

Mental



✓ Prepare in Advance

Facilitator: In advance of the session:

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the *Bible Background Video* ready to view.

✓ Explore

As you begin take a moment to discuss the public reaction of some Christian leaders to recent tragedies like Hurricane Sandy and the Newtown shootings. Why do you think some people assume these things happened because of moral decline or people's lack of faith?

Have someone read Isaiah 43:1-7 out loud, then show the *Bible Background Video*.

✓ God's Tender Care

In verse 1, how does Isaiah introduce the God who is now speaking? Why do you think this is echoed again ("created," "formed") in verse 7?

- What does God's loving care depend upon (look specifically at verses 1-4)?
- What other things might we sometimes assume God's love and care depend on? People's moral choices, for example? Their proper prayer lives?
- Twice in this passage (verses 1, 5) God tells the people not to be afraid. What reasons are given?

✓ God's Promise

In this passage, God never promises that the people will be protected from harm. In fact, God seems to guarantee that his people will face difficulties!

- What clues (specifically in verse 2) seem to indicate that God's people will certainly face challenges?
- Does God guarantee that God's people will come through the adversities untouched? Does he even promise that they will survive?
- What things are promised? Even though illnesses and tragedies can take away our health, our possessions, and our loved ones, what can they not destroy?
- This prophecy was written to God's people in a different time and place, but how does it speak to God's people today in the midst of our world's tragic events?

- How can it speak to us as individuals in our own life's challenges?

✓ Closing

In closing, recount some of the ways you've seen these promises fulfilled during the tragedies mentioned before.

Close with a prayer like: *Loving God, you created us, you formed us, and we are yours. Remind us of your presence and guidance through the storms and fires of life, and may we be a source of your love and grace to others who face them too.*

By Jon Parks

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