



## BEAUTY FOR ASHES

Isaiah 61:1-3

**Big Ideas:** *Easter, transformation, Good News*

I. Gathering (Attendance, Announcements, First-Timers)

II. Engaging the Brain

A. Video Teaser: Extreme Makeover

1. As the group is coming in, have a clip from the TV show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* playing.
2. Once everyone has arrived, ask the following process questions:

- **How many of you have ever seen this show before?**
- **Why is a show like this so popular?**
- **Have any of you ever seen the Extreme Makeover shows that go as far as doing plastic surgery?**
- **Why would someone go through all of that pain to look better?**
  
- **If God were to tell you that you would need to go through pain to be molded into the person that you want to be (that God wants you to be), would you be willing to go through that pain?**

### Note to the Leader

- Choose the activities that will work for your specific group and time frame.
- We recommend changing your teaching method at least three times each lesson.
- If you have any questions about *Spice Rack*, contact us at [youthministrypartners.com](http://youthministrypartners.com).

B. The Beauty Challenge

1. Before class, collect enough bags of ashes to give each team of three in your group their own bags. (If making ashes is too time consuming, you can simply fill each bag with small items of trash.)
2. Divide the group into teams of three.
3. Invite the group into The First Annual Beauty Challenge.
4. Give each team a bag of ashes (or trash), and give the groups 2 minutes to make something beautiful out of what they were given.

5. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
6. Give the groups time to make their creations.
7. After a couple of minutes, let the groups present their creations.
8. Process Questions
  - **How did we do, creating beauty out of nothing but ashes (or trash)?**
  - **What have you heard from the Bible that might relate to this challenge?**

C. Just for Fun: Good News/Bad News Jokes

1. Intro Teaser Question: When you hear the term *good news*, what ideas come to your mind?
2. Give the group a sample of a few “good news/bad news” jokes, such as the following:
  - a. Attempted Humor 1: A large two-engine train was crossing America. After it had gone some distance, one of the engines broke down. “No problem,” the engineer thought and carried on at half power. Farther on down the line, the other engine broke down; and the train came to a standstill. The engineer decided that he should inform the passengers about why the train had stopped, so he made the following announcement: “Ladies and gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be stuck here for some time. The good news is that you are on a train and not an airplane.”
  - b. Attempted Humor 2:  
 Doctor: I have some good news and some bad news.  
 Patient: What’s the good news?  
 Doctor: The good news is that, well, they *are* naming a disease after you.
  - c. Attempted Humor 3:  
 Doctor: I have some good news and bad news for you. The good news is you have 24 hours to live.  
 Old Man: That’s the good news? Then what’s the bad news?  
 Doctor: I was supposed to tell you yesterday.
3. If you’ve got a particularly quick group with a flair for the dramatic, you might try the Good News/Bad News Challenge.
  - a. Divide the group into teams of 2-5 youth.

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- b. Give each team four index cards or slips of paper.
  - c. Ask each team to come up with two pieces of good news and two pieces of bad news that are completely unrelated (for example, the good news might be, “You’ve just inherited a million dollars” or “Your dog just placed first in the dog show”; and the bad news might be something like, “Your cell phone just got run over by a truck” or “You lost the disco contest”).
  - d. Explain how the process will work:
    - Each team will read one of its good news or bad news statements.
    - The other teams will then have 1 minute to come up with their best “good news” or “bad news” response. (For example, if the statement given is good news, the teams will come up with a bad news statement to go with it.)
    - The process will be repeated at least until every team has had the chance to give one statement.
  - e. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
  - f. Play the Good News/Bad News Challenge.
4. Process Questions
- **When the Bible talks about “good news,” how is it like or unlike the good news/bad news combinations we just heard?**
  - **Can a few of you tell about a time when you received some really great news?**
  - **Do you think that it’s true that good news and bad news always go together? (For example, is joy more powerful for people who are in despair, or is food tastier to people who are really hungry?)**

#### D. Check-in Question

1. Starting with the person in the group who has spent the most time in the past week reading the newspaper or watching the news, go around the group, inviting everyone to check in with one of the go-around options.
2. The Go-Around Question Options:
  - **Whom do you know who always feels like “good news” when you see him or her?**
  - **Tell about a time when you watched something beautiful come out of something that felt like a mess.**
  - **Describe the messiest or most depressing room in your house.**

#### E. Bonus Game: Paper Chase

1. Divide the group into teams of any size.
2. Give each team a pile of newspapers and a pair of scissors.
3. Give the teams 2 minutes to cut out as much “good news” from the newspaper as they can find.
4. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
5. Play the game, and ask the following process questions:
  - **How many pieces of good news did your group find?**
  - **What were some of those “good news” articles about?**

- Which would be harder to find in the paper your group was given—good news or bad news?
- When you are with your friends, what is easier and more interesting to talk about—good news or bad news?

### III. Igniting the Heart

#### A. The Text: Headlines

1. Before the meeting begins, write the following five fragments from Isaiah 61:1-3 on different slips of paper:

The LORD God's spirit is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.

[The LORD has sent me] to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release for captives, and liberation for prisoners.

[The LORD has sent me] to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and a day of vindication for our God, to comfort all who mourn, to provide for Zion's mourners.

[The LORD has sent me to give to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, and the prisoners] a crown in place of ashes, oil of joy in place of mourning, a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.

[They poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, and the prisoners] will be called Oaks of Righteousness, planted by the LORD to glorify himself.

