

New Life Bible Study Series



THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

A BIBLE STUDY FROM ISAIAH 42-43

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TEACHING PLAN BY BETSY K. DUNBAR



National Ministries

Supporting NEW LIFE 2010



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*NEW LIFE 2010 is a vision
set forth in 1998 for American Baptists
to reach 1,000,010 new disciples,
plant 1,010 new churches,
vitalize a multitude of caring ministries
—and so transform our congregations
by the year 2010.*



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www.newlife2010.org
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THE SERVANT OF THE LORD
A Bible Study from Isaiah 42-43

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OBJECTIVES

- Identify what it means to be a servant of God caring for new life.
- Examine what new things God will do.
- Explore the tension between our current reality and God's vision.
- Decide what implications these learnings have for our personal witness and our church's involvement in NEW LIFE 2010.

BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Decide whether you will break this study into two sessions or keep it as one extended session.
2. Invite group members to read Isaiah 42-43 before your session, and to bring their Bibles.
3. Study the lesson plan and become comfortable with it. Take time to study the Introduction to the Passage (page 4), so you can express it in your own words.
4. Copy the Personal Study handout (pages 8-11) for each member of the group, and provide extra pens, pencils and Bibles.
5. On newsprint, poster board or chalkboard, draw a large version of the charts on the Personal Study handout for use during group discussion.

6. Have the vision for NEW LIFE 2010 available for the group to review. Write it on newsprint for everyone to see or on slips of paper or 3"x 5" cards that you hand out. (See vision on inside cover of this Bible study.)
7. Option: Place pictures of new life (spring flowers, scenes of new beginnings in our human life, baby animals, etc.) around the room.

SUPPLIES

- Copies of the Personal Study handout
- Extra pens, pencils and Bibles
- A thick rubber band for each person
- Newsprint, poster board or chalkboard
- Depending on your choice for #6 in Before the Session, copies of the NEW LIFE 2010 vision on paper or 3"x 5" cards
- If you choose option #7 in Before the Session, pictures of new life clipped from magazines, etc.

NOTES FOR THE LEADER

Just as there is often a tension between our current reality and our vision, there is often a tension for modern readers of the Old Testament between the beautiful images of God's creation, hope and promises and descriptions of burning anger, violence and scorn. There are two major traps: 1) to ignore those "negative" passages, and 2) to focus on them.

These chapters in Isaiah talk of justice, which we often symbolize as balanced scales. Guide your group to balance these images, whether they relate to God or to our mission as God's servants.

As in nature, some seeds need a fire in the forest or prairie to germinate and grow. (Sometimes, for example, we need to face the painful question of whether we are following false idols or not paying attention to God.) But a slash and burn approach to everything would be disastrous. (So would

getting wrapped up in identifying our enemies or the punishment due those who have not followed God's laws.)

If your group starts to lean toward either of these extremes, help the group to remain focused on the goal of new life. Keep the image of a servant caring for another in your mind.

BREAKING THE ICE (10 minutes)

If the group has fewer than eight participants, do this exercise with the whole group. If you have more than eight, divide into groups of four or five. Go around the circle and have each person answer...

What did you want to be when you grew up?

After everyone has a chance to answer, ask each participant to respond to...

How would you describe who are you today, in contrast to who you wanted to be when you were younger?

BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION TO THE PASSAGE (5 minutes)

From the very beginning of creation, God has been on a mission—a mission of love to draw people back into a relationship with Himself, their Creator. God’s plan was to use ordinary people for this extraordinary purpose. It began with the nation of Israel, climaxed in the coming of Jesus the Son, and continues today through the Holy Spirit, in and with the church. *“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16).

God has a plan for you! No matter how young or old you are, how wealthy or poor, how educated, or where you live, God has a mission for you. God’s mission in the world continues to be a mission of love. And He continues to use ordinary people for His extraordinary purpose.

Now more than ever, the people of Planet Earth need servants of God who embody Christ’s love and share the Good News of Jesus in word and deed. You can make a world of difference when you answer God’s call to service and allow God’s plans to be your plans, and God’s mission to be your mission in this world. There is nothing more fulfilling in life than growing up to be a servant of the Lord.

Isaiah 42:1-7 is the first of four “Servant Songs” in the book of Isaiah. (See also 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12.) These passages portray the mission of God’s Servant in the world. Though these passages are often seen as a reflection of the promised Messiah, they should also be considered a reflection of the nation of Israel. Ultimately they reflect all servants of God, all followers of Christ, all members of His church—us!

Read Isaiah 42:1-7 with different persons reading each verse.

GROUP STUDY (15 minutes)

Discuss the following questions, making sure that each person has the opportunity to share. (In large groups, break into groups of four or five.)

What is the specific mission of the “servant” in these verses?

What is the relationship between the “servant” in this passage and Christians today?

How do these verses challenge your service to God as you live out the mission God has given you?

How do these verses speak to your church’s service to God?

How do they relate to your church’s mission to the community and to the nations?

