



## Beautiful Savior

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages Available Online

By Shari Miller

*(Please do NOT use the “if time permits” sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private before or after the study.)*

*(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for most effective study. Passages are printed below for ease in presentation.)*



Our apple tree [pictured above] has scars; wounded many years ago. After a thunder and hailstorm, a fruit-laden tree branch couldn't bear the weight and cracked off the trunk, virtually splitting the tree in half. We knew we couldn't save it, and were ready to chop it down. Memory reminded us of a sainted Christian friend who just happened to have a doctorate in horticulture. When hearing about the tree, he encouraged us to keep it. The “doc” proceeded to patiently put pins in the tree and cut off what couldn't be saved. He took such loving care of our tree. In amazement, the apple tree has flourished for almost 20 years, producing apples in

abundance. However, the pins are still

Author's apple tree in bloom – 2019

there and a big

scar where the branch joined back to the tree mars its appearance. But our “tree scar”—the evidence of a healed wound—is actually beautiful to us, since it does remind us of our dear, sainted tree doctor.

We all have been wounded and carry scars. Memories inevitably accompany the scars. This could include physical scars, scars in the woodwork, or even scars of the heart or soul after a loss. Identify a scar that you have, but more important, identify the memory that accompanies it, and how that scar is beautiful to you. Share if you can with your partner or a small group.

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share if they are comfortable doing so. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should start to begin discussion.**

**Opening Prayer:** Beautiful Savior, We praise and acknowledge that You are our God. We know that You cannot stand our sin and by nature, we are Your enemies. But in love for us, You fulfilled God's plan of salvation and willingly became one of us, lived a perfect life, suffered and died for *our* sins, bringing peace between sinful humankind and our just God. You conquered death and rose again to new life, promising us eternal life in You. Your Spirit gives us faith to believe and keeps us believing in You, our Savior and Lord. Please bless us as we explore Your awesome and saving Word. In Your name we pray, Amen.

In Isaiah 52:13–53:12, we read Isaiah's fourth Suffering Servant Song, an Old Testament prophecy of Jesus, the King and Savior. As you read particularly **Isaiah 52:13–53:6**, identify and/or list phrases that describe Jesus' appearance. \_\_\_\_\_

**Isaiah 52:13- 53:6: <sup>52:13</sup> Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. <sup>14</sup> As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—<sup>15</sup> so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. <sup>53:1</sup> Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has**

the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>2</sup> **For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.** <sup>3</sup> **He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.** <sup>4</sup> **Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.** <sup>5</sup> **But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.** <sup>6</sup> **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

Isaiah indicates that Jesus' appearance was *marred, beyond human semblance (verse 52:14)* — hardly beautiful to our worldly eyes. Discuss why you think that was. (See **verse 53:6** for a clue.) \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sin is ugly and all our iniquities were laid on Jesus – we would not want to look on that!**

Crucifixion was a method of capital punishment where a person is either bound or nailed to a large wooden beam (or cross) and eventually dies of asphyxiation. Read the following accounts of Jesus' crucifixion and identify the physical wounds He experienced: **Mark 16:16–20; John 19:1–3, 31–34; and John 20:24–25.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Crown of thorns jammed on His head; striking His head with a reed; spitting on Him; crucified Him; flogged Him; struck Him with their hands; pierced His side with a spear; used nails in His hands to crucify Him.**

**Mark 16:16-20:** <sup>16</sup> **And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion.** <sup>17</sup> **And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.** <sup>18</sup> **And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"** <sup>19</sup> **And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.** <sup>20</sup> **And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.**

**John 19:1-3:** <sup>1</sup> **Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.** <sup>2</sup> **And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.** <sup>3</sup> **They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.**

**John 19:31-34:** <sup>31</sup> **Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.** <sup>32</sup> **So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.** <sup>33</sup> **But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.** <sup>34</sup> **But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.**

**John 20:24-25:** <sup>24</sup> **Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.** <sup>25</sup> **So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."**

**Faith Talk:** From the crucifixion accounts in the four Gospels (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18), can you imagine some "heart" wounds that our Savior may have experienced? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Answers could include: betrayal; sadness; humiliation; anguish.**

