

Isaiah Leader's Guide

What is our goal for those you are leading? Most simply I would say that we want them to follow Jesus, to be His disciples for life. Our 2 Timothy study showed us the value of the Scriptures to teach, reprove, correct and train us. To follow Jesus we need to interact with Him through His word, and the Gospel of Mark gave us an eyewitness account of Jesus' life and teaching. Then Exodus went back to the foundational events of God calling His people out of Egypt and forming them into a nation. Isaiah jumps forward to a time when that nation has severely gotten off track. God is going to judge His people, but He also looks beyond to the Messiah He would send and the new heavens and new earth where He will rule. It will be a rich place to spend the semester!

The packet your group will receive will help them to spend time in the passage over the week and give them a few questions to think about. Our hope is that it would serve as training wheels that prepare them to study other books on their own. We would like for the material to give a basic framework and a place to record ideas as the student reads Isaiah.

As the leader you will need to use your group time well. There is so much to this book that you will not be able to discuss it all. As with the Essentials of Spiritual Multiplication study, it would be helpful to use the process of Connect, Hear, Apply, and Tell.

Before the study:

Everyone in the group needs to work through the section for that week. Their participation in the discussion will be much more profitable that way.

During the study: (if 1:15 for this part of the small group time)

Connect: (around 10 minutes)

You want to connect the group to each other and to the topic for the week. It would be a good time to review what you've covered so far. Maybe ask a question or introduce an idea that relates to the week's topic.

Hear: (around 50 minutes)

Now you want to 'hear' what the Bible has to say through observation (what does it say?) and interpretation (what does it mean?). It may be helpful to read through the passage out loud together and then walk through it from beginning to end asking what was observed and what questions they had. With some of the longer passages you may need to focus on a portion of it. After you've moved through the passage, it's a good time to pull it together by asking, "What do you think is the main idea of the section?" or "What is Isaiah's point here?"

Apply: (around 10 minutes)

We don't want to end the semester just smarter. We want the Word to change our lives. You can't force those in your small group to take this step, but you can make sure you take the step yourself. And you can create an environment that assists your group in applying the scriptures to their lives. You want everyone to think about how they should live in light of what they've just learned or been reminded of. This needs to be practical and specific. Such as: 'I'm going to serve my roommate by keeping my part of the room clean and asking how I can pray for him' verses 'I'm going to be a better roommate.'

Tell: (around 5 minutes)

This is one more step in application and it's huge. If you tell someone what you've learned from reading the Bible it's much easier to continue engaging in spiritual things with that person and it may lead to an opportunity to share the Gospel. It also helps us to see that Bible study isn't just for us to know more and it's not just that *we* would live differently, but that we would share with others what has been given to us from the Lord. We must pass on what we've been given. This is an essential step in the process of spiritual multiplication.

First Week

So what will you do this week? This first week you need to give the material to those in your group and explain how it works (i.e. doing the work before hand). This means you need to be familiar with the format of the study to orient those in your group. Also, it would be good for you to read through the book.

Next week covers **Isaiah 1**. Since they have not worked with poetry yet, work through those first few verses together. This should help them get an idea of how poetry works and remind them how to observe, interpret, and apply.

Each week the front side of the material gives them space to write, and then the back asks them 3 or 4 **questions** to help them process the section. Also, there are **boxes for tracking themes**. The Most important thing to get out of Isaiah is who is God. The first box gives a space to record what is learned about Him. The second idea to track is what can be learned about people. How are they off track? Where do they have faith?... Next, prophets also speak about things that are in the near or distant future. This box gives space to record those. The last 2 boxes give a space to record personal application and who they can tell about what they have learned. Please help your group get to these last boxes and encourage one another to live them out.

Thanks for leading! Please feel free to ask any questions you have along the way. I will be teaching it too. Brian.white@uscm.org 979-574-6933

Isaiah Student's Guide

This is going to be a great semester!

