jesus (the “Lamb of God” – John 1:36) marrying a city? What does Jerusalem represent?

God’s Response

The song or prayer of Isaiah 61:10-11 continues in Isaiah 62, and the imagery reverses from the people singing about their God to God singing about His people (verses 3-5):

You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord’s hand,

a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

No longer will they call you Deserted,

or name your land Desolate...

for the Lord will take delight in you,

and your land will be married.

As a young man marries a young woman,

so will your Builder marry you;

as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,

so will your God rejoice over you.

Chapter 8 – SINGING & GROWING – joyous bean sprouts

To whom do the crown and the jewels belong in this passage?

Who do the crown and jewels represent?

Who is rejoicing here?

Who is getting married to whom?

The Garden

*For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.*

In this passage, who is the gardener?

What is He growing, and where?

How does this imagery illustrate life in the *kingdom* of God?

Chapter 8 – SINGING & GROWING – joyous bean sprouts

In the Bible (Genesis 2:8-9), what is the original garden?
Who is the gardener?

Delight in the Lord

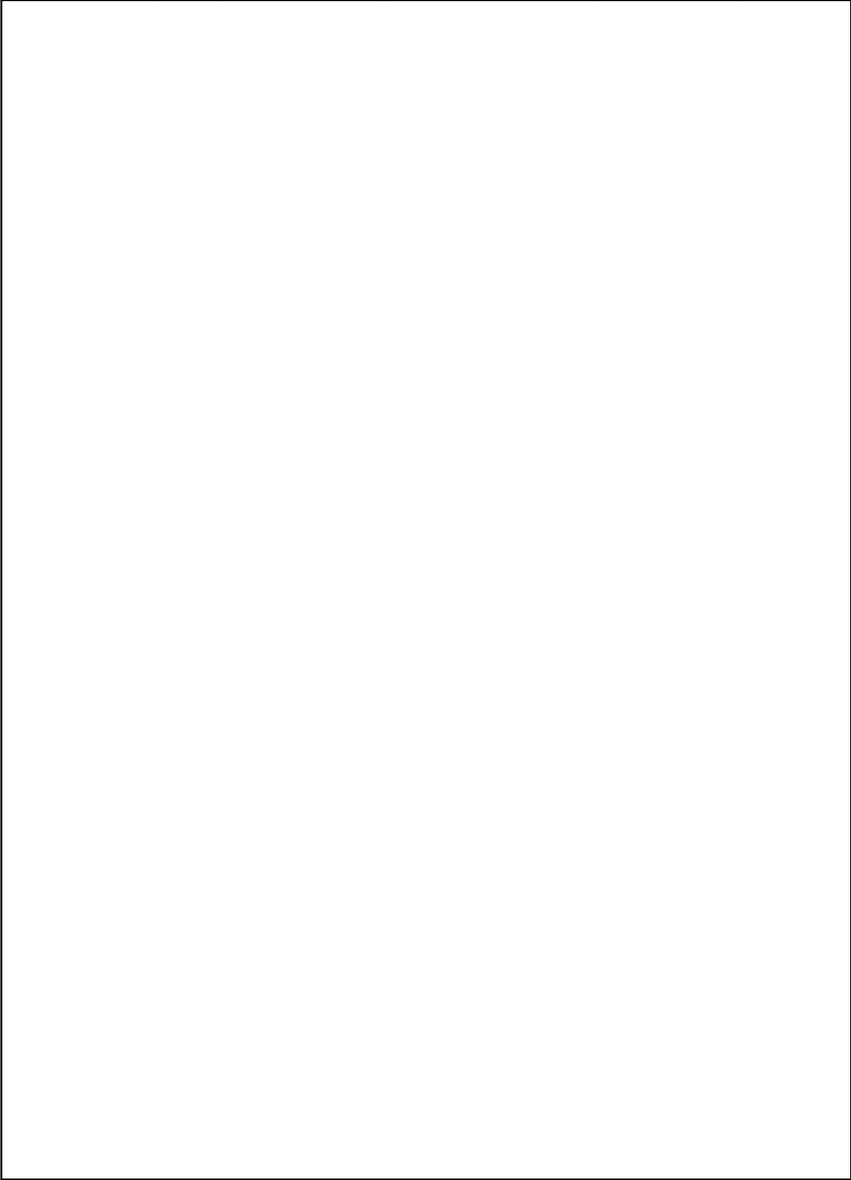
Isaiah 61:10-11 begins a prayer or song of response to what God has said He will do. Note the similarity between this introduction and the beginning of Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1:

*“My heart rejoices in the Lord;
in the Lord my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.*

Based on the study of Isaiah 61 and your own experiences with what God has said and done, write a prayer, song, or poem of response to God. If writing is a difficult way for you to express worship, take time instead to speak a response of praise to God. Share your response with someone else or your pilgrim group!

Chapter 8 – SINGING & GROWING – joyous bean sprouts

**Collect your re-writes of the different parts of Isaiah 61 and put them together below.
Read this paraphrased chapter to your Pilgrim Group.**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write their re-writes of Isaiah 61. The box is currently blank.

NOTES

APPENDIX A: PILGRIM GROUPS

The Village Pilgrimage...

The spiritual disciplines create a path from our physical, material world into the new world of the kingdom of God, a world which is breaking in around us. On this path, we learn to think about and respond rightly to God. We open space in our lives to become aware of God interacting with us. We begin to see his beauty unfolding in and around us, and His work accomplished through us. This is the pilgrimage we are presently undertaking.

