

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

- 1 Cyrus was a pagan king who was used as God's tool to accomplish God's purposes.** How does God's sovereignty over the unconverted give hope to believers?
- 2 In contrast to the dead and dumb idols (Isaiah 45:20), God is the only true and living deity.** One of the major themes is the uniqueness of God, "I am the Lord, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21-22). What are some theological or practical implications connected to the uniqueness of God?
- 3 Whom does the Lord address in (Isaiah 45:1)?** What promises does the Lord make to him? See (Isaiah 45:2-3a). How do you feel about the idea that God is good to the unrighteous? How does it strike you to hear that God's common grace would bless a pagan king?
 - ⚙️ *Is God's work limited to believers?*
 - ⚙️ *What does fulfilled prophecy do for your faith?*
 - ⚙️ *What is the purpose of God's equipping of Cyrus?*
- 4 Isaiah prophesies that Cyrus will deliver Israel from Babylon in verses 4-6: "I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me.** I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know... that there is none besides me..."
 - 🗒️ *To the lost soul, the sovereignty of God is a squelching confusion, but to the saved soul, the sovereignty of God is a saving comfort! With your group, describe a time when God's sovereignty ministered to your heart. With your group, describe a time when you doubted or tested God's sovereignty in your heart.*
- 5 The sovereignty of God vs. man's free will** has been the subject of debate for centuries.
 - 💬 *What is the sovereignty of God? What is free will? (take it easy, just a few words to describe the debate if you have been involved in it)*
 - ⚙️ *Is there any debate in the mind of God? v 7-13.*
- 6 Exclusivity is a fairly negative concept in modern American culture.**
 - 💬 *Define religious exclusivity:*
 - ⚙️ *How exclusive are the claims of God in verses 5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22, 23, and 24?*
 - ⚙️ *Does the Bible leave room for salvation through any other religious beliefs?*
 - 💬 *What are some phrases that inclusivists or universalists like to use in reference to religion?*

What are phrases that exclusivists use?

- ♥️ *How difficult is it for you to stand in a group of colleagues and say, "There is only one God and there is only one way to heaven"? Share with your group strengthening scriptures for boldness in witnessing to a hostile culture.*

- 7 Independence and questioning the establishment is the mantra of youth in many cultures today, not just American culture.** We see this questioning in how people discuss or dismiss authority. The word "authoritative" is no longer synonymous with decisiveness or leadership. Rather, to be authoritative is to be controlling. However, God claims absolute authority over you and me. In fact, He claims absolute authority over all of creation.
 - 💬 *What gives God the right of authority in your life? v 12.*
 - 💬 *How does God respond to those who rebel against his authority? v 9-10.*
 - ♥️ *How do you respond to God's authority in your life?*
 - ♥️ *How do you respond to other authorities in your life?*
- 8 Though the purposes of God seemed hidden from Israel, did they have the right to question God's truthfulness or goodness when they were in captivity?** Why or why not? v 15-19.
- 9 When your God seems silent while the "gods" of your colleagues seem to speak, remember the comparison of v 20 to vs 7-8.**
 - 💬 *What are their idols really doing for them? What is your God really doing for you?*
 - 💬 *What are ways that the "gods" of the people seem to bring them good things? (success, money...)*
- 10 Compare and contrast vs 22-23 with Philippians 2:9-11.** Though every knee will someday bow to the LORD and every tongue will swear allegiance, today God is calling everyone to "Turn" to him or to "Turn their face" toward him.
 - 🗒️ *What is God's heart toward the nations today? v 6, 22.*
 - 🗒️ *Does he desire to force everyone into submission? What does he want? v 22-23.*
 - 🗒️ *To those who do not turn to Him, what will (or won't) happen? v 16, 20, 24.*
 - 🗒️ *To those who do turn to Him, what will (or won't) happen? v 17, 19, 22, 24, 25.*