Remember, our goal in Bible Study is not merely to know more information, but it is to learn from the Lord and be transformed by Him to be more like Jesus. Paul's goal was to present every man complete in Christ. To accomplish this he emphasized the value of the Scriptures as he exhorted Timothy that they are profitable to teach, reprove, correct and train us that we may be adequate, prepared for every good work.

This packet is designed to help you dig into the book of Isaiah (or at least excerpts) **and** be prepared to study other books on your own in the future. We have not packed it full of questions or our opinions, but have packed it full of space for you to record and reflect on the Lord. Who is He? What has He said and done? How do I respond to Him?... Our hope is that you would spend lots of time in the book and that time would not be driven by the need to fill in answers to our questions, but will be driven by your personal hunger to know God.

Like most things in life: **You will get out of it what you put into it.**

If you just show up to your Bible study time you will be living off of others (would you let them chew your food for you?). Also, if you spend one day a week on Isaiah (would you eat once a week?), you will be missing out on what you could gain by soaking in it. Here is a suggested way to use your week if you were in Isaiah 5 days:

- Day 1 pray and **read** through the passage for the week.
- Day 2 pray and **read** through the passage for the week.
- Day 3 pray and read through the passage making **observations** and asking questions in the work space provided
- Day 4 review the passage, **consider** the questions we have asked, **consult** outside resources as needed (biblegateway, netbible...).
- Day 5 focus on how to **apply the passage** to your life.

Then as you come together with others you will be able to discuss the passage and learn from each other. Given the length of the book, you may not get to every question that is raised. However, your group's goal is to help you all grow in Christ likeness.

As with any book it is helpful to read it through as much as you can. Although **we will not be able to cover every chapter in our discussions**, it would be profitable to read the chapters we are skipping as you can along the way. We will be taking 1-2 chapters each week, and we will get to the major sections of the book. One major difference from 2 Timothy, Mark, and Exodus is that Isaiah, like other prophets, is highly poetic. In light of that see the discussion below about understanding prophets.

Observation: What does it say?

Start by looking for the basics:

Who – Who is performing or receiving the action?

What – What is occurring?

When – When is it occurring? Is there a sequence of events?

Where – Where is the action occurring? Does the location change within the paragraph?

Why – What is the goal or purpose for the action? Who benefits?

How – What is the means or manner for accomplishing the action?

Key Words (especially theologically important terms)

Important Connectives - Indicate relationships within and between paragraphs; such as...

after, then, as, until, before, when, now, while, because, for, since, so, therefore, thus, in order that, but.

Grammatical Construction - How does each word function in the sentence?

Verbs - What are the actions? Note the tense of the verb (when is the action performed)

Is there a list of commands?

Noun - name of a person, place, thing or quality

Adjective & Adverb - modifies or describes something

Figures of speech - Non-literal language (e.g. “I am the bread of life”)

Comparison: points out the similarities between two or more related ideas, or simply joining like ideas.

“...he will be **like** a tree firmly planted ...”(Ps.1:2-3)

Contrast: points out dissimilarities between thoughts or ideas. This indicator is often easily identified by the use of the word “but.”

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident... **But** the fruit of the Spirit is...” (Galatians 5:19-23)

Questions: structure is built around questions posed and answered by the author (or a hypothetical opponent created by the author).

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” (Rom.6:1)

Repetition: reiteration of the same word or phrase (when a similar but not exact word, phrase or idea is repeated it is known as continuity)

Progression of Ideas: the movement of ideas from general to particular (Matt. 6:1-18) or particular to gen. (Jas 2).

Cause to Effect: the passage first states the cause and then directly correlates the effects. Romans 1:18-31 demonstrates the cause (rejection of God) and the effect (God gave them over). See also Romans 6:23.

Effect to Cause: opposite of cause to effect, the author states the effect and then substantiates it by stating the cause. In Romans 8:18-27 Paul describes the effect of longing, and in 8:28-30 he describes the cause, which is our certain future glorification.

