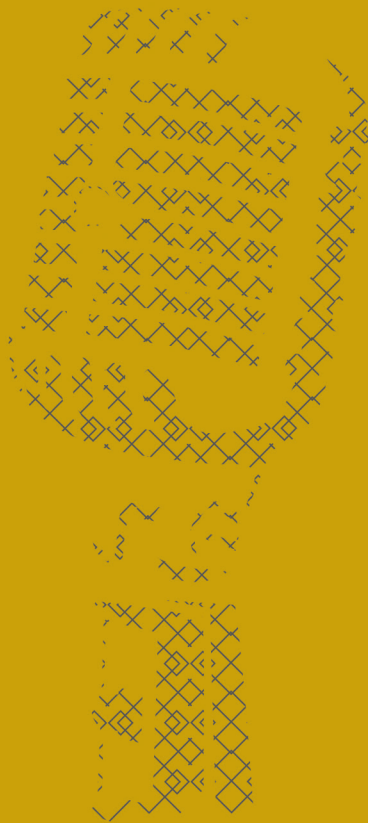


DIALOG

The Prophets

HEARING THE TIMELESS VOICE OF GOD



Facilitator's Guide

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SESSION

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ISAIAH: PROPHET OF JUDGMENT AND HOPE

Focus Scriptures: Isaiah 55

Session Goal: To help group members understand that God invites everyone to relationship.

OPENING OUR MINDS

Option 1

Ask people who they might include if they were to send an invitation for each of the following events:

- *Birthday party*
- *Wedding*
- *Graduation*
- *Dinner party*
- *Retirement recognition*

Then ask,

- **Do you send an invitation to everyone for every event? If not, how do you determine who gets an invitation?**

Option 2

Begin by asking your group the following questions:

- **What is the most unusual invitation you have ever received?**
- **Has there ever been a time when you were not invited to something you thought you should have been? How did it make you feel?**
- **Has there ever been a time when you were invited to something and wondered why you received the invitation?**
- **What makes an invitation so special?**

OPENING THE WORD

Understanding Isaiah 55

Chapter 54 speaks of the work of the Servant. The latter part of chapter 54 speaks to the fact that Israel will be healed and restored by the Servant. The focus now shifts to what Israel will receive. Chapter 55 can be divided as such: The first is a calling for people to listen and accept God's promise of covenant (vv. 1-5). The second (vv. 6-13) section urges people to seek God because He is dependable and the results of accepting God's promises are wonderful.

Those that choose to disobey God will receive judgment (1:20-25). However, God invites all those who will, to come and discover who God is and what a future with Him is like. This chapter proclaims God's gracious invitation to restoration/redemption and is filled with encouragement and hope. Their hope ultimately will come through the promised Messiah who will . . . be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-2 and Matthew 1:22-23). . . lead and feed His flock like a Shepherd (Isaiah 40:11 and John 10:11). . . and suffer like a sacrificial lamb . . . bearing our sin and sorrow (Isaiah 53 and Acts 8:32-35). There are over 20 references to Isaiah's prophecies in the Gospels.

Option 1

Share with group members that Isaiah was a prophet who lived around the time of 8th century BC in the Kingdom of Judah during the time when Israel was living in disobedience to God. Isaiah warned the people their sin would bring captivity (Jerusalem fell in 586 BC). Isaiah's ministry was to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, calling the people to repent from their sins and return to God. The book of Isaiah has 66 chapters. The first 39 chapters deal with God's impending judgment. The last 27 chapters focus on restoration, hope, and the coming ministry of the Suffering Servant.

Read Isaiah 55. Then, read verses 1-2.

- **Who are the thirsty? What is the invitation to those who are thirsty?**
- **How would you interpret verse 2?**

Read verses 3-7.

- **How would the people feel knowing that God had made an everlasting covenant with them?** (David had been promised an unending kingdom that would culminate in the Messiah.)
- **What does Isaiah urge the people to do in verse 6? What is the importance of seeking and calling?**
- **What does Isaiah urge the people to do in verse 7? Why is it necessary for the “wicked to forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts”?**
- **According to verse 7, what is the good news for those who turn to God?**

Read verses 8-13.

- **Why is the truth of verses 8-9 important for us to understand? In what ways do these verses give us hope?**
- **In what ways do verses 10-13 speak to the benefits of turning toward God?**
- **How was the message of these verses good news to those living during the time of Isaiah?**
- **How is the message of these verses good news to us living today?**

Option 2

Divide your group in half. Assign one group to read Isaiah 1 and the second group to read Isaiah 55. Give each group a pen/pencil and paper and ask them to read and summarize the message of their chapter. Allow sufficient time for discussion, then bring everyone together. Give each group a chance to share, then ask:

- **In what ways is the message of these chapters similar?**

- In what ways is the message of these chapters different?
- How would you summarize the message of these chapters?

Imaginative Option

Divide your group into pairs. Make copies of chapter 55 and give each pair a copy along with a highlighter. Invite each pair to highlight key words and discuss their importance. After sufficient time for discussion, bring everyone together. Allow each pair to share.

OPENING OUR HEARTS

Isaiah is a book about judgment and hope. Chapter 55 focuses on God's gracious invitation. Close your time together by reading the following as a group.

***Invitation to Live*¹**

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;

And you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

O God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. My soul will be satisfied.

Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. Seek the LORD while he may be found;

Call on him while he is near.

1. *Sing to the Lord Hymnal* (Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing Co., 1993), 325.

Let the wicked forsake their ways

And the evil man his thoughts.

Let him turn to the LORD,

And he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

The Spirit and the bride says, "Come!"

And let him who hears say, "Come!"

Whoever is thirsty, let him come;

And whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

(Isaiah 55:1-2; Psalm 63:1, 32, 5a; Isaiah 55:3a, 6-7; Revelation 22:17)

Connect

WEEK 1

Isaiah: Prophet of Judgment and Hope

THIS WEEK: We will look at the message of the prophet Isaiah. Although his message contained judgment; it also contained a message of hope.

THINK ABOUT THIS: In what ways does God invite us to a relationship with Him?

PRAYER CONCERNS:

The Prophets

HEARING THE TIMELESS VOICE OF GOD

Topics in this 7-week study include:

Session 1: Isaiah: Prophet of Judgment and Hope

Session 2: Micah: Prophet of Doom and Hope

Session 3: Jeremiah: Prophet of Restoration & Renewal

Session 4: Amos: Prophet of Justice

Session 5: Jonah: The World's Worst Missionary

Session 6: Joel: The Day of the Lord

Session 7: Hosea: Living the Message

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