2. Divide the group into five teams. (Teams may be made up of just one person, if necessary; or if you have fewer than 5 people, you could divide the group into two teams of two or just do the entire process as one group together.)
3. Give each team a broad-tip marker and a large sheet of paper.
4. Explain that the teams will be developing headlines for the texts that will be assigned them.
5. Invite the youth to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
6. Give the teams 3-5 minutes to develop their own newspaper headlines for the verse(s) that have been assigned to them.
7. After 3-5 minutes, collect the headlines and tape them, in order, on the wall in front of the group.
8. Interrupting Process Questions
  - As you look at the headlines in front of you, what questions do those headlines bring up for you?
  - If you were to make a headline for the entire text, what would it be?
9. Read Isaiah 61:1-3 (CEB) in its entirety, and ask the following process questions:

- Now that you have heard the entire text, what do you think our headlines are missing?
- Isaiah says that he has come to preach good news “*to the poor.*” Why do you think Isaiah identifies that group as the one group he is giving good news to?
- What kind of news do you think Isaiah might have had for the rich?
- Jesus read this very text early in his ministry when he was asked to read the Scripture in the synagogue. Of all of the texts from the Hebrew Bible that Jesus could have selected, why, do you think, did he select this one?
- Does God want his people to be “beautiful” and “glad” all the time?
- Some people think that unless a person knows his or her bondage and brokenness, that person can never really grasp the good news of the Christian faith. What do you think?
- Do you think that these promises are for all of us all of the time, or do you think that they are specific promises that God made to a particular group of people?

B. Imaginary Quick Survey on the Walls

1. Write the following statements on the tops of large sheets of paper (a different statement on each sheet):
  - a. People at our school are better off because there are Christians at my school.
  - b. In general, it is good news that there are so many Christian youth at my school.
  - c. Brokenhearted people feel the comfort of God through the Christians at my school.
  - d. People who are in bondage become more and more free because of the presence of Christians at my school.
  - e. People who feel like they are trapped experience release because of the Christians at my school.
  - f. People who are in despair and hopelessness become increasingly joyful because of the presence of Christians at my school.
2. On the top left side of each sheet of paper write “Agree,” and on the top right side of each sheet of paper write “Disagree.”
3. Either have these statements hanging on the wall and covered with another sheet of paper up until this point of the lesson, or hang the statements on the wall at this point in the meeting.
4. Hand each person six sticky dots or sticky notes.
5. Invite the group members to indicate their responses to each statement by placing their sticky dots or notes along an imaginary line between “Agree” and “Disagree.”
6. Invite the group to ask questions to clarify the instructions.
7. Give the group 2 minutes to indicate (with sticky dots or notes) their agreement or disagreement with each statement.
8. Process Questions
  - **Looking at the ways we all responded to these questions, what observations do you have about our schools?**

- **Do people at your school feel that having Christians around is good news or bad news? Why?**
- **What are the most significant changes that despairing and brokenhearted people would like to see in the Christians at your school?**
- **How do you think our group is at loving the outcast or those who are brokenhearted?**

C. Brainstorming: Captives and Prisoners

1. Introductory Question: How many of you have ever known someone who was in prison (literally behind bars)?
2. Remind the group that the text we have been looking at today makes clear that God's "good news" is specifically for the "captives" and "prisoners."
3. Invite the group to brainstorm as many kinds of "bondage" or prisons that people can come up with (for example, drugs, friends, popularity, fashion, pornography, alcohol, abuse, cutting, eating disorders).
4. Once the list is complete (at least 10 items), go through each item, one at a time, asking how many of the group members know at least one person who is currently in each particular kind of bondage.
5. Process Questions
  - **What do you think it means "to proclaim release for captives"?**
  - **Do you think that God calls all of his children to "proclaim release for captives"? If so, how do we do such a thing?**
  - **What do you think Isaiah might have to say to someone who is trapped in an unhealthy relationship?**

D. Testimony Time: Released From Bondage

1. If you know of someone in your church who has experienced an addiction or some other kind of bondage, invite that person to take 5 minutes to share a part of his or her story with the group. Make sure that he or she is comfortable with sharing and having questions asked about his or her story.
2. After the guest has finished telling his or her story, invite the group to ask any questions they might have.
3. Process Questions
  - **If you had looked at our friend from the outside when he or she was totally trapped in this addiction, do you think that you would have known an addiction problem existed?**
  - **Do you think that it is possible to be in bondage to something and not even know it?**
  - **What would you say to a person who felt trapped with a feeling of worthlessness?**
  - **What would Jesus say to a person in that kind of condition?**

IV. Taking It Home

A. Article: My Extreme Makeover

1. Give everyone in the group a pencil and a sheet of paper.

2. Ask each person to write his or her own *future* story, starting with today.
3. You might use the following outline to give the group some structure to their articles:

*When Mark was in high school he was....*

*He struggled with....*

*And try as he might, he could never get over his problem with....*

*But now, 20 years later, the transformation has been nothing short of miraculous. Mark is/has....*

4. Collect the articles the group has written. (These could be included in their senior notebooks or in some other memento to be given to them at graduation.)
5. Process Questions
  - **How likely is it that there would really be significant transformation in your lives over the next 20 years?**
  - **How would you guess you will feel about yourself if, in 20 years, you have not changed significantly?**

B. Closing Song Prayer

Invite the group to listen to the Shane and Shane song “Beauty for Ashes” as a closing prayer.