Summarization: the author gathers the main ideas he has been trying to communicate and restates them in a summary. For examples see Hebrews 8:1-2 and Joshua 12.

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Observation is answering ‘what does it say?’ In interpretation you are asking ‘what does this mean?’ Or better ‘what does Paul mean here?’ As you observe, ask lots of questions like

What does this word mean?

Why does he use this analogy?

What does Paul mean when he says we “were dead”?

Answering these questions is interpretation. Remember creativity in interpretation is not a virtue. Start your search for answers within the immediate context. Also, consider what others say now (your small group, pastor...) as well as in the past (commentaries). **Your goal is to discern the author’s intended meaning.**

Application: How does this touch my life?

Once you have discovered the universal principle(s) from the text, then you move to application. How does this truth connect to my life? By putting your application in words you begin to hold yourself accountable for becoming a doer of the Word. Some basic guidelines for application are: 1) focus on the main themes expressed by the author; 2) keep it short; 3) make it practical. An example of an application from Matthew 28:18-20 is “Wherever I am, I should proclaim the gospel to all men in hope of making some disciples.” Consider the following questions for application:

- Is there an example for me to follow or avoid? (Genesis 34; Joshua 1:9)
- Is there a sin or error for me to avoid? (1 Cor. 5:1)
- Is there a promise for me to claim? (Heb. 13:5)
- Is there a prayer for me to repeat? (Eph. 3:14-21)
- Is there a command for me to obey? (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Is there a condition for me to meet? (John 15:5)
- Is there a verse for me to memorize? (Psalm 119:11)
- Is there conviction from the Spirit to which I must respond? (1 Thess. 5:19)

Relate the application to your various relationships. Ask yourself, How should this application affect my attitudes, thoughts or actions:

- In relationship to God
- In relationship to myself
- In relationship to my family
- In relationship to my Christian friends
- In relationship to my non-Christians friends and the world
- In relationship to my adversary

Create a plan of action

So, what will I do today, or this week, or this month to implement this application? Who will I ask to hold me accountable? How and when will I evaluate my progress? A plan of action for our application from Matthew 28 might look something like this:

By the power of the Holy Spirit I commit myself to asking my neighbor to lunch this week. I commit to daily pray for his salvation and for the opportunity to present a verbal witness to him during lunch. I will ask my Bible study leader to hold me accountable to initiate this plan by asking me next week if I have followed through.

Understanding the Prophets

The Prophets of the Old Testament are both some of the most beautiful and most challenging parts of Scripture. There are several reasons for this challenge, and I hope that you will end the semester better equipped to understand and apply any of the prophets.

So why are they challenging? One reason is that they are mostly written as **poetry**. When was the last time you had a few minutes to yourself and you picked up some poetry to read? For most of us today, poetry is hard to understand. It is something we had to endure in school, but we would never pick up ourselves. We might say, “Just come out and say what you mean.” Still, there is something powerful about poetry, and we actually like it very much. It’s just that today our poets play guitars (and I would say that sometimes it takes work to figure out what they mean too).

Anyway, a super brief introduction on Hebrew poetry is that the rhyming is a rhyming of ideas. The idea of the first line is either restated, or built on, or contrasted in the next line.

For example Isaiah 1:3

The ox knows his master,
the donkey his owner's manger,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.

The first 2 lines communicate the same idea. Then the second 2 lines communicate the same idea while contrasting with the first 2 lines.

For example Isaiah 3:10

Tell the righteous it will be well with them,
for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.

Here the idea from line 1 is built on in line 2.

Often in the prophets a larger group of these pairs of lines is an oracle. The prophet will introduce “the oracle to ...” In Isaiah this is most used in the section to the nations.

A second challenge is that prophets write about events that happen in various **times**. Extreme views in this can cause us to miss the great message of the prophets. On one hand some may say all they were writing was for their day and it doesn’t apply to us

(so let’s ignore this strange part of our Bible). On the other hand some only think the prophets are writing about future events. Actually they do both and even both at the same time.

