

## **SMALL GROUP: ISAIAH**

### **CATCH UP**

This section is designed for each person to share their experiences from last weeks' application. This should be an encouraging time and not a time to shame someone for not doing their assignment - simply let a couple of people share how their project went. Be sure to encourage the group to talk about their struggles, oppositions, and defeats as well as their successes.

### **WARM UP**

What's the most awe-inspiring thing you've ever seen? Really think this one through. Was it a visit to an amusement park when you were a kid? Was it a fantastic view from a mountain range you climbed or drove through? Was it an act of kindness or bravery you saw in another person? Share your experiences with the group.

### **READ UP**

- Isaiah 6:1-8

We have all been given talents and abilities to impact the Kingdom of God. Whether it is our athletic abilities, our intelligence, or another blessing, God has called us all to glorify Him with the talents he has given us. The problem is that a lot of us aren't willing to answer God's calling. For various reasons, we hold ourselves back from truly honoring God with our lives. We grow cold in our passion to serve God.

The prophet, Isaiah, found the cure for the common "cold".

Isaiah has an amazing encounter with God. The whole scene is like something out of a fantastic movie! In chapter 6, we read about Isaiah having a vision of being in the very presence of God Himself - something that few people in scripture EVER did.

Here's the scene - God is sitting on a huge throne way above everything and everyone else. He's wearing this marvelous robe that flows down from the throne and covers the vast room they are in. Flying above him are these creatures called seraphim. They are an "angelic" creature designed for worship. They are actually described as fiery, snake-like creatures with six wings - two wings covered their faces, two wings covered their feet and the other two wings were used for flying. I know, right?!

Can we just stop right there and take in this scene? We have THE All-Powerful Creator, sitting in a massive and beautiful space with strange creatures around Him. Did you ever imagine the presence of God as something out of a sci-fi novel? Me, neither.

What's remarkable about these mighty and powerful, winged seraphim is their reason for being there - all they do constantly is repeat to the Lord that He is Holy. We get a real picture of just how holy God is by our text telling us that even these angels in the kingdom of God had to cover their faces and feet humbling themselves before the all-holy Creator of the earth. They call out to God as being "Holy, Holy, Holy." This is significant. Any time a word is repeated in the Bible, it intensifies the meaning.

This is the only time in the entire scriptures a word is repeated back-to-back three times in a row. This gives us a picture of just how holy God is. The room itself is such a powerful place!

The reaction of Isaiah is, of course, understandable. If angels in heaven have to cover themselves because of God's holiness, what does that mean for a mere human? Isaiah is completely overwhelmed. He sees himself in comparison to a holy God and cannot bear to stand in his presence. He's a sinner, unholy, unrighteous, and impure. He's standing before a Holy God and knows he has zero business being in the presence of God - in his current state.

This is true about each of us - we have all sinned and broken God's law. He is holy and we are not. His holiness should overwhelm all of us and bring us to a place of repentance. Isaiah knew he wasn't right with God the minute he was standing in God's. Falling on his face in absolute surrender is his only option.

"Whoa to me! I am ruined!" This is the biblical way of saying "Oh, geez. I'm a dead man. I do not belong here AT ALL!" Our sinfulness has a way of bringing death to our minds. It's what sin does - it kills and destroys.

Thankfully we have a God who steps in and loves to lavish us with His grace.

The Seraphim fly up to Isaiah and touch his lips with hot coal. It seems odd to us, but this gesture speaks directly to Isaiah - "your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven." As overwhelming as God's holiness should be, it should be equally overwhelming to experience His grace. What I love about this passage is that Isaiah couldn't do anything to clean himself - all he could do was stand before God, repent of his sin, and ask for forgiveness. He couldn't make himself right before God, he couldn't pick up the coal and touch his own lips, and he couldn't remove his guilt by forgiving his own sins.

God must intervene in our own lives in the same way, but we must first come before him in repentance. His grace is sufficient for us all if we are willing and realize the desperate situation we all stand in before his holiness.

What makes this story great is the immediate response that Isaiah gives to God's request for a messenger. Without any questions, without counting the cost and making sure the tasks aren't too hard, Isaiah replies - "Here I am. Send me!"

What an amazing response! Isaiah went from awe to shame and fear. From shame and fear to complete forgiveness. From forgiveness to the necessity of serving God in whatever capacity He asked for. This is the attitude that God is looking for from us and it's only found in direct encounters with God Himself.

If we see God for Who he really is, we will understand our need to be forgiven and brought back into a right relationship with Him. We must all come humbly before his throne and repent of our sins. If we completely trust in him, we will be forgiven. This renewed relationship set us up for a willingness to do anything that He asks of us.

## **TALK UP**

1. Have you ever asked God for forgiveness? What does it do to you to see your sin in comparison to God's holiness?
2. How would you describe God's grace to you and me?
3. When we realize God is Holy and we are not, our immediate reaction is to try to get ourselves presentable before God. What is the balance between resting in God's grace knowing that we will never be able to clean ourselves and working each day to follow and be more like Him?

## **ACT UP**

Write a list of the talents and strengths God has blessed you with and pray that he will use you in a powerful way for his glory and honor. Think of ways that you can use your strengths to impact the kingdom of God.

## **PRAY UP**

Now would be a great time to examine your heart before God, asking Him to reveal any sins that have been separating you from Him.

## **GATHER UP**

Before everyone leaves, make sure you confirm next weeks' meeting day and time – and confirm those who can make it.