



Lesson Overview

Week of April 4

1 Life Need:

Discuss how our suffering connects to that of Jesus.

2 Bible Learning:

Read Isaiah's incredible prophecy about how Jesus would suffer and sacrifice for us.

3 Bible Application:

Study the relationship between Jesus' suffering and our redemption and salvation.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Poster—He Was Wounded for Our Transgressions

4 Life Response:

Experience the redemption and salvation that come from Jesus' suffering.

Suggested Material:

- The words to the first verse and chorus of the Fanny Crosby hymn 'Redeemed How I Love to Proclaim It'

Church/Home Theme:
Revive Us Again,
O Lord!

Lesson Focus:
Receive salvation from the Servant, who redeems suffering.

Lesson Scripture:
Isaiah 53:4-11a

The Suffering Servant Brings Salvation

The Suffering Servant—The Old Testament prophet Isaiah vividly painted a picture of God's Suffering Servant dying for His people. The details fit Jesus' death on the Cross hundreds of years later as Jesus endured the pain and sorrow of carrying on His back the sins of every individual who ever walked this earth. Christians who understand this truth embrace Him as Savior and praise Him for what He's done.

God orchestrated and ordained the Son's sacrifice on the Cross. Why? Each person should be paying for his or her own sin. But instead, the Father arranged for His Son to suffer and take everyone's place. Before His crucifixion, the Roman soldiers viciously whipped Christ, tearing the flesh from His back, and it is by these stripes that healing and restoration can happen.

The Shepherd for the Sheep—Isaiah said that all people rebel against God at some point and time, choosing their way instead of following the Lord's leading. He describes humans as sheep—ignorant, easily lead astray, and desperately in need of a shepherd's care to survive.

Therefore, the Lord sent the Good Shepherd, Jesus, who despite the extreme torture, did not defend Himself, but was like a lamb being led to the slaughter. Christ voluntarily sacrificed Himself as our Shepherd to protect and save us.

The Plan of Salvation—The Father watched the death of Jesus and saw it as a significant victory, for through the sacrifice of Christ, God reconciled the world to Himself. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled the Father's plan for salvation for everyone who will believe. Believers stand clean and justified before God as a result of what Jesus accomplished on the Cross.

Easter Sunday is filled with songs, sermons, poetry, and dramatic presentations highlighting the events surrounding the sacrifice of the Suffering Servant. However, we should every day turn our thoughts to the One whose redemptive work as the sacrificial Lamb of God made eternal life with Him possible.

As Your Students Arrive

Ask your students to think of a situation where some kind of suffering was ultimately good for them in some way. For example, in school they may have "suffered" studying for a test, but because of that, they received a good grade. They may have worked long and hard on a home remodeling project, but in the

end, they enjoyed the results. While the suffering we experience is not comparable to that of Jesus, His suffering brought us great benefits, as this week’s lesson explains.

Link to Last Week: Ask students to share if they were able to overcome some fears this past week so they could do what God asked them to do.

1 Life Need

Discuss how our suffering connects to that of Jesus.

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The Suffering Servant Brings Salvation

It had been years since Cornell had heard Sunday school teaching. However, today was not Sunday, and Cornell was not in church. He was in a soup kitchen, where he had landed because of years of bad choices—namely drugs, alcohol, and gambling.

It was a long fall with lots of suffering down to the soup kitchen. Cornell’s pride had been enormous. No one could tell him anything, and he felt he could do anything. How wrong he was.

Cornell was a regular at the soup kitchen. He knew that Tuesdays and Fridays were days two different church groups came to bring the Word of God. It filtered in through his haze, and he remembered. Cornell recalled hearing stories of a God who was mighty, and most of all—loving.

Well, it would take a lot of love for God to reach him. *Who would want me now?* he wondered.

“God wants you. God loves you,” the minister was saying. “Do you know what God let Jesus go through to redeem us? Christ suffered shame, brutality, and death so we could be healed, whole, and saved.”

After the service, the minister sat opposite of Cornell at the table, stretched out both hands, and said, “I sense your heart is open to the Gospel, and you are ready to receive Christ.”

Cornell unclenched both his hands and grabbed hold of the minister’s. “Yes,” he sobbed. “Lord, save me!”