They were writing or speaking first to their generation. They were sent to call the people back to God. Often they speak of the sins of the current generation and call them to repent and return to God. The reality of coming judgment and future restoration remind the people of God’s justice and grace and give reason to repent.

In the midst of this God also revealed more of the things to come. Some of these things took place in their day, some in the time of Christ, and some wait for His return. These layers can make it hard to understand. With the passages about the future it is helpful to ask how was this fulfilled in Isaiah’s day? How was it fulfilled later? And how is it still awaiting fulfillment?

A third factor that makes prophets challenging is that we are unfamiliar with the **setting** they are writing in. This can be helped by reading the history books that parallel them in time or by reading the background section in a commentary. For Isaiah, 2 Chronicles 15-25 covers this time period. Still even with reading these there will be places and names that are unfamiliar and a Bible dictionary can help with these.

In short, after Solomon died in 931BC the kingdom was split into 2 parts: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The northern kings were all bad and promoted the worship of idols and foreign gods. In 722BC they were taken into captivity by Assyria. The southern kings were a mixture of good and evil. Finally they were taken into captivity in 586BC by Babylon.

Isaiah writes to the people of Judah from before Israel was taken into exile to about 687BC. His message is one of rebuke to the people of God who have turned away from the Lord and will one day face their own exile. One commentator divides the book into 3 parts: 1-35 judgment from God, 36-39 historical interlude, 40-66 salvation from God.

Hopefully, as we go you will grow in confidence in understanding Isaiah. The prophets are rich portions of the Bible, and it is my hope that by this look at excerpts from Isaiah you will be motivated and equipped to study other prophets as well.

Isaiah

lesson 1
Isaiah 1

Observations & Questions

(Use this section each week to record your observations and questions from the passage)

Isaiah

After you have spent time in the passage, this section will give a few questions to consider.

This chapter introduces the setting of Isaiah. From verse 1, gather what you can about who, what, when?

What is God's complaint against Judah and Jerusalem?

Describe the people's condition.

How are these same sins present today? Would God have the same case against us?

What does God call them to do?

What does He say He will do?

These boxes are for recording 3 themes and your application each week.

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?
what do I learn about people in this passage?
what do I learn about the future in this passage?
what is my response to this passage?
who can I tell?

Observations & Questions

Isaiah

What does Isaiah see?

Contrast King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-23) and the Lord.

What is Isaiah's response? Why?

How do I see Him? What is my response to Him?

Can you say "Here am I, send me."

Describe the work God calls Isaiah to (9-13).

See John 12:37-43. Note the pronouns. Who does John say Isaiah saw?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?
what do I learn about people in this passage?
what do I learn about the future in this passage?
what is my response to this passage?
who can I tell?

Isaiah

lesson 3

Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7, & 11:1-10

Observations & Questions

Isaiah

lesson 3

Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7, & 11:1-10

Old Testament prophecy of future events often had a near fulfillment that applied to the original audience as well as sometimes multiple distant fulfillments. See if you can determine what was fulfilled in Isaiah's day, what was fulfilled in the Messiah's first advent, and what awaits the return of Christ.

Isaiah's day
(see 8:3-4)

Return from exile
(see Ezra 2:1-2, 3:1-2...
and Mt.1:12)

1st advent

2nd coming

How and where are these passages used in the New Testament? (i.e. Matthew 1:23, 4:15-16, Romans 15:12)

Taken together, what sort of portrait do these passages reveal of the Messiah?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Isaiah

lesson 4

Isaiah 24:1-6, 21-23; 25:1-12

Observations & Questions

Chapters 13-23 deal with the nations surrounding Judah. For the sake of time we have skipped them though it would be good to read through them. The next several chapters come back to focus on Judah and we are looking at 24-25 as a sample of this section. These 2 chapters describe the Lord's judgment and banquet to come.

