

## **TOUGH LOVE (Love is tough ....)**

### **Opening Prayers**

Asking God to bring:

fresh revelation to everyone in the group

open eyes and listening hearts to allow the Holy Spirit to speak into discussions.

### **Potential discussion questions**

1. Do you struggle to reconcile the loving and angry aspects of God's character? Why?
2. Read Isaiah Chapter 5 .. what is happening?
3. Imagine you are a character in this scene, hearing Isaiah relay God's words. How would you feel? How would you respond?
4. Isaiah provides a stinging critique of social injustice. How might the idea of 'righteous anger' make you read the text differently?
5. Can you think of a time when you had 'righteous anger', or when an act of discipline was also an act of love? How did you feel? What about the people around you?
6. Read Isaiah 41: 1 – 11. How do you reconcile the fact that God is still keeping His side of the Covenant with Israel, despite Isaiah's critique of their actions?
7. In light of these texts, how would you explain the love of God to someone who has had a strong reaction to more challenging parts of the Bible?
8. What injustices do you think make God angry today? How do you think Christians should respond to this and challenge injustice?
9. What 'Big question' issues do you feel passionate about? What actions could be taken to bring about small steps of change?
10. Can you think of places in the New Testament where the theme of 'tough love' is picked up?

### **Closing Prayers**

Ask God to hold the injustices mentioned in ways that enable action;

Pray for each other and continued learning by looking and listening for God in Scriptures and in the world around us.

ISAIAH

## **Isaiah Chapter 5**

### ***The Song of the Vineyard***

**5** Listen while I sing you this song, a song of my friend and his vineyard:  
My friend had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

**2** He dug the soil and cleared it of stones; he planted the finest vines.

He built a tower to guard them, dug a pit for treading the grapes.

He waited for the grapes to ripen, but every grape was sour.

**3** So now my friend says, "You people who live in Jerusalem and Judah, judge  
between my vineyard and me. **4** Is there anything I failed to do for it?

Then why did it produce sour grapes and not the good grapes I expected?

**5** "Here is what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge around it,  
break down the wall that protects it, and let wild animals eat it and trample it  
down. **6** I will let it be overgrown with weeds. I will not trim the vines or hoe the  
ground; instead, I will let briars and thorns cover it. I will even forbid the clouds to let  
rain fall on it."

**7** Israel is the vineyard of the LORD Almighty; the people of Judah are the vines he  
planted.

He expected them to do what was good, but instead they committed murder.

He expected them to do what was right, but their victims cried out for justice.

### ***The Evil That People Do***

**8** You are doomed! You buy more houses and fields to add to those you already  
have. Soon there will be no place for anyone else to live, and you alone will live in  
the land. **9** I have heard the LORD Almighty say, "All these big, fine houses will be  
empty ruins. **10** The grapevines growing on five acres of land will yield only five  
gallons of wine. Ten bushels of seed will produce only one bushel of grain."

**11** You are doomed! You get up early in the morning to start drinking, and you spend  
long evenings getting drunk. **12** At your feasts you have harps and tambourines and  
flutes—and wine. But you don't understand what the LORD is doing, **13** and so you  
will be carried away as prisoners. Your leaders will starve to death, and the common  
people will die of thirst. **14** The world of the dead is hungry for them, and it opens its  
mouth wide. It gulps down the nobles of Jerusalem along with the noisy crowd of  
common people.

**15** Everyone will be disgraced, and all who are proud will be humbled. **16** But  
the LORD Almighty shows his greatness by doing what is right, and he reveals his  
holiness by judging his people. **17** In the ruins of the cities lambs will eat grass and  
young goats will find pasture.

**18** You are doomed! You are unable to break free from your sins. **19** You say, "Let  
the LORD hurry up and do what he says he will, so that we can see it. Let Israel's  
holy God carry out his plans; let's see what he has in mind."

**20** You are doomed! You call evil good and call good evil. You turn darkness into light  
and light into darkness. You make what is bitter sweet, and what is sweet you make  
bitter.

**21** You are doomed! You think you are wise, so very clever.

**22** You are doomed! Heroes of the wine bottle!

ISAIAH

Brave and fearless when it comes to mixing drinks!

<sup>23</sup> But for just a bribe you let the guilty go free, and you keep the innocent from getting justice. <sup>24</sup> So now, just as straw and dry grass shrivel and burn in the fire, your roots will rot and your blossoms will dry up and blow away, because you have rejected what the LORD Almighty, Israel's holy God, has taught us. <sup>25</sup> The LORD is angry with his people and has stretched out his hand to punish them. The mountains will shake, and the bodies of those who die will be left in the streets like rubbish. Yet even then the LORD's anger will not be ended, but his hand will still be stretched out to punish.

<sup>26</sup> The LORD gives a signal to call for a distant nation. He whistles for them to come from the ends of the earth. And here they come, swiftly, quickly! <sup>27</sup> None of them grow tired; none of them stumble. They never doze or sleep. Not a belt is loose; not a sandal strap is broken. <sup>28</sup> Their arrows are sharp, and their bows are ready to shoot. Their horses' hoofs are as hard as flint, and their chariot wheels turn like a whirlwind. <sup>29</sup> The soldiers roar like lions that have killed an animal and are carrying it off where no one can take it away from them.

<sup>30</sup> When that day comes, they will roar over Israel as loudly as the sea. Look at this country! Darkness and distress! The light is swallowed by darkness.

### **Isaiah 41: 1 – 11 - God's Assurance to Israel**

**41** God says, "Be silent and listen to me, you distant lands! Get ready to present your case in court; you will have your chance to speak. Let us come together to decide who is right.

<sup>2</sup> "Who was it that brought the conqueror from the east and makes him triumphant wherever he goes? Who gives him victory over kings and nations? His sword strikes them down as if they were dust. His arrows scatter them like straw before the wind.

<sup>3</sup> He follows in pursuit and marches safely on, so fast that he hardly touches the ground!

<sup>4</sup> Who was it that made this happen? Who has determined the course of history? I, the LORD, was there at the beginning, and I, the LORD, will be there at the end.

<sup>5</sup> "The people of distant lands have seen what I have done; they are frightened and tremble with fear. So they all assemble and come.

<sup>6</sup> The skilled workers help and encourage each other.

<sup>7</sup> The carpenter says to the goldsmith, 'Well done!' The one who beats the idol smooth encourages the one who nails it together. They say, 'The soldering is good' and they fasten the idol in place with nails.

<sup>8</sup> "But you, Israel my servant, you are the people that I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham, my friend.

<sup>9</sup> I brought you from the ends of the earth; I called you from its farthest corners and said to you, 'You are my servant.' I did not reject you, but chose you.

<sup>10</sup> Do not be afraid—I am with you! I am your God—let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you.

<sup>11</sup> "Those who are angry with you will know the shame of defeat. Those who fight against you will die.