

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

This unit of seven sessions in Isaiah is perfect to use at Christmastime. Consider using the first five sessions during Advent leading up to Christmas and the final two sessions (The Servant Songs) following Christmas. All are appropriate anytime during the year.

Confessing Our Need for God
Isaiah 64:1-9

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Make copies of the scripture list found at the end of this week's Bible Study and Worship guide for each of the participants in the Bible Study Time. Have someone (preferably a child) distribute those at the beginning of your study session.

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Confessing Our Need for God – 14-36-01-en

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If you have youth in your group who will have their own separate moment of application to the Bible study session, then several days before the session, have that youth take care of the following:

If you live in a nation or situation where computers are available and can be freely used, then:

Ask a member of the group to bring their laptop computer to class **if** they can connect to the Internet where you will be meeting. Or ask the homeowners where you are meeting if you can have access to their computer to search for “The Potter’s Wheel” on the Internet.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

“Song for the Nations”, #365, *The Worship Hymnal*. CCLI# 20340

“Send Me, O Lord, Send Me”, #367, *The Worship Hymnal*. CCLI# 246942 – Lyrics not available on CCLI.

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Confessing Our Need for God

Focal Text

Isaiah 64:1-9

Background Text

Isaiah 63:7—64:12

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas begins with confessing our need for God.

Question to Explore

With all that we have, do we really need God?

Teaching Aim

To help class participants confess their need for God.

Gathering together:

Sing “Song for the Nations”

First thoughts:

We will study seven sessions in the book of Isaiah. Five of those can be used to lead up to Christmas and two will continue after Christmas. The first five fit under the heading *Isaiah’s Christmas Story* while the last two will be entitled *Isaiah’s Servant Songs*. Much of the text we will be examining has been made unforgettable by Handel’s music in *The Messiah* and we will find ourselves almost singing the words as we study. This is fitting as we prepare our hearts for the Christmas season in its truest sense – the season in which we anticipate and celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Confessing Our Need for God

Focal Text

Isaiah 64:1-9

Background Text

Isaiah 63:7—64:12

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas begins with confessing our need for God.

Question to Explore

With all that we have, do we really need God?

Teaching Aim

To help class participants confess their need for God.

Introduction to your personal study:

The Old Testament book of Isaiah contains a wealth of material that has impacted the beliefs of Jewish and non-Jewish people around the world. Jesus, in teaching, frequently quoted from Isaiah. Our conviction, as followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, of God’s plan for the redemption of every person on earth through the death and resurrection of Jesus – reflects our deep belief in the truths proclaimed by Isaiah.

This session begins two Units of study entitled “Proclaiming God’s Salvation”. The first Unit offers five sessions called “Isaiah’s Christmas Story”. The second Unit contains two sessions called “Isaiah’s Servant Songs”. The two Units together teach us God’s master plan for the world and his master plan for each of our lives.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

Many passages of history, prophecy, and sheer poetic beauty make up the lengthy book of Isaiah. Obviously, seven lessons will not do justice to the wealth of information and spiritual guidance in this book. Our study will focus on what the prophet Isaiah tells us about Jesus so many years before his birth. We do not usually consider studying an Old Testament book to learn about Jesus, but in this book we will find much to encourage and uplift us as we consider our Saviour and His birth. However, we also want to understand the prophet’s message for his own people in his own day. He was a man deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of his people.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Isaiah 63:7-64:12 is the background text. Isaiah 64:1-9 is our focal text.

***1“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
That the mountains would tremble before you!***

***2As when fired sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil,
Come down to make your name known to your enemies
And cause the nations to quake before you!***

***3For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,
You came down, and the mountains trembled before you.***

***4Since ancient times no one has heard,
No ear has perceived,
No eye has seen any God besides you,
Who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.***

***5You come to the help of those who gladly do right,
Who remember your ways.
But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry.
How then can we be saved?***

***6All of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
We all shrivel up like a leaf,
And like the wind our sins sweep us away.***

***7No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you;
For you have hidden your face from us
And made us waste away because of our sins.***

**8Yet, O Lord, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
We are all the work of your hand.**

**9Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord;
Do not remember our sins forever,
Oh, look upon us, we pray,
For we are all your people.”**

In Chapter 63:7,8 Isaiah writes **“I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us – yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, ‘Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me’ and so he became their Savior.”**

The following verses of chapter 63 describes how the people of God have been false and how badly they need to be reminded of God’s power. They desperately need to understand that they are God’s people.