**Faith Talk:** "Beauty is only skin-deep" is an adage heard through the centuries. What does this phrase mean to you? Share with a partner or your small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Read **John 3:16–17** and **1 Peter 2:24–25**. Discuss how Jesus' crucifixion — though bathed in ugly wounds, scars, and blood — was really the most beautiful thing that has happened for mankind. \_\_\_\_\_ Of what do Jesus' wounds and scars remind us? \_\_\_\_\_ **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

**John 3:16-17:** <sup>16</sup> **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** <sup>17</sup> **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.**

**1 Peter 2:24-25:** <sup>24</sup> **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.** <sup>25</sup> **For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

Even when we sinners look beautiful on the outside, what does Jesus tell us in **Matthew 23:27**? \_\_\_\_\_  
**We are really dead in our sin and are unclean — the opposite of beautiful.**

**Matthew 23:27:** <sup>27</sup>Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but **within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.**

Isn't it a testament to our Savior's abiding love that He reconciled us with God and that by His wounds we are healed? The Psalmist writes in Psalm 34:18, *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit*, and again in Psalm 147:3, *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds*. Read Romans 5:1–5. What are the results of Christ's beautiful work here on earth for each believer? \_\_\_\_\_

**Salvation, forgiveness, healing, the Holy Spirit, and life forever.** By what means does *the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* work in our lives? \_\_\_\_\_ **The Means of Grace — Word and Sacraments (The Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism)** How does later Paul further define our "hope" in Colossians 1:3–5.

\_\_\_\_\_ **The hope of heaven – eternal life in Christ Jesus.**

**Romans 5:1-5:** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

**Colossians 1:3-5:** <sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup>since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, <sup>5</sup>because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

**Faith Talk:** Read James 1:2. According to this and the Romans 5:1-5 passages, will we experience our own wounds and scars — both physical and spiritual — along life's way? \_\_\_\_\_ What can these trials accomplish in your life? Share with a partner or the small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

**James 1:2:** <sup>2</sup>Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

**If time permits:** In Isaiah 61:1-3, the Servant Messiah speaks and the prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. As a group, identify the ways in this reading that our Savior has changed our lives because of salvation through Him.

From: **Being poor**  
**Brokenhearted**  
**Captive**  
**Being prisoner**  
**Mourning**  
**Wallowing in ashes and grief**  
**Mourning**  
**Faint spirit**

To: **Having good news**  
**Wounds bound**  
**Proclaimed liberty**  
**Opening prison**  
**Comforted**  
**Beautiful headdress**  
**Oil of gladness**  
**Praise**

**Isaiah 61:1-3:** <sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

What responses to the saving work of our Beautiful Savior are encouraged in Psalm 147:1 and Isaiah 52:7? \_\_\_\_\_ **Praising the Lord, proclaiming salvation and the reign of our God, witnessing to the Good News of salvation in Jesus.**

**Psalm 147:1:** <sup>1</sup>Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

**Isaiah 52:7:** <sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

**Faith Talk:** What do praising God and witnessing about Him look like in your life? Share with a partner or the small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Just as a bridegroom says to his bride, so our Beautiful Savior says to His Church, in **Song of Songs 4:7**: *You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.* Jesus made us beautiful in God's eyes on Calvary. By His beautiful wounds and Spirit-given faith, we are His own — beautifully redeemed — beautifully tended and nourished — looking forward to our beautiful home in heaven. No wonder we call Him our Beautiful Savior!

***Faith Walk:***

1. Praise the Lord for His grace and mercy.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the boldness to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus.
3. Reflect on the wounds and scars that you have borne throughout your life and ask the Spirit to use these experiences as you assist others in their struggles.
4. Memorize all four verses of the hymn “Beautiful Savior.” (See below.)
5. Pray that the Lord keep you faithful and clinging to the hope of heaven until your life on earth ends.

***Closing Prayer:*** Speak or sing the words of “Beautiful Savior” (*LSB #537; LW #507; TLH #657*).

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