PERSONAL STUDY (30 minutes)

Introduce this time by reading Isaiah 42:8-9. Share with the group that in chapters 42 and 43, the Lord announces the new things He will do. Some things will change; but some things, like God’s character and God’s mission, are eternal and will remain the same.

Give group members the Personal Study handout (pages 8-11) and invite them to find a comfortable space for their personal study, either in the room, another spot in the building, or outside. Before they leave, make sure everyone knows when the gathering time will be.

GROUP DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

When members of the group return, invite them to share their discoveries. Use the big chart you made to jot down some of their findings in the three categories:

Images of God
Old Things
New Things

Discuss the implications these findings have for your church's mission as a servant to care for new life.

TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY - *When the vision pulls...* (10 minutes)

Give each person a rubber band and divide the group into partners. Ask the partners to link their rubber bands and then hold onto their own rubber band.

Have each pair determine which person will represent *Current Reality* (the way it is today) and which person will represent the *Vision* of what God desires to do.

Instruct the person representing the *Vision* (still holding the rubber band) to take a step away from the person representing *Current Reality*.

As the rubber bands pull, ask the *Vision* holder to continue to step away from *Current Reality*, increasing the tension until both persons feel uncomfortable.

Ask the group, "What can you do to reduce the creative tension?"

The three options:

- The *Current Reality* person takes a step toward the *Vision*.
- The *Vision* person takes a step back toward *Current Reality*.
- Both the *Current Reality* and *Vision* persons take a step toward each other.

Allow time for the partners to experiment with these options.

GROUP SHARING (20 minutes)

Bring the group together. Explain that there is always creative tension between God's vision and our current reality. We can distort our current reality (moving it closer to the vision than it really is), distort the vision (moving it closer to our current reality), or distort both. But, as God's servants, we are called to work *with* the creative tension.

In the whole group discuss these questions:

How does the rubber band activity relate to your study of Isaiah 42-43?

What is one observation from Isaiah 42-43 that relates to your church's involvement with NEW LIFE 2010?

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Invite your group to hold hands in a prayer circle.

Lord, you are creating all things new. We are your servants, and want to serve your purpose. Help us to follow your vision. Deliver us from potential pits of despair over our current reality. Lead us through the tension. Give us the tools we need to bring justice and hope to the nations. Take hold of our hands. Make our congregation to be a promise and a light for all to see that God has not forsaken them. We pray all this in the name of Jesus, who as a servant washed his disciples' feet. Amen.

Handout: NEW LIFE 2010 Bible Study
The Servant of the Lord

PERSONAL STUDY (30 minutes)

By yourself, read through Isaiah 42:10-43:28. In answering the questions, you will want to re-read the passage several times.

Using the charts, jot down notes from the passage that reflect the following three categories:

- What images or metaphors does Isaiah use to describe God? (For example, in verse 14 God is described as a woman in labor.)

- What are the old things (the “former things”) that God will change? (For example, in verse 22 God wants to free those “trapped in holes and hidden in prisons.”)

- What are the new things God will do?

Images of God

Old Things

New Things

Review your notes for each section. Note the implications for...

Your personal ministry and mission as a servant caring for new life

Your church's ministry and mission as a servant caring for new life

NEW LIFE 2010 Resources

NEW LIFE BIBLE STUDY SERIES - \$1.00 each

- #1 "Good-Faith: The Well-Spring of New Life" - 4686
"Verdadera Fe: La Fuente de Nueva Vida - 4704
- #2 "The Servant of the Lord" - 4721
"El Siervo del Señor" - 4777
- #3 "New Images, New Understanding" - 4778
"Nuevas Imágenes, Nueva Comprensión" - 4779

NEW LIFE 2010 CHURCH BROCHURE - FREE

Is your congregation working toward one or more of the NEW LIFE 2010 goals? Brochure offers the opportunity to be recognized as a NEW LIFE 2010 church. Use with NEW LIFE 2010 poster below. English—4688; Spanish—4689

NEW LIFE 2010 POSTER - FREE

One side offers suggestions to help churches seek God's leading. The other side can be posted on a bulletin board with goals defined by your congregation. English—4619; Spanish—4621

NEW LIFE 2010 BULLETIN COVERS - FREE

Colorful bulletin cover for special events. Include NEW LIFE 2010 responsive reading. Available in packs of ????. English—NM4543; Spanish—4723

NEW LIFE 2010 CALENDAR STICKERS - FREE

Put sticker on the 20th of each month as a reminder to pray for NEW LIFE 2010. Available in packs of 50 sheets/12 stickers on each sheet. English—4360; Spanish—4361

NEW LIFE 101 WEB WORKSHOP -

"WHAT IS NEW LIFE 2010?" - FREE

Interactive, 90-minute workshop for discussing what NEW LIFE 2010 could mean for your church. Includes Bible study, Treasure Hunt, and discussion guides. For downloadable copy, visit www.newlife2010.org, or call 800-ABC-3USA, ext. 2307 to request a copy.

To order these print resources, call 800-4JUDSON.

For additional copies contact:

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