

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUMMER
AT
HILLSIDE

July 23, 2023

TRACES OF RAIN - Chris Simning

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you *think more deeply* about the sermon and *engage with others* through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and *allow God to work* in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is one thing you have always wanted to do that might surprise this group?

➤ EXPLORATION

Can you imagine the role of a prophet? Words spoken are meant to revitalize the chaos, encourage the soul, convict the heart and bring peace to the situation. Isaiah is an Old Testament prophet who God used mightily.

Isaiah 6:1-8 (From your bible, read aloud)

What a powerful scene. God calls Isaiah, and Isaiah answers that call. As we read further, we will see one of the ways God used Isaiah as a prophet to bring about God's desired outcome for the people.

Isaiah 45:1 (From your bible, read aloud)

This verse talks about King Cyrus, who did not even know the Lord. And yet, the Lord used his stature and his military experiences of conquest to ultimately show God's power.

God wants to deliver His people from captivity, but they must learn to acknowledge that there is only one God, and only He can save them. Any form of status diminishes when you are contending with the one, true, God.

Has God ever used something unexpected to draw your attention to him? If so, what?

Throughout the message, Chris used the analogy of a rain storm to help illustrate how God uses unexpected things to help draw our attention back to what is important - our relationship with God.

Important Question

- **Whose applause am I seeking?**

Isaiah 45:8 (From your bible, read aloud)

Isaiah making a bold declaration here. These words were likely meant to wake people up, and to get their attention so that they could see what God was doing.

In our busy lives, it is easy to lose sight of what God is doing all around us. Are you aware of what God is doing in your life? Are you looking for recognition or validation from anything other than God?

Important Questions

- **Whose applause am I seeking?**
- **Is it time for you to surrender?**

Isaiah 45:9 (From your bible, read aloud)

How would you rephrase or explain what this verse means?

Sometimes in the difficulty of life, we are tempted to blame God or we become angry that things are not going the way we want.

We may feel as if we are in a storm. The wind and rain can feel overwhelming. However, no matter what storm we face, we will eventually see that God is at work even when our circumstances seem to indicate otherwise.

Life is difficult. We all face stormy times. It may be grief, loneliness, a search for a place to belong, etc. We may even begin to wonder why we have to experience things that feel as if they will break us. In those times we must be careful not to manufacture our own solutions and get stuck in an unending cycle of discontent. When we truly understand who God is, we are more able to weather the storms that we face.

Psalm 37:23 (From your bible, read aloud)

Isaiah 45:21 (From your bible, read aloud)

What encouragement can you draw from these verses?

Important Questions

- **Whose applause am I seeking?**
- **Is it time for you to surrender?**
- **What victory do you need to claim?**

Romans 6:3-4 (From your bible, read aloud)

We have a new identity because of Christ. Jesus brings us new hope. Salvation gives us new life. Jesus understands our suffering, he experienced it first-hand. But through his experience he made it possible for us to experience victory, even in times of chaos.

We often see Baptism as an expression of surrender to Jesus. This beautiful act of going down into the water (surrender) and coming up out of the water as

a new creation (victory) is such a powerful reminder of God's continuing work in our lives.

If you have been baptized, share about what that experience meant to you?

If you have not been baptized, share any questions or concerns you may have about baptism.

> TAKE AWAY

Life is not easy for anyone. We all face storms in our lives that cause us to question what God is doing, or not doing. During those difficult times, there are 3 important questions we can ask ourselves to help keep us connected to God.

3 Important Questions

- **Whose applause am I seeking?**
- **Is it time for you to surrender?**
- **What victory do you need to claim?**

Every set-back, difficulty or trial can be an opportunity for us to either move closer or farther away from God. As we have seen in this message, God is always at work, even when we don't perceive it. We can choose to trust God and watch with hope and expectation that God will use whatever we face to draw us closer to him.

Take some time to pray together, asking God to help you have the faith to be patient and trust God during difficult times.

Commit to pray for each other this week and set a reminder so you don't forget.

> 1000 TABLES

We are halfway through our 1000 Tables goal. If you haven't had a chance to share a meal with someone new, we encourage you to be bold and invite some people to join you for a time of food, sharing your story and prayer. Be sure to snap a picture and send it to us at communications@hillsidechurches.com

Join the fun! It's not too late!