

Israel, God's Vineyard

Unit 4: Our Sin, God's Faithfulness

LAST WEEK

The prophet Hosea speaks God's message, showing God as a loving and anguished parent (Hosea 11:1-9).

THIS WEEK

Isaiah uses the image of God as a planter, while Israel and Judah are the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5).

Story Summary

In the Book of Isaiah, we are reminded that God's love endures through disappointment and injustice, and we are comforted by the knowledge that—even with the mess that humans create—God will work to bring peace and love to the world. Isaiah uses the image of a vineyard to describe God's love for Israel and Judah as well as God's anger at their betrayal. In a separate passage, Isaiah offers the hope of a coming ruler who will act with righteousness and faithfulness.

Practice: Fellowship

Fellowship includes learning to share God's love with those with whom we may not feel that we connect. Who can you reach out to this week with a hello, a smile, or a conversation—someone who you normally walk past? Try it.

The Point

God calls us to love and respect others.

Bible Nuts & Bolts:

The Meaning of Justice

Justice and righteousness are key words in this passage. We hear of God's kingdom being one of justice, but what does this mean? Justice and righteousness are not synonymous with equality. Justice means that all people will have what they need—not necessarily what they want—in the amount each person needs. When justice reigns, no one will be hungry; when justice reigns, true peace is possible. Peace—shalom—is not just a lack of conflict. Peace reigns when people have what they need, when they are safe, and free to love God and be in relation with each without fear. God intends for us to act in just ways, working to bring peace to our world.

NEXT WEEK

King Josiah's faithful reforms bring the people of Judah back to the worship of their God (2 Kings 22:1-10, [11-20]; 23:1-3).

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Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5

Going Deeper

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? Consider the following basic pattern as a way of forming family devotions:

- Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time." Pray a simple prayer together.
- Take a moment to check in with each other; what are each person's "highs" and "lows" today?
- Read aloud from the Daily Bible Readings from below. Discuss the questions following each.
- End with a blessing, by simply tracing a cross on each other's forehead. The Lord's Prayer is a good way to end your devotion time. If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotions.

Note: *This is only a suggested pattern. It will vary with your household's context and patterns. What works best for you? First thing in the morning? Over breakfast? Bed time? Be creative and flexible with how you practice and keep your devotions!*

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday—Read Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5

Israel, God's vineyard.

- What might God sing in a love song to you?
- Why do you think God compared Israel to a vineyard?

Monday—Read 2 Kings 18:1-8

King Hezekiah reigns over Judah.

- What are some examples of the ways King Hezekiah did what was right in God's sight?
- What are some examples of the way you live intentionally for God?

Tuesday—Read 2 Kings 18:13-18

The Assyrians attack Judah.

- Why did Hezekiah cooperate with King Sennacherib?
- Why does God allow bad things to happen?

Wednesday—Read 2 Kings 18:28-37

The Assyrians challenge God.

- Who has tried to discourage you from having hope?
- How did Hezekiah's life and words encourage his people despite the king of Assyria's negative talk?

Thursday—

Read 2 Kings 19:1-2, 5-7, 29-37

Jerusalem is saved.

- What are some examples of answered prayer that you have experienced?
- When have you felt God's hand of protection on you?

Friday—Read 2 Kings 20:1-11

Hezekiah becomes ill.

- What was Hezekiah's main reason for wanting to continue to live?
- What is your main purpose in life?

Saturday—Read 2 Kings 21:1-9

A bad king rules over Judah.

- What made King Manasseh a bad king?
- How can people continue to live for God when their leaders encourage things that oppose God's kingdom?

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