



A Devotional Conversation

Kendal Conner

Begin by reading and praying Isaiah 9:1–7 together. Take turns reading the entirety of the passage out loud. It will feel repetitive, but that is the point. Repetition is the key to sticky learning, so allow the verses to be heard and received again and again.

Then give a quick explanation of Isaiah’s prophecy. Remind your teen that Isaiah is giving these words to God’s people in a moment when they felt powerless against their enemies. The governing authorities were not ruling with equal justice for all people, especially them. It seemed like God was absent, and this led to feelings of utter hopelessness. It didn’t seem like change and justice were possible. But Isaiah offers God’s people the promise of a coming king and kingdom which will stand in contrast to their current unjust rulers. This promised king, Jesus Christ, would rule with perfect justice and peace, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Next, invite your teen to write out the promises God gives his people in this passage. Ask them, “What do we learn in this passage about the rule, or government, of this coming king?”

Talk about the passage. This was no simple prophecy, but a radical proclamation of truth against the unjust rulers of Isaiah’s day. As Geoffrey W. Grogan writes in the *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*, “Hebrew prophesy was founded in truth, not flattery. The prophets did not hesitate to speak stern words of judgement to their political overlords.”

And Isaiah’s prophecy has only begun to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In Jesus, the promised child has arrived, and, through him, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. But there is more to come. Isaiah’s words still hold a promise of hope for God’s people today. In verse 7, we see that Christ’s government and peace are continually increasing and will never cease. This means that in the moments of unrest, discouragement, and injustice, we can hold fast to God’s promise that his kingdom is still growing, and we will experience the spread of its perfect peace, justice, and righteousness.

Finally, have your teen reread verse 7 out loud. It says, “Of the greatness of his government

and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

Together, take turns praying God's promises back to him. Ask specifically for the increase of his peace, justice, and righteousness—first in your own hearts and then in the places you see racial injustice in your own life, home, and community.

Other conversation starters

What does godly lament look like for the believer? Every day our teens see the pain and grief of our country through the media. They are learning how to lament, whether from us or from their social media feeds. Using Romans 12, talk to your teen about why God calls us to lament over our sorrows and those of other people. Allow them to see that lament is right and good for the believer in as far as it leads to a posture of worship. Romans 12 calls us to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn. We want to show students that we should be less concerned about whether we agree or not with the reason an image bearer is weeping. The more important concern is that an image bearer is weeping.

Civil rights activist and minister, John Perkins, once said, "Suffering is a virtue. When you enter into the suffering of others, you get passion from that pain and it is redemptive."

God can, and will, do his redemptive work without us. Yet, as a gift of grace, he has chosen to use us as instruments for that work. Our tears have the power to carry the message of redemption in ways our hands cannot. In this way, our pursuit of justice is not aimed at perfection, but at Christ.

Three questions. A pastor of mine, Brian Key, once offered me three questions that can be used to help frame any conversation with teens about race. While seemingly simple, these questions have been a powerful framework that help me keep conversations focused, clear, and centered on what truly matters. Here they are:

1. What does God say? What is the biblical truth that we must proclaim over this situation?
2. What does God see? This is our chance to discuss and invite our students to study the historical realities of racism.
3. How would God have you respond? This is the chance to pause and consider the way we apply God's truth to our hearts and lives.

Resources

Books to read:

- *Mother to Son: Letters to a Black Boy on Identity and Hope* by Jasmine L. Holmes
- *United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity* by Trillia Newbell

For your headphones:

- [Pursuing Racial Diversity in Youth Ministry: A Conversation with Jason Cook and Clark Fobes](#) from the Rooted Ministry Podcast
- [Equipping the Next Generation to Embrace Gospel Diversity](#): a talk by Jackie Hill Perry at the MLK50 Conference

Videos to watch:

- Austin Stone Community Church Students conversation: https://www.instagram.com/tv/CAbrofsn_RT/?hl=en
- [Just Mercy](#) (PG-13): also, check out [this resource](#) from Rooted Ministry on discussion questions for teens over the movie.