Several major emphases exist in the focal passage of today’s lesson.

First, God is a God of power. Isaiah entreats God to demonstrate his power in such a way that the mountains would tremble. More than just a show of power, however, Isaiah asks that God act on behalf of those who wait for him. This is chapter 64 of the 66 chapters attributed to Isaiah. Through all of them, he has entreated people to wait on the Lord – to depend upon him rather than upon physical and military might. In every crisis in the political life of his people he counselled faith in God as the only alternative to frustration and defeat.

Second, Isaiah insists on the necessity of moral purity. He admits that all have become like one who is unclean. He bemoans the righteous acts which have no real love of God behind them and compares them to filthy rags. The picture here is of the leper so feared in ancient society. Cast away from ordinary human contact, a leper lived in a colony with other lepers. They became increasingly more diseased and poverty-stricken until everyone feared to approach them. They were to cry out “Unclean, unclean” if they were approached by others who did not have the disease.

Isaiah continues the picture of human unworthiness by comparing us to a shrivelled up leaf. Our sins sweep us away like the wind sweeps away the dead leaves in fall. Leaves in spring bring hope with the softness of their color and gradual growth. In the summer, they bring shade and coolness. In the early fall, they can be vibrantly beautiful. But in late fall and early winter, they are left to be blown about and they can become filled with trash and no longer have any beauty at all.

Third, Isaiah then reminds God that humankind has a claim on him. **“You are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do**

not be angry beyond measure, O Lord; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.”

This is an amazing claim. ***“We are all your people”***. Throughout all the years of Isaiah’s ministry, he has called people to repentance. It seemed he called in vain. He might have reached the point which as humans we often reach of feeling that the wicked should be left to face the consequences of their sin. But he reminds God that these sinners are His people.

How can we not respond to this reality? We are his people. This theme runs throughout the Bible. Hear it in the following passages:

Deuteronomy 32:9 – ***For the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.***

2 Chronicles 7:14 – ***If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.***

Jeremiah 24:7 – ***I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.***

Zachariah 2: 10-11 – ***Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion, For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the Lord. Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people.***

Luke 2:10 – ***But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”***

2 Corinthians 6:16 – ***“What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.’”***

Titus 2: 13-14 - ***While we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.***

1 Peter 2:9-10 – ***But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belong to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.***

Revelation 21:3-4 – ***Now I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people,***

and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Isaiah declared this wonderful thought hundreds of years before the writers of the New Testament reminded us of it again. We are the people of God and we are the work of his hand.

***8Yet, O Lord, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
We are all the work of your hand.***
Isaiah 64:8

We are his creation and we are constantly being moulded by Him into the kind of people we need to be. Sometimes that process is the smooth shaping of tender hands through life's every day circumstances; through our Bible study and prayer; through the time we spend talking to and listening to God. At other times, the process seems more drastic as when the potter reforms the clay and begins again on the object he/she is making. Life circumstances seem sometimes to crush us. But the Father desires to use these life circumstances to form and mould us into a beautiful creation. Like the potter, the Father always is creating something beautiful and useful.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Your goal is to help participants understand their need for God and to rejoice in the reality of God's concern for his people.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Confessing Our Need for God

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the *Focal Text* in their Bibles. Also, share with them the *Main Idea* to be learned from the Scriptures, and the *Questions to be Explored* by the group.

Focal Text

Isaiah 64:1-9

Background Text

Isaiah 63:7—64:12

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas begins with confessing our need for God.

Question to Explore

With all that we have, do we really need God?

Teaching Aim

To help class participants confess their need for God

Connect with Life:

Summarize briefly the background material.

Say: The writings included in Isaiah cover a large span of the history of Judah. Even chapters 1-39 indicate that Isaiah prophesied during the reign of four different kings. Three of those kings actually tried to serve God, but were faced with continual warfare with those who would subjugate them. They also faced the religious life of the people. It was one of false piety and lack of concern for the less fortunate. Even a good leader could not overcome the persuasive evil that existed.

