



WONDER  
DISCOVERY  
PASSION

In this three-week series we'll look at the ways we're tempted to skip out on the real life that God has for us. As we do, we'll see that God's inviting us to stop avoiding our problems and just deal with it.

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# TEACHING OUTLINE

## DEAL WITH IT | WEEK 2

### BOTTOM LINE

GOD CARRIES US *THROUGH* PROBLEMS, NOT *AROUND* THEM.

#### SCRIPTURE

*Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. With whom will you compare me or count me equal? (Isaiah 46:4-5a NIV).*

The author of Isaiah wrote in the midst of his own tough circumstances. In this passage we see that God promises to carry us through even the most challenging of circumstances when we turn to Him.

#### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that making bad choices makes bad circumstances worse.

#### TEACHING SCRIPT SUMMARY

##### INTRODUCTION

What's taking up the most space in your brain right now?

When we're occupied with things that aren't that great, we want to shut those thoughts down.

##### TENSION

The problem with bad or difficult circumstances is that the distractions we turn to as a result have a tendency to lead to bad choices.

Choosing to do these things doesn't actually fix anything.

##### TRUTH

God doesn't say that He'll make their problems go away and disappear.

After we make our bad escape choices, the problem is still there. So in reality, we haven't actually *escaped* anything.

What we need to know is something that can help us *through* the pain of our problems.

In all of it, He is a God who sustains us, rescues us, and carries us—even to our old age.

##### APPLICATION

Here are three things to consider when you're trying to decide if you will face it or try to escape it: 1) Name the problem. 2) Change our perspective. 3) Make some good choices.

##### LANDING

Ask yourself, "Am I trying to get *around* this, or am I trusting God to get me *through*?"



# TEACHING SCRIPT

## DEAL WITH IT | WEEK 2

### BOTTOM LINE

GOD CARRIES US *THROUGH* PROBLEMS, NOT *AROUND* THEM.

### INTRODUCTION

1 Minute

Okay, let's start with a question. What's taking up the most space in your brain right now? In other words, what do you find yourself thinking about the most? If you tried to sit quietly and let your mind wander, what would be the *thing* that pops up over and over again?

For some of us, it's a great thing:

- A trip we're looking forward to.
- A new guy or girl we're interested in.
- Or a driver's license that's just around the corner.

When something awesome is on our minds, we *want* it to stay there. But for a lot of us, the thing that's taking up most of our brain space right now isn't fun at all. And we wish it was *out* of our minds. Like...

- A fight with a friend.
- The stress of school.
- Drama at home.
- Or the anxiety we feel about how we look or what other people possibly think of us.

When we're occupied with things that aren't that great, we want to shut those thoughts down, *fast*. *Dealing with it* is the last thing we want to do.

Last week we talked about how we tend to distract ourselves with fun things to avoid the difficult or boring things in life.

Today we're going to talk about a completely different category of things we use to avoid dealing with challenges.

### TENSION

4 Minutes

**See, the problem with bad or difficult circumstances is not simply that they're difficult to get through. The problem is that the resulting distractions have a tendency to lead to bad choices.**

Sometimes, we look for a distraction—something we enjoy that take our mind off of our problems. But many times, we go the more damaging route.

We don't just look for a distraction. **We look for an escape.**

I was terrible at this when I was in high school. I would be frustrated at my mom for any number of things, and I would let my frustrations build up inside. And instead of actually talking with her about those frustrations and dealing with it, I would distract myself with endless hours of watching TV. And inevitably—and way more times than I'd like to admit—I



would lose my temper with my little brother. And most of the time, I would overreact to the slightest thing. He didn't even do anything that was a big deal at all. I would say *awful* things to him. In my general frustration, I would lash out. And not because I was actually mad at *him*, but because I hadn't dealt with my frustration with my mom.

So it basically worked like this. Angry with my mom? Didn't want to deal with it. Which then led to me being mean to my brother, which was a bad choice.

See how that works?

Dealing with it in this way is sometimes simple...

- Like peeling out of your driveway way too fast after an argument with your dad.
- Or slamming the door as hard as you can after a frustrating conversation with your boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Or talking about your friend behind her back because she said something rude to you.

But sometimes, our way of dealing with it is way more complicated, with reactions that can result in some serious consequences. Choices like...

- Drinking.
- Drugs.
- Raging.
- Cutting.
- Smoking.
- Reckless behavior.

Now, we're in church, so most of you probably assume that we're going to talk about why those things *are* so dangerous, and why you *should* stop.

But while those things are dangerous, and you should stop doing those things, this isn't a talk about that. You already know about consequences. You've probably heard talks about bad choices at home and at school.

**What I want you to know today is this: Choosing to do these things doesn't actually fix anything.**

They may *feel* helpful in the moment, right? We can "vent off some steam," forget about reality, or find some enjoyment, and we like that. That makes sense. And it's what a lot of people around us are doing to deal with their challenges, so it seems normal.

And the truth is, when we make unhealthy choices, what we're ultimately looking for is something that will help us get *through* the situation—something that will help us get beyond our hurt, frustration, or pain. **And this goal isn't bad; we just need to change our tactic.** We need a new strategy. Because avoidance isn't helpful. And turning our emotions into harmful actions isn't helpful, either.

And this may sound simplistic, but it's something we all need to hear: **Bad choices don't fix bad circumstances.**

But of course, the alternative to making bad choices—which is actually *dealing* with our bad circumstances—is WAY easier said than done. It's easier to drink, cut, smoke, rage, shut down, and act out. But ultimately, here's what happens when we do these things:

First, we actually *risk* more hurt.

Second, the original pain isn't dealt with.

And third, the original pain actually gets worse.

So that's the bad news. But there's good news, too. Because there *is* a different tactic.

