



Leader guide and Bible passages are available online or by calling the LWML Office.

# Beautiful Savior

BY SHARI MILLER

**O**ur 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 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.

## 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. \_\_\_\_\_

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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.) \_\_\_\_\_

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**. \_\_\_\_\_

**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? \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

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? \_\_\_\_\_

Even when we sinners look beautiful on the outside, what does Jesus tell us in **Matthew 23:27**? \_\_\_\_\_

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? \_\_\_\_\_

By what means does the Holy Spirit *who has been given to us* work in our lives? \_\_\_\_\_

How does Paul further define our “hope” in **Colossians 1:3–5**? \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

**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.

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What responses to the saving work of our Beautiful Savior are encouraged in **Psalms 147:1** and **Isaiah 52:7**? \_\_\_\_\_

**Faith Talk:** What do praising God and witnessing about Him look like in your life? Share with a partner or the small group.

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).

Shari Miller, wife of Rev. Larry, is a freelance author and musician living in Helena, Montana, and is the LWML Montana District President. She has written numerous articles and studies for the LWML.