Guide the Study:

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***Confessing Our Need for God* – 14-36-01-en**

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Have someone read the entire focal passage, Isaiah 64:1-9.

Ask the group: What words seem familiar to you? (Verse 64:8 about the potter and the clay may be familiar to some).

Remind the group that this is not basically a familiar passage. So, nothing may be familiar.

Encourage the group to respond to this question: How does Isaiah ask God to demonstrate his power? (Rend the heavens and come down, make the mountains tremble, make your name known to enemies, act on behalf of those who do right.)

Ask: Is this a prayer we would find appropriate for today's situation?

Seek an answer: In verses 4 and 5, does Isaiah indicate that there still are those who wait on the Lord, do right and remember God's ways? Give the class a moment to look at those two verses and then respond.

Then ask: Why, then, does Isaiah emphasize in verses 6-7 that all are unclean. (Leave opportunity to discuss our own sinful nature as well as the fact that we are a part of a culture which does not value holiness).

Get the group to briefly discuss the concept of being God's people.

Read (or have people in the group read) several of the passages given in the "Teacher Preparation" material. (These passages are printed out at the end of the lesson. You may want to have the people read them from their own Bibles, but that is very time-consuming for such a large number of verses and by now you may be out of time for your session).

Request one of the group to briefly discuss the passage of the clay and the potter.

Ask if any of the group has worked with clay or observed a potter at work.

Suggest that some aspects of that process apply to the Christian life. Then ask them what a few of those might be. (The potter slowly moulds the object he/she is making into the form desired; sometimes there is a radical starting over of the process; as well, the potter has great joy in the finished product).

Encourage Application:

Reminder to the leader: Our teaching aim for this session is to help participants confess their need for God.

Allow time for the members of your group to express how these verses have reminded them of their need for God.

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Confessing Our Need for God Isaiah 64:1-9

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

The Potter's Wheel

Ask a member of the group to bring their laptop computer to class **if** they can connect to the Internet where you will be meeting. Or ask the homeowners where you are meeting if you can have access to their computer to search for "The Potter's Wheel".

Google "The Potter's Wheel" to look up various references to making pottery or use the following link to access a video interpretation of Isaiah 64:8.

http://video.google.ca/videoplay?docid=8583459602774810953&ei=P-7xSZWrNMX3-AarhIXkDQ&q=Potter%27s+wheel&hl=en&client=firefox_a

Ask yourselves: **"Are there ways you sense that God is moulding your life as the potter moulds the clay?"**

3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Confessing Our Need for God Isaiah 64:1-9

Beginning the Service:

Sing "Send Me, O Lord, Send Me"

Offering:

Praying for the World:

Most of the 18 million Sindhis live in the Sindh province of Pakistan. There are only a few Christian believers among this Muslim people group. Most of them are men, mainly because the lifestyle of Sindhi women allows them few opportunities to know believers or to hear the gospel. However, God is not limited by human traditions.

He is more than able to shine His light into the hearts of Sindhi women. Pray fervently for these women to encounter the Good News about Jesus Christ, to recognize it as the pearl of greatest price, and to surrender their lives completely to Him, no matter the cost.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

And I said, Here am I. Send Me! Isaiah 6:1-8

We have begun a seven week study in the book of Isaiah. However, in order to understand the passion with which Isaiah wrote, it is well to review his very personal encounter with God and his reply to God's question **"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"** Only eternity will tell how many have responded to these words while studying the passage found in Isaiah 6. Full-time ministers and missionaries and laypeople called to specific difficult tasks for the Lord keep these words ringing in their ears. **"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"** The answer became personal for them and will hopefully become personal for us **"And I said, Here am I. Send Me!"**

Isaiah was taking part as a prophet in a religious ceremony. Although he was still a young man, he had undoubtedly done this before, but on this occasion he saw something that others did not see. He had a vision of the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple (Isaiah 6:1). This impressive scene was increased by the presence of **"seraphs, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another**

***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty
The whole earth is full of his glory.***

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6: 2-4).

