

Teen Devotion

Year C – Lent 5

Crushed



One truth shared: Part of being human means facing rejection. It can be crushing. We see that is especially true for Jesus this Lenten season. The result for us is spectacular, God promises to never leave us or forsake us.

This is what the Lord says—

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!”

Isaiah 43:16,18-19

Human Rejection Is Crushed by Divine Exaltation

We’d been friends ever since high school. We saw each other every day, got coffee every morning, and went to dinner at least once a week. Sometimes I would pay, and sometimes she would pay. I thought this would be a fantastic relationship, but I knew she didn’t really know how I felt. So, I made a plan. I went out and bought tickets to a show and asked if she would go. She seemed very excited until the moment I finished the question with “as my date.” There was an eternal two second pause before she said “...no.”

In my head, I saw this whole scene going very differently.

Rejection feels awful especially when you’re on the receiving end. Can you imagine when it happens to an entire nation? Today’s Word of God was to a nation who felt rejected by God. Israel was held in captivity twice. The first time was in Egypt—through no fault of their own. The second time was in Babylon as a result of their rejection of God.

God is no stranger to rejection. Think about Jesus on the cross. He cried out, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” God turns his back on his loved Son when Jesus needed him most. As Jesus dies, we see all of God’s anger against us poured out on him. We see our best friend rejected for what we should have done.

Rejection hurts. God has a message for those who are hurting because of rejection. “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!” Maybe that sounds “fluffy,” but it’s actually bigger than just “sorry you got rejected.” Or “God has something/someone better in store for you around the corner.” God doesn’t promise blue skies and flower-strewn pathways throughout life. He promises strength to get through your fragile moments. “He says, “I’m doing a new thing” for you. It’s a promise to never leave you or forsake you. And no matter who rejects us, he accepts us. He has chosen us. It’s iron-clad too! Just as Jesus was raised on the third day, you were raised with him through your baptism and marked as a child of God. Your identity as part of God’s family makes you incredibly valuable to him.

Jesus faced rejection in his life. So will you. Yes, it is painful, but God promises a way through it to something far better. “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13,14).

Prayer: Gracious and almighty Lord, you were rejected but became the cornerstone. Help me to build my life on you. When I face rejection, remind me of your grace and the calling you have given me. When I fall, forgive me because of your Son. Be my strength and my confidence. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

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***Starting the Discussion:** This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

Remembering the past: Have a couple people tell a story from their life that involves someone else stepping in and doing something impactful that rescued them/their family/class/etc. Be as descriptive as possible.

***Connecting:** This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

How do the stories we remember about people shape how we feel and trust them? In a similar way, God gives stories in his Word to shape our reliance upon and trust in him.

***Digging In:** Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

Read **Isaiah 43:16-17**.

- What event is Isaiah reminding us (and the people he is preaching to) about? (See Exodus 15.)
- What does this teach us about opposing God and trusting him?

Read **Isaiah 43:18-21**.

- Isaiah reminds us of the events and miracles God performed at the Red Sea against Egypt, then he says, "Forget the former things."
 - How can we rationalize both trusting God based on the past but also forgetting "the former things"?
 - What are we asked to remember about God (and what are we asked to forget about ourselves?)
- Focus on the beginning of verse 19: "See, I am doing a new thing!"
 - If we are stuck in the past, we can find ourselves never getting to anything new. Graciously, God pushes through.
 - What is this new thing God is doing? (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- Focus on the second line of verse 19: "Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"
 - What are things in life that can distract us from what God is doing in our lives?

When we face rejection, God says he can "make a road in the wilderness" (v19)

- Discuss what that road might look like.
- Think of a specific scenario in your life to illustrate.

***Conclusion:** Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

- This week's challenge: Be determined to "forget something from your past." Plan what you want to think about to replace it.
- Close in prayer asking God to bless their efforts to forget the past and focus on a new thing.