This Village journey has several objectives: first, to further develop community within the Village. Pilgrim Groups are a specific discipleship structure of the Village, and we ask that people who participate in them be active participants in the community, attending worship services at the Village and so forth during their time in the Pilgrim Group. Within this context, the Pilgrim Group is designed for the practice of some of the disciplines of the faith together (these may vary depending on the topic & structure of the particular study & group); to discuss our sexuality in healthy ways; to confess sin, pray for each other, and experience healing; to develop leaders (if you are part of a Pilgrim Group, you should expect to lead one in the future); to grow in knowledge and application of the Bible; and finally, to further the discussion of our vocation in the Kingdom of God.

The Discussion...

In response to another person's sharing, group members should refrain from giving advice or telling their own stories as a way of instruction. This is a time to pursue one another by asking open-ended questions and practicing active listening. Try to use clarifying statements like, "What do you mean by _____?" or, "Tell me more about _____." Instead of offering answers to people's problems, consider praying together with the laying on of hands as a default solution.

The Confession...

Confession is about our struggle to live "in the world but not of the world." This may include admitting to overt sins, but it may just as well be telling other people about our worldly patterns of thought that need to be transformed (Romans 12:1-2). Any way of thought or action that is not based on God's goodness and the life to which He calls us is fair game for confession. This should be followed by people praying for the confessee, as in James 5:16 and 1 John 1:9. God wants to renew our minds, and He does this when we ask in prayer. Sometimes areas of sin in our life seem subtle, or we hold them in denial, so conversation in your pilgrim group may also include helping guide someone toward seeing their own hidden sin and the impact it has. We need to be open to the voices of people in our community as they gently point out areas that need to be healed.

Discussing Sexuality...

As we consider our stories and tell each other about the experiences which have shaped us, our sexuality may be an evident force. God has designed us as sexual beings. Sexuality, however, which He created for good, has been twisted and abused in the dark world around us. We are each in the process of growing into wholeness in this area of our lives. Some of us struggle with addictions to pornography, some have long histories of sexual abuse, some have lived sexually impure lives, and most of us struggle to reconcile the worldly messages about sexuality with our own bodies, desires, and experiences.

As we seek to better understand God's view of sexuality and to become more comfortable with our sexual selves in Christ, it is important for us to create a safe space for each other where we can head toward the freedom from shame which God offers. Please honor sensitive conversations with appropriate confidentiality as well as gentle, active listening.

APPENDIX B: IDENTITY IN THE KINGDOM

MY RELATIONSHIP

I am reconciled to God - 2 Cor 5:18
I'm a child of God - He is my Father - 1 Jn 3:1,2
I am a saint - Eph 1:1; 1 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:1
I am Christ's friend - Jn 15:15
I am a fellow citizen in God's kingdom - Eph 2:19
I am born of God - 1 Jn 4:7
I have been brought near to Christ - Eph 2:13
I have been adopted by God - Rom 8:15
I'm to be righteous and holy like God - Eph 4:24
I have direct access to God - Eph 2:18

MY INHERITANCE

I am a citizen of heaven - Phil 3:20
I am an heir of God - Rom 8:17
I've been rescued from Satan's domain - Col 1:13
I am a joint heir with Christ - Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7
I am hidden with Christ in God - Col 3:3
I am blessed with every spiritual blessing - Eph 1:3
I am chosen of God - holy, beloved - Col 3:12
I am a child of promise - Rom 9:8; Gal 3:14
I am a child of light, not darkness - 1 Thess 5:5
I've been given great promises - 2 Pet 1:4
I am a partaker of Christ - Heb 3:14
I'm one of God's living stones - 1 Pet 2:5

MY TRANSFORMATION

I'm a member of a royal priesthood - 1 Pet 2:9
I'm redeemed and forgiven - Eph 1:6-8
I'm to be a stranger to this world - 1 Pet 2:11
I've been justified - made righteous - Rom 5:1
I'm an enemy of the devil - 1 Pet 5:8
I have eternal life - Jn 5:24
I died w/Christ to the power of sin - Rom 6:1-6

MY CALLING

I am free from condemnation - Rom 8:1
I am to be salt on the earth - Mt 5:13
I have received the Spirit of God - 1 Cor 2:12
I am to be light in the world - Mt 5:14
I have been given the mind of Christ - 1 Cor 2:16
I'm chosen and appointed to bear fruit - Jn 15:16
I have been crucified with Christ - Gal 2:20
I am called to do the works of Christ - Jn 14:12
I am a new creation - 2 Cor 5:17
I am to do what Christ commanded His disciples - Mt 28:20
I have been made alive with Christ - Eph 2:5
I have been given spiritual authority - Lk 10:19
I am God's workmanship - Eph 2:10
Signs should accompany my work - Mk 16:17-20
I have received fullness in Christ - Col 2:10
I am a minister of a new covenant - 2 Cor 3:6
I am a minister of reconciliation - 2 Cor 5:18,19

MY POSITION

I am to be an expression of life in Christ - Col 3:4
I am connected to the true vine - Jn 15:1,5
I am a partaker of a heavenly calling - Heb 3:1
I'm a willing slave of righteousness - Rom 6:18,22
I am a temple of God - 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19
I am one spirit with the Lord - 1 Cor 6:17
I am a member of Christ's body - 1 Cor 12:27

APPENDIX C: HOT SEAT RULES OF THUMB

Hot Seat Rules of Thumb

Things to Practice

- Open-ended questions
- Reflective listening
 - “It sounds like. . .”
 - “I hear you saying. . .”
- Questions about emotions
(e.g. “How did you feel when. . .”)
- Questions about underlying beliefs
(e.g. “What belief is this rooted in?”)

Things to Avoid

- “Why” questions
- Stories about yourself
- “Yes” or “No” Questions
- Advice

Listening to Jesus Together

- How does his story impact this situation?
- What is your true identity in Christ?
- What would it look like if you trusted Him here?
- How have you been finding relief?
- How is Jesus inviting you into relationship?

APPENDIX D: HOTSEAT MODEL