This vision was not experienced by others in the temple. There undoubtedly was the smoke of incense and the prayers of the priests, but only Isaiah was aware of the presence of God Himself.

Often our deepest spiritual experiences occur when only we are aware of them happening. It is a great thing when a worship time brings believers together in communal worship and the whole crowd is in accord. Youth camps are often great spiritual highs for young people when the whole group is touched and called and worship and share together. We are glad for such experiences.

But we are also glad that in the midst of an ordinary worship experience or an ordinary day, God is so real that we would sing with the seraphs

***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty
The whole earth is full of his glory.***

The Hebrew way of saying holy, holier, holiest is to repeat the same word three times. It is a building crescendo of emotion and adoration. The Lord Almighty is holy, The Lord Almighty is holier, The Lord Almighty is holiest.

Isaiah's reaction to this experience was to understand his own spiritual condition in light of God's holiness. His reaction was ***"Woe is me!" "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."***

Isaiah had already been speaking to the people of Judah about their sins. In this occasion he is aware of the sins of the people, but he is also aware of his own sin. Compared to the holiness of God, his sin was evident.

In the midst of his concern for his sin, one of the mighty seraphs takes a live coal from the altar and touched Isaiah's mouth and said to him "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Few of us have had that experience; but many have known what it is to have a load of guilt removed by simply trusting in the Lord to remove it.

There has been enough excitement for one day, but there is more. The Lord says, ***"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"***

Isaiah does not question what the job and the place will be. He said, ***"Here am I, Send me!"***

The remaining verses of chapter 6 tell Isaiah just how hard this ministry is going to be. He will warn people of their sins and they will not listen. They will hear God's message and it will not penetrate their brain or their heart. And Isaiah is to continue preaching until the city he loves is ruined, the fields are ravaged, and people have been sent into exile.

Isaiah might have said, "But Lord, what's the point? If all of these things are to happen whether I preach or not, why bother?"

Faithful servants of God might ask that today. Yes, people come to Christ, but in very small numbers in comparison to the vast populations which have never known Christ. In spite of great organizations and good strategy many people groups remain who have never heard the gospel; who have never read the Bible in their own language.

A Seminary student came to the end of her practical experience project which she developed in a church plant in a new area of a prosperous city. She hoped to provide child care so that others in the church- particularly the pastor and his wife – could take couples with young children on a date night. It was a good plan; a good way to minister and to involve neighbours in the new church plant. The year passed by and no connections were made which resulted in a couple wanting to take advantage of this opportunity. After nine months it was time to turn in the results of her work. She had done a number of things to enrich her experience and had learned some valuable lessons. But it was sad for her to have to tell her supervisor that the church plant which she had so hopefully wanted to help was in fact closing. Other members of the tiny

congregation were moving on to other ministries. She, herself, was answering God's call to children's work in an international context.

She had answered, "***Here am I, Send Me!***" with enthusiasm and her plans did not work out. Once again she answered "***Here am I, Send Me!***"

Call to Commitment:

Isaiah would know a lifetime of frustrated hopes for change. But the reality of his encounter with God early in his ministry and the fervour of his reply, "***Here am I, Send Me!***" never wavered. Faithful servants of God have thrilled to God's call "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? They have answered, "***Here am I, Send me!***" May that be our reply today as we look at the tasks of the week.

Who will share Christ with the neighbour next door?

Who will be a Christian teacher whose compassion heals a child's sense of inadequacy?

Who will be a Christian businessman whose integrity influences his company?

Who will be a sports player whose fairness is legendary?

"Here am I, Lord, Send Me!"

Conclude the Service:

Close by singing again "Here am I, O Lord, Send Me".

Make copies of this page for all participants in the Bible Study session:

The People of God

Deuteronomy 32: 9 – ***For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.***

2 Chronicles 7:14 – ***If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.***

Jeremiah 24:7 – ***I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.***

Zechariah 2: 10-11 – ***Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion, For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the Lord. Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people.***

Luke 2:10 – ***But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."***

2 Corinthians 6:16 – ***"What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"***

Titus 2: 13-14 - ***While we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.***

1 Peter 2:9-10 – ***But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.***

Revelation 21:3-4 – ***Now I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."***