

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

LIFE GROUPS STUDY GUIDE



Overview:

The book of Isaiah is traditionally considered one of the most significant books of the Old Testament, due to its varied style in poetic language, Messianic themes and consistent message. Scholars are divided on whether Isaiah is the product of one author, or multiple authors. The latter view would mean that the prophet Isaiah composed the first thirty-nine chapters, while the last sections were composed by disciples of Isaiah, carrying on his message. Regardless of this question of authorship, the book is a vision of what life under God's universal reign should look like, and will look like when the Messiah comes, suffers, rises and ultimately brings about the arrival of the New Heavens and New Earth. The prophet Isaiah speaks as God's voice-box, reminding Judah to return to their calling: showing everyone, everywhere, what life under God's reign looks like.

This is significant for us in the 21st century, because we have an even greater vision into the unfolding of God's reign than Isaiah ever did. We have seen and believed Christ as the One through whom God's reign is most clearly realised in the world. Our calling is the same as Judah's and Isaiah's: to alert everyone, everywhere to the universal reign of God through Christ.

WEEK 3: THE SERVANT SONG (ISAIAH 52-53)

WARMING UP...

- Think of some great leaders from throughout human history. Which of those impacted others through the use of power and control? Which of those effected change through humility and love?

GOING DEEPER...

1. In chapters 40-48 God announces he is going to free Israel from their captivity and restore them to their land, but chapter 48 suggests Israel itself is not entirely virtuous. Then the chapter finishes with, "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked." (v22) In light of this, even when "wicked" rulers and nations are overthrown, why can't humanity find peace?
2. The fundamental human problem is the untrustworthiness of the human heart and our constant wrestling for power and control. What are some examples of how this problem is playing out in our society today?
3. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. What strikes you as unique about this passage? What questions do you have about it? (If anyone's wondering who it's about or by or for, you're in good company! Theologians have been debating this for centuries.)
4. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:3. The Servant is an unlikely 'winner'. How does this contrast with our expectations of what a successful leader looks like?
5. Read Isaiah 53:4-6. If anyone wants to sing verse 6, now's the time! The Servant will be the "circuit-breaker" for humanity, laying down his power and suffering on our behalf. Think of other religions & worldviews... how unique is this?
6. Read Isaiah 53:7-12. These verses speak of a great victory and vindication for the Servant. This is clearly about more than the Israel returning to its land. What victory does the Servant's death (and resurrection) achieve?
7. In what ways is the Christian 'plan for world peace' (seen in the Suffering Servant, as fulfilled perfectly by Jesus) superior to every other plan? (use examples)

BRINGING IT HOME... (READ 1 PETER 2:21-24)

- Have you received the 'healing' from your sin that Jesus died to give you?
- In what personal relationship can you seek 'peace' through laying down your power and trusting God, even in the midst of injustice and hurt?
- How can you follow Jesus' example, and be the 'hands and feet' of the Servant, by coming alongside the powerless and oppressed in our world today?