

MY OPPORTUNITIES



INTRODUCTION

We're told by Christ, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). This brings new meaning to the job description embraced by Christ from Isaiah 61.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach 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 favor. (Isaiah 61:1-2)

This week, we will gaze through the lens of this passage at the world you identified last week (*My World*). What would it look like to bring "good news to the poor" or "to bind up the brokenhearted" in your world?

This exercise is intended to initiate an ongoing conversation with God. Not only are you encouraged to guard against rushing this exercise, but you are also encouraged to cultivate open eyes and ears for ongoing answers to these questions in the days and weeks to come.

There are two stages to this exercise. First, you will explore a category to gain depth of insight into its meaning and application in *My World*. And second, you will prayerfully and thoughtfully brainstorm potential steps you could take to engage the world around you.

Before you get started, one technical note is helpful to know. In this exercise, we use Isaiah 61:1-2 rather than the quote from Jesus of this passage recorded in Luke 4:18-19. You may notice that the two passages are slightly different. There's good reason for this. It's not uncommon for New Testament writers to paraphrase when quoting people or writings, or to be influenced by the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the "Septuagint," which they often used. The differences do not change the heart or spirit of the passage. In this case, it's likely when Luke recorded this event that he paraphrased some aspects of it, and that when quoting Isaiah 61, he either used or was influenced by the Septuagint's translation of Isaiah 61.

FIRST STAGE
EXPLORE—IDENTIFY—PRAY

Preach Good News to the Poor

Step 1: Explore the category

Consider two brief passages of Scripture that give clarity on Scripture's broad definition of poverty. One is the example of an early Christian woman who served the poor; the other is Christ's corrective exhortation to a church that was poor, despite its great wealth.

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died... Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. (Acts 9:36-39)

You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. (Revelation 3:17)

Based on these passages or other passages that come to mind, in your own words, how does Scripture define poverty?

Step 2: Identify the people

Where do you see poverty in *My World?* (See pages 29-30.)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Step 3: Pray

Take a moment to write a brief prayer for the impoverished in your world. Ask that God would give you eyes to see the poverty or clarity on how you can bring good news to those impoverished. If you're having difficulty seeing the poverty, talk to God about that. If you're overwhelmed by it, talk to God about that. Guard against praying what you think you should pray, and simply talk with God from where you truly are.

BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED

Step 1: Explore the category

The world can be a tough place to live and the casualties are many. Consider a few passages that offer examples or teaching on what it might mean to bind up the brokenhearted.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. (John 11:33-35)

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. (Romans 12:15)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Based on these passages or other passages that come to mind, in your own words, what does Scripture mean when we are told to "bind up the brokenhearted."

Step 2: Identify the people

Who are "the brokenhearted" in *My World?* (See pages 29-30.)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Step 3: Pray

Take a moment to write a brief prayer for the brokenhearted in your world. Ask that God would give you eyes to see and ears to hear their brokenness. Talk with him about people who come to mind, and listen for how he may be guiding you to simple ways you could serve them.

PROCLAIM FREEDOM FOR THE CAPTIVES AND RELEASE FROM DARKNESS FOR THE PRISONERS

Step 1: Explore the category

Consider a few passages that give breadth of definition and depth of insight for Scripture's definition of being captive or imprisoned.

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." (John 8:34)

I will not be mastered by anything. "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (1 Corinthians 6:12-13)

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. (Philippians 3:19)

Based on these passages or other passages that come to mind, in your own words, what does Scripture mean when we are told to "proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."

Step 2: Identify the people

Who are the "captives" and "prisoners" in *My World?* (See pages 29-30.)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Step 3: Pray

Take a moment to write a brief prayer for those in your world who are imprisoned or are held captive. Talk with God about bringing liberation, freedom, and clarity. What excited you about this? What troubles you about this? What do you hope and pray that God will do?

PROCLAIM THE YEAR OF THE LORD'S FAVOR

Step 1: Explore the category

It's fascinating to note the specificity with which Christ quoted Isaiah 61. He ended his quote with the line, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Isaiah 61:2). The careful reader of Isaiah 61 will note, though, that the full line is "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and **the day of vengeance of our God**" (Isaiah 61:2). The last half of this verse, *the day of vengeance*, is not quoted by Christ as part of his current mission. Why?

A careful reading of Scripture shows that Christ's initial work on earth was to usher in a season of grace, or as Isaiah put it, "the year of the Lord's favor." This "year" continues to this day, but will one day be followed by a day where God will hold humanity accountable for our rebellion against him. The following are two brief passages from Scripture that reinforce this teaching.

For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. (Romans 2:5)

Based on these passages or other passages that come to mind, in your own words, what does Scripture mean when we are told to "proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Step 2: Identify the people

Who are those in need of the Lord's favor in *My World?* (See pages 29-30.)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

MY OPPORTUNITIES

Step 3: Pray

Take a moment to write a brief prayer for those in your world who need to experience “the year of God’s favor.” As you talk with God about this, genuinely express your heart. If you feel urgency on these matters, express urgency. If you feel apathy on these matters, talk with God about that.