1. *If we are suffering in some way, does that mean we are sinning? Explain your answer.*
2. *How can our suffering help others?*
3. *How can our suffering help us identify with Jesus and His suffering?*

LESSON FOCUS: Receive salvation from the Servant, who redeems suffering.

Read the anecdote in the student book, then ask your students to form small groups to discuss how they would answer **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

For Question 1, when Jesus healed a blind man, the disciples asked who had sinned—the man or his parents. Jesus explained that neither had sinned but the sickness and healing was to declare the glory of God. Without the sickness, there is no healing, and without suffering there is no perfection, maturity, understanding, or spiritual development.

Question 2 reminds us that we learn things through experience that we can’t learn any other way. Suffering can teach us compassion, humility, obedience, and faith in Christ. When we are strengthened, we are commanded to strengthen others. The afflictions of one are common to all; we all suffer in this life, but suffering doesn’t have to be in vain.

For Question 3, we can see that God allowed Jesus to suffer for us, so God understands our suffering as well.

2 Bible Learning

Read Isaiah's incredible prophecy about how Jesus would suffer and sacrifice for us.



You may want to put up the poster “He Was Wounded for Our Transgressions” for people to look at as you read the Scripture text. A small group will discuss it in Step 3.

- Isaiah prophesied in great detail about what a Roman crucifixion would look like hundreds of years later when he talked about the suffering of God’s servant.

- Isaiah described what happened to Jesus centuries later at His crucifixion.
- God’s servant would suffer terribly, and His suffering would be seen as punishment from God, though He would be innocent.
- But Isaiah saw that the Servant would be

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP

Read Isaiah 53:4-6 and think about these important ideas:

BIBLE EXTRA

The Servant Songs

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 is the fourth of the “Servant Songs” from this Old Testament prophet (see also Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11). While some Jewish scholars have attributed the identity of the Servant to the nation of Israel, or even King Hezekiah, the parallels between the man described in this passage and the life and atoning work of Jesus are too numerous to ignore. Allusions to the crucifixion, the sacrificial lamb, and the atoning impact of what happened to this silent servant all clearly point to Jesus. For this reason, the passage is tied to Jesus several times in the New Testament.

Passages in the New Testament quote portions of Isaiah 53. These include Matthew 8:14-17 (describing the healing ministry of Jesus); John 12:37-41 (to explain why Jesus was not received by His people); Luke 22:35-38 (Jesus identifying Himself as the Suffering Servant); 1 Peter 2:19-25 (to describe the way Jesus suffered during His crucifixion); Acts 8:26-35 (as the text that caught the attention of the God-fearing Ethiopian eunuch); and Romans 10:11-21 (where the apostle Paul identifies the Suffering Servant as Jesus).

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All We Like Sheep

Isaiah 53:4-6, KJV

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:4-6, NIV

⁴Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53 is widely known as the description of the Suffering Servant. The New Testament writers clearly identify the person described in Isaiah 53 as Jesus Christ, the Savior who comes to suffer atonement for the sins of the world.

Isaiah describes how this Suffering Servant will be rejected by the very people He came to save and the substitutionary atonement of the Servant’s work on their behalf. Jesus died in our place—He took up our pain and endured the suffering we should have. No amount of suffering that we experience ourselves can ever atone for our sins. Upon the Suffering Servant, the Lord has placed “our iniquities” (vs. 5).

Further, the Suffering Servant was “pierced for our transgressions” (vs. 5), alluding to the nails and possibly the spear driven through the hands, feet, and side of our Savior (John 19:31-34). The mental and physical crushing nature of His execution couldn’t be more clearly evident.

Isaiah reminded his original readers, and us, that everyone



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 1191-1194 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*.

paying the price of other people’s transgressions through the wounds inflicted upon His body, and His suffering would purchase peace and healing.

- We are like sheep without a shepherd—we will wander without His direction any way but toward the Shepherd.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

He was suffering for the “transgressions” (vss. 5, 8) of everyone. He took upon Himself our pain and our suffering.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

They can experience healing and salvation. Christ’s wounds are the healing for people who have accepted Him.

OPPRESSED AND AFFLICTED

Read Isaiah 53:7-9 and highlight these key points:

- Continuing to describe the Servant’s suffering, Isaiah said the Servant would not protest to His accusers but choose to allow the accusations about Him to go unchallenged.