Isaiah

lesson 4
Isaiah 24:1-6, 21-23; 25:1-12

What events does God foretell in chapter 24?

What reason does He give for these?

Has this happened yet?

Can you think of other passages that describe this time? See 2 Peter 3:3-10

What is the blessing to come described in 25?

Who is this for?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Observations & Questions

Chapters 36-39 are an extensive narrative section that shed light on the events of Hezekiah's reign. For our discussion, we will focus on 36-37.

Isaiah

lesson 5
Isaiah 36-37

Describe the situation in chapter 36.

Who does Rabshakeh represent?

How does Rabshakeh view the Lord?

How does Hezekiah respond to the challenge?

How did God intervene? Why might He have done this?

If you were watching these things happen, how would it change your view of the Lord?

Look back at these verses: 6:1,5; 9:7; 11:1; 36:4, 14-15. What is a common thread?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Observations & Questions

Chapters 40-66 are a particularly rich portion of Scripture that look past the present threat of the Assyrians and the future threat of the Babylonians to a time beyond captivity. Some divide it into 3 sections of 9 chapters. We will look at chapters in each of these sections.

Isaiah

lesson 6
Isaiah 40

What is the main idea in each paragraph?

1-2

3-8

9-11

12-17

18- 20

21- 26

27- 31

What issue is the Lord addressing in this chapter?

There are lots of contrasts drawn here. Who or what is small? Who or what is great?

What should the audience do in light of this chapter?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Isaiah

lesson 7

Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-11

Observations & Questions

These are 3 of the 4 Servant Song passages.

Isaiah

lesson 7
Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-11

What characteristics of the Servant are found in each passage?
42

49

50

From Isaiah's vantage point, who is the Servant? (What points to Israel? What points to another?)

As we saw in the earlier Messianic passages (7-11), there are some aspects of these pictures of the Servant that have near fulfillment and some that seem to point beyond to a future fulfillment.

Has the Servant come?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Isaiah

lesson 8

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

Observations & Questions

This 4th passage adds to the portrait of the Servant from last week.

Isaiah

lesson 8

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

What characteristics of the Servant are found here?

What is the Servant's task?

Has the Servant come?

For further study, find New Testament cross references to this section. How do the NT authors use this section?

Read Psalm 22. What are the similarities? Differences?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Observations & Questions

Isaiah

lesson 9
Isaiah 55

There are 2 offers or invitations here (1-5, and 6-13). What are the 2 offers? Who are they offered to?
What is required to receive the offer?

Look back at the covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7. What are some of the characteristics of the covenant with David?

Why might He repeat the word “Listen”?

Why does He explain that “His ways are higher...”?

What is His word intended to produce?

In what way will His word bear fruit?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Observations & Questions

Isaiah

lesson 10
Isaiah 59

What is the problem described here?

Of the sin described here, what is present in our day? In your life?

Why did God intervene? What did He do?

Has verse 20 been fulfilled?

What does verse 21 tell about God's covenant?

If this chapter was all you had, what could you communicate about the gospel?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Observations & Questions

Before diving into our section for the week, notice these verses: 60:1-3, 61:1-2, 63:10-14, 64:1-6 and 65:15. These last chapters have more to say about the Holy Spirit and the new heavens and earth.

Isaiah

lesson 11
Isaiah 65:17-66:24

Has this part of Isaiah's prophecy been fulfilled?

How does Isaiah describe the new heavens, new earth and new Jerusalem?

What will it be like to live there?

How is God pictured in 66:1-2? How does this relate back to earlier passages we have studied?

What will it be like for His enemies?

what do I learn about the Lord in this passage?

what do I learn about people in this passage?

what do I learn about the future in this passage?

what is my response to this passage?

who can I tell?

Isaiah

lesson 12
Summary

Summary:

Review the sections we have covered and consider the following questions

After studying through parts of Isaiah, how is God revealed in this book?

What are His rebukes to His people?

What does He foretell? Why does He tell them these things?

How does this apply to us today?

