A screenshot of a website

Description automatically generated

**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Take some time to build relationships with the students:

* Ask for each student’s high and low from the summer so far.
* What was the longest line you had to wait in? Was it worth the wait?

**INTRODUCTION**

In our busy, instant gratification-filled culture, none of us particularly enjoy waiting. Whether it’s waiting for a stoplight to turn green, waiting in line for a rollercoaster, waiting your turn in a doctor’s office, or waiting for a vacation to arrive, it can be difficult to wait. We want what we want when we want it. Waiting can take various forms though. When waiting for something exciting to happen, we may be filled with anticipation. When waiting on something we know will be difficult, we can be filled with dread. If anyone understands the struggle during a season of waiting, it is the people of Israel. Abraham and Sarah waited decades for God to fulfill his promise of a child. The Israelites waited 400 years for their deliverance out of Egypt. One of the toughest seasons of waiting is waiting for better days during a season of struggle. In the passage today, Isaiah offers hope amidst a coming period of darkness and points to the coming birth of Jesus Christ! While there will be difficult days ahead, God has given His people a Wonderful Counselor, Jesus Christ, to bring light into the darkness. Today, Jesus Christ continues to offer us hope as he signals to a brighter future.

***READ Isaiah*** ***9:1-7***

1. When have you experienced hope from the Lord during a time of difficulty?
2. The Israelites thought the coming Messiah was going to bring military and political victories. Have you looked at Jesus similarly, hoping He would simply make your problems go away?
3. We are still waiting for the second coming of Christ today. Does this anticipation affect how you live each day?
4. How does it make you feel knowing the Messiah Isaiah promised the Israelites is with you and stands for you today?

**WRAP UP**

**Put today's lesson into action: How can you apply it to your life?**

*Ask for any prayer requests and pray for one another.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

The book of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah who lived in Jerusalem during the Kingdom period of Israel. Receiving a vision from the Lord, Isaiah speaks on behalf of God to the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah. The book opens with Isaiah bringing judgment upon the leaders. Israel has violated their covenant with God, rebelling against Him through idolatry and oppression against the poor and are continuing to live in sin. Because of their wickedness, God will judge the city using enemy nations, Assyria (and Babylon). God will burn away all the wickedness in Israel to restore it to a “Righteous City” (Isaiah 1:25-26, 6:13). Isaiah reveals that after Jerusalem’s downfall, God will bring up a new King, Immanuel: God with us (Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah’s warnings to Jerusalem include, yes, coming darkness. But that is not the end of the story. There is hope. “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light” (Isaiah 9:2). The hope. Jesus Christ will bring peace and joy to the land. In the passage today (9:1), Isaiah says Jerusalem will not share the fate of two Northern tribes (Zebulun, Naphtali) for the coming Messiah brings hope for a brighter future.

1. **When have you experienced hope from the Lord during a time of difficulty?**

While you don’t live in a land that is about to be destroyed by foreign nations like our passage, you have faced your own difficult moments. Struggles in school, with relationships, loneliness, a sports injury. Life can be challenging at times. Sometimes it can seem like there is no hope. As dark as things may seem, we know that isn’t the case. Just as God offered Israel hope, God offers us hope as well. On this side of the cross, we know that Jesus was the One to whom Isaiah was referring and Christ is the Light of the World (John 8:12). Through Christ, and by the Spirit within each one of us as believers, we can rest in the peace, joy, and comfort that only comes from God. During a difficult time in your life, have you sensed a peace that everything will be okay? Know that God walks with you through struggle, and He seeks to be your light during the darkness.

1. **The Israelites thought the coming Messiah was going to bring military and political victories. Have you looked at Jesus similarly, hoping He would simply make your problems go away?**

In the context of Isaiah, the people were in the middle of an invasion. When they hear of a coming Messiah who will bring peace and joy, their mind went directly to a military or political savior. Jesus, suffering on the cross for our sins, laid down his life rather than taking lives through conquest. Christ offered more hope than any military rule could ever have. Through Christ, we have eternal hope and freedom from the bondage of our sins. We have won victory through Jesus over all the things of this world. Like the Israelites, though, we sometimes want Jesus to come and wipe our problems away. While Jesus does care for our needs, sometimes life simply has struggles. But we can rest in the hope that Jesus is with us and guiding us through the difficult days.

**3. We are still waiting for the second coming of Christ today. Does this anticipation affect how you live each day?**

We are living between Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension and his ultimate return. If you’re like me, you know Christ will return one day but you don’t actively think about it every day. It can be easy to get caught up in the activities of each day and forget God’s promises to us. It’s easy to focus on daily stress and life circumstances. But God is a God who fulfills his promises, and he has promised us that Christ will return and bring full restoration and healing. In the meantime, be comforted by the hope of Christ. Continue walking in your relationship with the Lord, leaning into Him during those difficult days.

**4. How does it make you feel knowing the Messiah Isaiah promised the Israelites is with you and stands for you today?**

Isn’t it amazing that Isaiah was prophesying about the birth of Jesus nearly 700 years before Jesus was born?! Such a revelation only gives me more confidence in the trustworthiness of scripture and more confidence in the faithfulness of God, who has promised us that all things work together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Just as Christ offered hope to the people of Israel during their darkness, Christ offers you hope as well. Rest in the assurance that God is who He says He is and that He will keep his promises. And through Christ, God offers us hope and joy, regardless of what life may throw our way.