- He would be like one of the silent lambs sacrificed on the altar at the temple.

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is in need of atonement—whether or not that need is acknowledged. All we like (dumb) sheep have wandered off, seeking our own happiness and means of salvation (vs. 6.). Quite often, only after the futility of those pursuits are discovered, do people finally understand their need for a Savior.

4. Why was the Suffering Servant being punished?

5. What impact can the Servant’s suffering have on others?

Oppressed and Afflicted

Isaiah 53:7-9, KJV

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Isaiah 53:7-9, NIV

⁷He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested?

For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

⁹He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Isaiah calls attention to the fact that the Suffering Servant did not get defensive, combative, or plead for His life when being offered up as an atonement for sin. Sacrificial lambs did not object when they were being offered up because, in

BIBLE EXTRA

‘The Lamb of God’

When Jesus approached John the Baptist in order to be baptized, the prophet cried out to all who could hear him, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). The parallel John was making with the lambs sacrificed on the altar of the temple (for the sins of the people) with the (eventual) atoning work of Jesus is remarkable and unmistakable. Of course, the prophet Isaiah also describes the Suffering Servant (identified by the New Testament writers—and Christ Himself—as Jesus) as the Lamb of God who would be sacrificed for our sins.

BIBLE EXTRA

Silent Sheep

Sheep are silent and still during the shearing process because their skin is very thin and prone to nicking (especially if the barber is not skilled in this practice). For this reason, sheep stay very quiet and still when they’re getting a wool-cut, because any quick movements might turn out to be quite painful.

• No one would speak up on His behalf, and He would be killed without protests of His innocence.

• The Servant would die with “the wicked” (as Jesus died with two criminals) and be buried with the rich (as Jesus was in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea).

• Isaiah reiterated that the Servant suffered and died even though He was innocent.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

He was offering Himself up voluntarily—not trying to escape from the suffering and humiliation.

BIBLE EXTRA

An Offering for Sin

A description of a sin offering, one of several offerings given in the law of Moses, is found in Leviticus 4. The sacrificial animal (bull, goat, or lamb) had to be entirely unblemished, and of course, its blood had to be shed. The guidelines in Leviticus 4 were only for unintentional sins; deliberate sins needed to be addressed by guilt offerings (Lev. 5–7).

BIBLE EXTRA

Healing: Physical or Spiritual?

Isaiah said of the Servant, “By his wounds we are healed” (vs. 5). But what kind of healing was he referring to? How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

Certainly the Gospels record many occasions when Christ healed physical ailments. Matthew 8:16-17 connects Isaiah 53:4 directly with Jesus’ exorcisms and physical cures. But from the Isaiah context it seems that Isaiah 53:5 refers primarily to the deeper spiritual healing—that is, to the healing of sin-sick souls. Ultimately, all true well-being comes from the power of God and work of Christ.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

He would be abandoned and cut off from the land of the living. And, of course, He would experience a horrifying death.

AN OFFERING FOR SIN

Finally, read Isaiah 53:10-11a and note these key ideas about Jesus’ sacrifice:

• Isaiah said that it “pleased” the Father for the Servant to die (KJV), not because He delighted in the Servant’s suffering, but because the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb was a sufficient “offering” for all sins.

• The Servant died and was buried, yet He lived

their innocence, they had no idea what was about to happen. Of course, Jesus had full knowledge of the pain He was about to experience, but did not protest. In this regard, Isaiah’s description of the silence of the Suffering Servant is a perfect reflection of how Jesus acted as He was to be crucified. When presented with the opportunity to save Himself by calling down the heavenly host, Jesus did not (Matt. 26:53). The few times He spoke, it was to challenge the assumptions of His executioners.

Isaiah predicted that no one would come to the defense of the Servant; that was true in Jesus’ case. Most of His followers scattered once He was taken into custody, though John and His mother Mary stayed by His side.

The reference to being “assigned a grave with the wicked” (vs. 9) alludes to the two men with whom Jesus was crucified—both convicted of actual crimes. One remained defiant, while the other asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. Jesus granted that man more than the promise to remember him—He also gave him eternal life.

“With the rich in his death” (vs. 9) is an allusion to Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy disciple of Jesus who gave up a plot in his family tombs in which to place the lifeless body of Jesus.

Isaiah highlighted the fact that the Suffering Servant had committed no crimes—in fact, He was sinless. He also spoke the truth, and never deceived anyone. Even so, His execution proceeded as planned. And those who put Him to death had no idea what they were doing, or whom they were torturing.

6. *Why didn’t the Suffering Servant defend Himself?*

7. *What consequences did the Servant’s suffering have upon Him?*

An Offering for Sin

Isaiah 53:10-11a, KJV

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make

Isaiah 53:10-11a, NIV

¹⁰Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his

and prospered, just as Jesus rose from the dead to ascend to a heavenly throne.

• For those who accept Jesus, their sins have been atoned for on the Cross.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

He accepted the shed blood of the Suffering Servant as an acceptable atonement for sin.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

“He will see the light of life and be satisfied” (vs. 11)—and God will exalt Him.

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KJV

his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11a He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

NIV

life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

^{11a}After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

In a statement that’s difficult to understand, Isaiah said that all the suffering of this Servant, at some mysterious level, “pleased” (vs. 10, KJV) God because it was His “will” (NIV).

In hindsight, we can understand how the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus made it possible for all people to come to God through His Son. However, it would have been considerably more difficult for Isaiah’s readers to grasp the significance of the suffering of someone clearly innocent.

The writer of Hebrews later explained the inadequacy of all the sacrifices in the temple when he wrote that the blood of bulls and goats would never “take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). Only “through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (vs. 10) could that happen. Now, those who truly want to be reconciled with God have the means to do so—and that is what brought delight to the heart of God.

In response to the Servant’s prolonged suffering, the Lord would reward Him. The Servant’s “prolong[ed] days” (Isa. 53:10) are reflected in Paul’s words in Philippians 2:9-11—God would exalt Jesus above every other name to the “highest place” (vs. 9), so everyone would acknowledge Him as Lord.

The Servant suffered to redeem sinful humanity. Those who reject the grace of God and Christ’s free offering on their behalf will face eternal separation from Him. But because of what Jesus did on the Cross, those who experience saving faith will experience eternal life with the Lord.

8. Why was the Lord satisfied with the Servant’s suffering?

9. How will the Suffering Servant be rewarded?

BIBLE EXTRA

Pierced

Isaiah tells us that the Suffering Servant was pierced for the transgression of many. This is an obvious reference to crucifixion when the Servant is seen as Jesus Christ. The Assyrians were the first to introduce a type of crucifixion by staking criminals into the desert sand until they succumbed to the elements. The Persians took this a step further and put the victims on poles. Alexander the Great brought the practice back to Europe, where the Romans perfected it into a slow, agonizing form of execution.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

The Reason for Suffering

Christ suffered for our sins, redeeming us from the curse of sin and eternal damnation. However, He commanded us to deny ourselves, take up our own cross, and follow Him. We are commanded to partake in His suffering—to suffer for righteousness’ sake. The apostle Paul said it this way: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10). But Paul went on to say that by understanding Jesus’ suffering and resurrection, he hoped to “somehow, [attain] to the resurrection from the dead” (vs. 11). Paul was not relishing the thought of suffering—he saw that it was part of being a child of God and also part of the path to the glory that would come at the future resurrection of the dead.

3 Bible Application

Study the relationship between Jesus' suffering and our redemption and salvation.

Make copies of this page so you can give instructions to each small group. Be sure to have the poster put up for the group discussing it.



Poster:

'He Was Wounded for Our Transgressions'

Read the familiar verse on the poster and discuss these questions in your group:

- How has Jesus' "punishment" personally brought you "peace"?
- How have you been "healed" by His "wounds"?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "It's Not Just about Blessings" in the student book and answer **Questions 10, 11, and 12**. We often associate suffering with sin and judgment, and that can be true if someone is suffering for a particular sin such as drug addiction, but we know that on the Cross Christ suffered for a debt He didn't owe. He paid the price of our sins, and we can find freedom from our sins when we accept Him as Lord and Savior. As believers, we know the greater glory that awaits us because we have accepted the salvation He paid for on the Cross. Also, as believers, we suffer with Christ and allow suffering to perfect in us patience, peace, hope, and righteousness.

