

**WEEK 4 | THE SUBSTITUTE
ISAIAH 52:13 – 53:12**



ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MINUTES)

Catch everybody up to date on what's going on with New City. You can use your bulletin as a tool to do so.

- The next Women's Gathering is March 16 (7pm at Unwind Wine Bar).
- The Mazatlan Team is leaving on March 31 (some cGroups are involved in donations for the children's homes; if your group is, make sure and talk about that).
- The next New Member Sunday is April 6. If you have been through the Intro to New City class and are interested in becoming a member, contact Amy (amy.samad@newcitycincy.org).
- If you haven't had a chance yet, make sure and do the Community Group Self-Assessment and [summarize your results for us here](#).

ENGAGE (10 MINUTES)

Starter Questions: What was the first concert you went to? What was the experience like?
OR, share a high and a low from the previous week.

REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

From now until Easter we're going to be looking at the latter chapters of Isaiah, particularly focusing in on the Suffering Servant. This week we're looking at the 4th Servant Song in Isaiah 52-53.

1.) Read Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. This chapter is cited in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament passage. Why do you think that is?

2.) How did people regard God's Servant when he came among them? (see especially 52:14, 53:2-3) What does this teach us about the way God works? the way we should look at the world?

3.) What afflictions did the Servant experience? (53:3-9) If God allowed the Servant (in whom he delights, Is 42:1) to suffer, how does this affect our understanding of the suffering that comes into our own lives?

4.) With what attitude did the Servant undergo these afflictions? (53:7)

5.) What was the purpose of the Servant's suffering? (53:4-6, 10-12) What should our response to this be?

6.) The Servant would be executed as a criminal. Nevertheless, what else did Isaiah promise would be true of him? (53:10-12)

7.) Read Acts 8:26-35. Philip applies this passage directly to Jesus. How does the Suffering Servant chapter help you understand the mission and work of Jesus Christ?

8.) ***Optional:*** If there is time, read through the attached handout together. What stands out to you as significant? What applications do you want to make in your life? If you don't have time, you can hand out copies for people to take home and work through on their own.

PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

Break up into smaller groups of men and women. For those who are comfortable, share your applications and pray for one another.

ISAIAH 52:13-53:12 HANDOUT

The 4th Servant Song is broken into 5 stanzas of 3 verses each.

1.) The Servant is an Unexpected Mixture of Strength and Weakness (52:13-15). In verse 13 it makes clear he will be successful in his mission (“act wisely”) and be “exalted.” And yet in verse 14, people are nauseated (“astonished”) when they see him, so badly was he beaten and tortured. When Jesus was beaten by Roman soldiers, people were not asking, “Is this the Son of God?”, they were asking, “Is this human?” In verse 15, his mission is successful – he will “sprinkle the nations” to cleanse people of their sin.

22x in the Old Testament priests are asked to do sprinkling for purification (i.e. Leviticus 14:7, 16:14; Numbers 18:7). This is a powerful image linked to the work of Christ, and one of the reasons many churches prefer sprinkling as the mode of baptism. Hebrews 9-10 uses the Greek word *baptizo* for sprinkling.

2.) The Servant is Unimpressive (53:1-3). It’s hard to believe in a crucified Savior because he looks so, well, *crucified*. But it’s not just his suffering that makes him hard to believe in. He is ordinary and unimpressive. “*Oh, so this is Jesus Christ. I am really quite surprised. You look so small, and not a king at all*” (Pilate, in *Jesus, Christ Superstar*).

Do you believe God works in the ordinary and day to day? What would you do differently if you believed that he did?

3.) The Servant is Your Substitute (53:4-6). Ten times in Isaiah 53 it says the Servant took on himself something that wasn’t his. This is a favorite passage for New Testament writers explaining how God can justify the ungodly. Jesus Christ came to die for our sins, to bear our guilt, to bring us peace and healing. Notice the personal pronouns Isaiah uses in this section. He was pierced for *our* transgressions, crushed for *our* iniquities. Like Rembrandt, painting himself into the crucifixion scene, Isaiah wants us to see the Servant bearing *our* sin, grief and sorrow.



4.) The Servant was Willing (53:7-9). Jesus is compared to a lamb led to slaughter, a sheep silent before his shearers. His death is not a capitulation to weakness, but an exercise of deliberate self-control. He was not overpowered; he *chose* not to fight back. “*No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord*” (John 10:18).

5.) The Servant is Triumphant (53:10-12). This stanza is full of victorious language. The Servant will see his offspring, divide the spoils of his victory, and be satisfied in his soul. He has accomplished what he set out to do: clearing sinners of their guilt by bearing their sin. At the Last Supper, Jesus quotes verse 12 to explain the meaning of his suffering to his disciples (Luke 22:37). There is perhaps no better place in the Bible to understand the Cross than this passage.

Lent (the 40 day run up to Easter) is a time the church uses to think about: 1) our own mortality, 2) the brokenness in the world and our call to mission & 3) our personal sin and need for a Savior. A good Lenten application would be to read and meditate on Isaiah 52-53 daily.