

# THE BEGINNING OF THE END

**Bible Basis:** Isaiah 3:1–13; 14:1–5; 48:8–9; 53:1–2

**Key Verse:** When it is time to save you, I will help you. I will keep you safe. —Isaiah 49:8 NIRV

**Bible Point:** God doesn't give up on his people. God won't give up on me.

**Resource:** *The Story for Children*, Chapter 16: "The Beginning of the End"

## STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

**Stuff You Need:** stack of heavy books, more than a child can lift

Invite children to take turns lifting a stack of books. You may use another heavy item if that is convenient. As each child takes a turn, add another book to the stack. At any point, children may decide to give up and skip a turn and are "out." Children who continue must be able to lift the stack of books and hold it up for three seconds; if they can't, they're "out." If you have a large group, you can do this with a few volunteers. With a small class, include everyone. Play until everyone gives up or is unsuccessful at lifting the stack. Talk about:

- What did it feel like when you had to give up?
- Tell me about something that happened to you when you had to give up.

Say, **Our Bible story today is about a time when God's people probably felt like giving up, but they discovered that God does not give up on them.**

## STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

**Stuff You Need:** copies of *The Story for Children*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 16*, basket or bowl, packing peanuts or uncooked macaroni, poster board, glue

Tell the story from *The Story for Children*, Chapter 16. You can also have children find Isaiah 53 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

### God Takes and Gives

Use the marker to write, "God never gives up" on the poster board. Use outline style letters. Put the packing peanuts or uncooked macaroni in a bowl or basket. At various points in the story, you will toss handfuls out to the children, representing the things Isaiah said God would take away. Later, children will collect the items and return them to you. At that time, you or the children will glue items into the outlined letters on the poster board.

God's people wanted a king, so he gave them a king. But as the years passed, the kings fell away from following God. The Lord sent prophets to warn the people, but the people ignored God's messengers. They didn't follow God's rules. They didn't listen to God's messages. So God let the punishment come. The kingdom split into Israel and Judah. Kings from other nations came in and took away all the money in Israel and destroyed houses and cities. In fact, the people of Israel were captured and led away to live in other countries.

Things were not much better in Judah, the other group of God's people. A few good kings tried to turn things around, but most of the people paid no attention. God sent another messenger, a prophet named Isaiah, to tell the people to change their ways. If Judah shaped up and started obeying God like they were supposed to, God would forgive them and protect them from the kings from other countries. Isaiah tried really hard to get the people to listen. He told the people all the things God would take away from them if they didn't change.

*Throw out generous handfuls of the item you've selected as you name the things God would take away:*

- supplies
- food
- water
- heroes
- soldiers
- judges
- prophets
- elders
- captains
- government leaders
- advisers
- skilled workers

All these good things would go away because the people were not following God. The people would fight with each other, and everyone would suffer. *Pause and show your empty basket; the good things are gone.*

Isaiah said, "Your leaders have taken you down the wrong path. They have turned you from the right path." But the people paid no attention. Isaiah said that the cities would fall apart and the people of Judah would be marched off to another country in chains!

But Isaiah's message was not all doom and gloom. He knew that God still loved his people and was not going to give up on them. So his message was also about the good things that would happen after the horrible stuff was over. God was going to bring good things back.

*Pause and ask the children to collect the items you threw out earlier and bring them back to you as you name the things that God promised to do for his people:*

- God would show his tender love toward his people.
- God would settle the people back in their own land.
- Israel's suffering would end.
- Other nations would help God's people.
- God would break the power of evil rulers.
- God would answer prayers.
- God would save his people.

God said to his people, “When it is time to save you, I will help you. I will keep you safe.” Isaiah’s message got even better. God let him see things that would happen in the future—way in the future. Isaiah had visions of the Messiah, the person who would save all of Judah and the whole world. Isaiah knew about Jesus hundreds of years before Jesus was born. God wanted to give his people hope for the future. No matter how many bad choices God’s people made, he wasn’t going to give up on them.

*Pause and invite children to glue the collected items in the outlined letters on the poster. If you have a large group, have an assistant put down dabs of glue so children can simply file by and stick an item on. With a smaller group, you can allow children to fill in the letters. As they do so, continue telling about what God had planned for the future of his people.*

Isaiah told the people that God’s servant would grow up like a tender young plant. He said, “He suffered the things we should have suffered. He took on himself the pain that should have been ours. He was crushed because we had done what was evil. All of us are like sheep. We have wandered away from God. All of us have turned to our own way. And the Lord has placed on his servant the sins of all of us. He gave his life for those who had done what is wrong.”

*If you have a large group and need more time for children to glue items in, you can read all of Isaiah 53:1–12 from a Bible or from The Story for Children. If you have strong readers in your group, you can ask for volunteers to read. Then finish the story time by saying:*

Isaiah was talking about Jesus long before Jesus was ever born. That’s because God had a plan not just for the people of Israel and Judah, but for all people. He doesn’t give up on any of us. He sent Jesus so that all of us can have the same close relationship with God that the Israelites had in the Old Testament. God doesn’t give up on his people, and he doesn’t give up on us.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 16*. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you about Isaiah’s job. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- **Why did God take so many things away from his people?**
- **What did God have planned for his people in the future?**

Say, **We feel like giving up plenty of times. It’s good to know that God doesn’t give up on us.**

Collect the cards for now. You’ll send them home with the children later.

## STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose from these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

### OPTION 1: Take and Give Collage

**Stuff You Need:** fresh poster board or the poster from the Bible story time, markers.

**Optional:** old magazines, safety scissors, glue

Briefly review with the children the things Isaiah said God would take away from his people: supplies, food, water, heroes, soldiers, judges, prophets, elders, captains, government leaders, advisers, skilled workers. Then review the things God promised for the future: tender love, settle them in the land, an end to suffering, answered prayer, keeping his people safe, a Savior. Divide the poster board with a diagonal line. On one half, write "Take" and on the other half "Give." Invite children to draw pictures or write words in each category. If you wish, provide old magazines to cut pictures or letters and glue them to the poster. Encourage them to fill in every open space for a true collage effect. Ask:

- How did God show that he does not give up on his people in this story?
- How do you know that God does not give up on you?

Say, **No matter what his people did in Bible times, God didn't give up on them, and he doesn't give up on you either!**

### OPTION 2: BIBLE VERSE CAKE WALK

**Stuff You Need:** sturdy paper, marker, masking tape, CD player, music

Use the marker to write words or phrases of the Bible verse on sheets of paper. On an extra sheet, draw a big star. Tape the sheets to the floor in a circle with a step or two in between. Aim to have a circle of about twelve sheets for eight to ten children. Enlarge the circle with blank sheets for a large group. Begin your activity time by reviewing the words of the Bible verse: "When it is time to save you, I will help you. I will keep you safe" (Isaiah 49:8). Play this Bible verse game like a cake walk. Have children walk around the circle while music plays. Randomly stop the music. The child standing on the starred sheet chooses any word from the Bible verse. The player behind this child must begin with that word and say the rest of the Bible verse. If a player chooses the last word, the next player says the Bible verse from the beginning. Start the music again. After the game, talk about:

- Tell me about some times when you need God's help.
- Describe some ways that God helps you.

Say, **This verse doesn't mean that nothing bad will ever happen to us, but it does mean that God is close to us all the time. He's always there to help and plans good things for us.**

**OPTION 3: GOD'S HELP**

**Stuff You Need:** God's Help Word Search Activity Sheet, highlighters, pencils

Give an activity sheet to each child. Have them work in pairs if they choose, to find all the words in the word bank. Arrange the words on the blanks below the puzzle to show Isaiah 49:8.

**OPTION 4: ISAIAH—GOD WON'T GIVE UP ON YOU**

**Stuff You Need:** unsweetened powdered drink mixes, water, paintbrushes, bowls, paper

This watercolor paint will be scented and uses multiple senses for children to remember that God won't give up on them. Make paint by mixing 1 tablespoon of drink mix with 1 tablespoon of warm water.

Give each child a piece of paper and a paint brush. Mix bowls of watercolor for children to share. Have children paint a picture that illustrates a situation in which God didn't give up on them or on someone they know.

**STEP 4: GOING HOME**

Pray together thanking God for never giving up on you. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 16, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.*