Acrostic

Create an acrostic using the word S-A-L-V-A-T-I-O-N. To make the activity more challenging, find key Bible verses on salvation to help you complete the acrostic. For example, S-Savior (1 John 4:14); A-Atonement (Rom. 3:25), etc.

Quote Discussion

Discuss this quote about redemption from Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield (1851-1921): "It [redemption] gives expression not merely to our sense that we have received salvation from Him, but also to our appreciation of what it cost Him to procure this salvation for us. It is the name specifically of the Christ of the cross."

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It's Not Just about Blessings

We've created such a self-centered society that it has carried over into our relationship with the Lord. Salvation not only brought us the blessing and promise of eternal life, but it also brought a cross and commandments. We are commanded to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him.

Suffering is not something we choose to embrace as part of our relationship with Jesus, but He suffered for us. The description in Isaiah 53 reminds us just how much He suffered when He did not have to. He did it for our sake. The witnesses of Christ's crucifixion could never imagine that it was their sins, sorrows, and grief that He bore on the Cross.

His suffering, then, had a purpose. He kept us from having to suffer for our sins and opened the way for us to come to God as His redeemed children. As the apostle Paul said, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Rom. 8:17).

As children of God, we are not suffering just for the sake of suffering. Suffering may eliminate self-reliance and pride; it can purge and perfect us. It can draw us closer to Him.

The Gospel message is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our mission isn't to see what else we can get from God; our mission is that we proclaim the Gospel of Christ. As His disciples, we pray for those He also died to redeem that do not yet know Him.

Life has suffering, but Jesus redeems suffering. It helps point sinners to Him, and it can help us to refocus on doing His will. On this Easter, the Servant shows us that the path to follow is not easy, but the reward of salvation is great.

10. Why is understanding Jesus' suffering an important part of receiving salvation?

11. When have you seen God redeem your suffering for His purposes?

12. How often do you thank God for redeeming you through His suffering?

4 Life Response

Experience the redemption and salvation that comes from Jesus' suffering.

Ask your students to read "Salvation and Redemption" in the student book and encourage them to think of people they know who need to hear about the salvation and redemption that is the message of Easter and the Gospel. They can pray for those people, but they might also drop them a belated Easter card, invite them for coffee to talk about their suffering, and share times they have suffered as well but saw how God redeemed that suffering in some way.

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Salvation and Redemption

Jesus suffered to pay the price for our sins, and because He did, we can find freedom from our sins when we accept Him as Lord and Savior. The troubles and suffering of this life may be many, but they remind us of Him and can help point us to the greater glory that awaits us because we have accepted the salvation He paid for on the Cross.

► *Think of ways you can share the Easter message of redemption and salvation with those you know who need to hear that message, especially those who are suffering for some reason. Write some names and ways here.*

KEY VERSE

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. —Isaiah 53:5, KJV

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. —Isaiah 53:5, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of April 5 through April 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Acts 26:19-23—A Light to Jews and Gentiles.

Tues. Ephesians 4:17-24—Live the New Life in Christ.

Wed. Leviticus 18:24-30—Keep Land Faithful to Godly Practices.

Thurs. Zechariah 7:8-14—Ignoring God's Laws Leads to Judgment.

Fri. Nehemiah 7:73b—8:6—People Anxious to Hear the Law.

Sat. Nehemiah 8:9-12—People Respond Actively to the Law.

Sun. Ezra 10:1-12—Committed to a Life of Obedience, Salvation, and Redemption.

Suffering can be a difficult subject to discuss. Some adults in your class or those they know may be suffering for reasons that seem pointless at this time. Be sensitive to anyone suffering today, and ask the class to pray a prayer of compassion and recovery from grief and loss for those in such a situation.

In closing, you may want to sing the first verse and chorus of the Fanny Crosby hymn, "Redeemed How I Love to Proclaim It," which joyously reminds us of Jesus' redeeming us from sin and death. Or, you may want to have a final prayer, something like this: "Heavenly Father, we thank You for sending Your Son to live, die, and be resurrected for our sins. Today, we confess Jesus as Lord of our lives for the first time or in recommitment to Him. Thank You for transforming us into witnesses for Your kingdom. We praise You for the grace and faith to walk with You all of the days of our lives. In Jesus' name, amen!"



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read Ezra 10:1-12. Ask your students to think about how often they consider the cost of things that they buy.