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## TRUTH

### 6 Minutes

Today we're going to take another look at what the Bible has to say about dealing with our problems. Now, the Bible is split into two parts: There's the Old Testament and the New Testament. There's a lot of significance behind their differences, but that's another talk for another time. But regardless of those differences, both parts hold some incredible truths from God.

One of the many reasons I love the New Testament is that it gives me a lot of clear instructions for how I should live my

life in light of Jesus, who He is, and what He did. And one of the reasons I love the Old Testament is that it holds lot of stories of people who got it right *and* people who got it wrong. I can connect with people who had a lot of faith people who wondered where God was when they needed Him. And listen, if you want to feel better about the things you struggle with, the Old Testament is the place for you!

So, in the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah is one of those books where, no matter what you're going through, you can



probably relate to the author. Today we're going to look at a passage that was written during a particularly challenging time in Israel's history. For starters, the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed by foreign invaders. And this city that was built to honor God—filled with people who were supposed to be God's chosen ones—was in ruins.

Not only that, these people that God loved so much were removed from their city and exiled to a foreign land. They had no temple—or place to worship—and no guarantee that they would ever see their homeland again.

And it's in these crazy circumstances that the author is writing. So right away, we know that he gets it. He knows what it's like to be in a bad season where things feel broken and unfixable. And in the middle of this really difficult time, this is the message God gives the author to deliver to His people:

*Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. With whom will you compare me or count me equal? (Isaiah 46:4-5a NIV).*

I love this passage. What a comforting way to think about God in tough times. But I love this passage because I'm just reading it. If I actually put myself in the shoes of the author, I'd be frustrated and sad. Why? Because it doesn't say one word about getting back at the people who had destroyed their city and taken their innocent people captive. It doesn't promise a return to their home country. God doesn't say, "Don't worry! Everything will work out fine!"

Sure, He promises to *sustain* them, which means He will literally *bear the burden* they're holding—He'll carry it.

**But He doesn't say that He'll make their problems go away and disappear.**

If I were the author, I would file that under bad news. Because, let's be honest, isn't that what we're hoping for? Isn't that *why* we lash out, or drink, or make bad choices? We're trying, even for a brief moment, to escape and make the bad thoughts and feelings and circumstances disappear.

But I think most of us would admit that "escaping" our problems hasn't worked out well for us in the past. After we make our bad escape choices, the problem is still there. So in reality, we haven't actually *escaped* anything.

The escape plan doesn't deal with it.

- Our problem—or other problems like it—will just show up again.
- Or we don't know when our problems won't be problems anymore.
- Or we don't know when we'll stop hurting.

What we need to know is something that can help us *through* the pain of our problems.

This leads us to look at these words from Isaiah a little differently. When our life feels upside down and we feel out of control, abandoned, or alone, we're not. We have a God who is with us—from now to the end of our lives. He will carry and sustain us. He may not take us out of our circumstance, but He will get us through it. Because the truth is this:

**God carries us through problems, not around them.**

The season we are in will eventually end. It will pass. Things will get better, but we can prolong the process and complicate the situation when we decide to escape by making bad choices.

And that's why what God is saying here matters so much. Because what He offers is something that won't change. No matter what the circumstances are, or how hard the season is. No matter how complicated or frustrating things are or how long it takes for them to get better. **In all of it, He is a God who sustains us, rescues us, and carries us—even to our old age.** He is constant, even when our situation isn't. And we can trust He is able to get us through.

Now, fast-forward many years later. Israel was again in another tough situation. And this time, God sent Jesus. And Jesus not only lived through tough times, but was also killed and then came back to life. He literally defeated death. And through Him we have hope that God, who has power over everything, can get us through anything. Because of Jesus, we can walk through our problems instead of trying to escape from them. We have a God who IS ABLE and WILLING to carry us *through* to the other side. If we were all alone, we'd have a reason to look for an escape. If we had no one powerful enough to get us through, we'd have a reason to hide. But we aren't alone. And *that* truth can give us the courage we need to deal with it.



## APPLICATION

2 Minutes

So in light of that, let's talk about some practical steps we can take. Here are three things to consider when you're trying to decide if you will face it or try to escape it.

**Number one, name the problem.** So often, we do destructive things that hurt us because we aren't *thinking*. So next time you're tempted to run toward something that's harmful, ask yourself, "What am I running *from*?" What am I trying to avoid dealing with?" We aren't ever going to work *through* our stuff if we just keep trying to skip past—or forget—the *real* issue.

**The second thing we can do? Change our perspective.** When all we see is the problem, it's easy to act out of desperation. But Isaiah reminds us that God is with us, and He's in it for the long haul. Our season isn't

permanent, but God is. The problem isn't the biggest thing in our world, God is. And this change in perspective can fuel us to face our stuff head-on.

**And finally, make some good choices.** We need to make choices that are going to help us get *through* something and not around it. Choices that will help us tackle our challenges instead of ignore them. But this isn't easy. Making good choices means we have to come face-to-face with the tough stuff. It means we have to step up and have the hard conversation we've avoided, or acknowledge the hurt we've ignored, or get the help we didn't want to ask for, or apologize for the wrong that we didn't want to own. Because we know God is with us. We aren't in it alone. And thanks to Him, we can make it to the other side of this season.

## LANDING

1 Minutes

So as you leave today, I want you to think about the thing in your life that—when it enters your mind—you instantly want to shut down.

Ask yourself, "Am I trying to get *around* this, or am I trusting God to get me *through*?" Be honest with yourself, because all of us naturally want to make difficult stuff go away.

The urge is to escape, even if that means doing something that hurts us MORE in the long run. But I want you to know that God loves you! He wants more for you than to simply be in a cycle of pain, escape, more pain, and more escape. Remember, **God carries us through problems, not around them.** And you can trust Him to do just that.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS