

Isaiah 61

Discussion Notes

This week we interviewed people representing three different causes that Love Running is supporting: the work of World Vision supporting children in the Azraq refugee camp, Mentor Me! who support those in prison and ex-offenders, and Beloved who support women working in the sex trade in massage parlours. You may want to spend some time reflecting on these interviews, asking:

- What stood out to you? Was there a particular cause that you particularly empathised with?
- What could we as a hub group do to support these charities or similar causes? Could we give money together, encourage each other to volunteer etc.?

Isaiah 61

A common theme across the charities highlighted was Isaiah 61. This is a passage that Jesus later quotes to explain his mission on Earth. You may want to spend the majority of today's session reading this passage together, digging into the things that stand out. Maybe spend 10 minutes reading it separately and then come back together to discuss it.

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendour.*

*They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.*

If you are unsure of where to begin, you could focus on some of the following:

- Why does Isaiah refer to God as the 'Sovereign Lord'? What does it mean for God to be sovereign as we try and tackle inequality and injustice?
- What does it 'the Lord has anointed me' mean to us? What does that look like today?
- Is there a command that stands out? i.e. comfort all who mourn etc.
- We see several exchanges in the passage: crown of beauty for ashes, oil of joy instead of mourning, garment of praise instead of despair. What would these look like today? How could we practically help people exchange a crown of beauty instead of ashes, for example?
- What are the ancient ruins and places long devastated in Bristol? And how do we rebuild and renew them?