

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.

Trusting in God's Promises
Isaiah 62

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:

Ask three leaders to prepare to read Isaiah 62: 10-12 which is given at the end of the Worship Time materials. Make copies for the readers. They will read this again during Worship Time.

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

The three leaders who read Isaiah 62: 10-12 will reread the passage as an introduction to the Worship Time message.

Music Sources:

“Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know” *The Worship Hymnal*, #307. CCLI 27659 Public Domain.

“Blessed Be the Name”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #310. CCLI 34525 Public Domain.

“His Name is Wonderful”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #315. CCLI 1122230.

“Standing on the Promises”, *The Worship Hymnal*, #339. N/A CCLI

And/or favourite Christmas songs

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Trusting in God's Promises

Focal Text

Isaiah 62

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas includes trusting in God's promises of a hopeful future.

Question to Explore

What does the future hold?

Gathering together:

Sing "Standing on the Promises"

First thoughts:

Have three readers prepare the following reading ahead of the session. Read with meaning and emphasis.

First reader:

***Pass through, pass through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people,
Build up, build up the highway!
Remove the stones,
Raise a banner for the nations.***

Second reader:

***The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth:
"Say to the Daughter of Zion,
'See, your Savior comes!
See, his reward is with him,***

And his recompense accompanies him.”

Third Reader:

***They will be called the Holy People,
The Redeemed of the Lord;
And you will be called Sought After,
The City No Longer Deserted.***

Isaiah 62 10-12

Our theme today is “Trusting in God’s Promises”. We have studied Isaiah and are aware of the prophet’s promises that the return of the exiles from Jerusalem will bring good things. One of those things is a new name. That is, instead of seeing themselves, and being seen by others, as captives, defeated by the Babylonians, they are to see themselves as a Holy People, Redeemed of the Lord, Sought After. Jerusalem is to be a city no longer deserted, but a place which honours God.

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

Trusting in God’s Promises

Focal Text

Isaiah 62

Background Text

Isaiah 62

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas includes trusting in God’s promises of a hopeful future.

Question to Explore

What does the future hold?

Teaching Aim

To lead the group to describe ways of facing the future with confidence.

Introduction to your personal study:

*For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
For Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet,
Till her righteousness shines out like the dawn,
Her salvation like a blazing torch.*

*The nations will see your righteousness,
And all kinds your glory;
You will be called by a new name
That the mouth of the Lord will bestow.*

***You will be a crown of splendour in the Lord's hand,
A royal diadem in the hand of your God.***

***No longer will they call you Deserted,
Or name your land Desolate.
But you will be called Hephzibah,
And your land Beulah;***

***For the Lord will take delight in you,
And your land be married.***

***As a young man marries a maiden,
So will your sons marry you;
As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,
So will your God rejoice over you.
Isaiah 62: 1-5***

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.

The theme for the entire chapter of Isaiah 62 might be “Zion’s New Name” and certainly we see this theme of rejoicing in the first five verses. Symbolic language enables the writer to express his joy with and for the exiles returning from captivity to Jerusalem.

Zion and Jerusalem both stand for the Israelite people – that is for the people chosen of God. In New Testament language these words stand for the church as in Hebrews 12:22-23a “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.”

Focusing on the Meaning:

In verse 1 of Isaiah 62, the prophet declares that he will not remain quiet or as in the King James version “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest” which gives a stronger emphasis than “I will not keep silent” and “I will not keep quiet”. “I will not hold my peace” indicates the prophet strongly resolving, notwithstanding all difficulties, to solicit God for the church’s happiness and constantly excite to the belief of it by his preaching.

“Her righteousness” refers not to the righteousness of the people, but to the righteousness of the people as the chosen people of God who has promised his people

deliverance. The vindicating of the people in the eyes of the nations by the ruin of the Babylonians will be brought to reality.

Vindication here does not mean exoneration or acquittal in the sense of declared innocent. The Hebrew word is *tsedek*, which is commonly translated ‘righteousness’ in the sense of “what is right” or “just” . However, the word has a wider range of meaning as the results of justice, or can pick up overtones of justified, pardoned, or vindicated in conflict with enemies. Especially when used in relation to God and his actions, the term refers to the “right” results of God’s saving activity. In this sense, it comes close to meaning “grace” or the “rightness” that comes from God’s grace. (See Ce2 Year C, Epiphany 2, Lectionary Commentary Isaiah 62: 1-6).

Her salvation shall be like a blazing torch or “a lamp that burneth” (KJV). Isaiah here indicates the task the church will have of being a light to the world.

In verse 2 we have a reference to the new name which goes along with the message of redemption to the world. Israel will no longer be called Deserted and the land called Desolate. The word Hephzi-bah means “my delight in her” and the word Beulah means “married”. Again, the writer uses symbolic language to indicate the intimate relationship which God has with his people.

This treasure will be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of God. The symbolic language gives a vivid picture of the church being held in the very hand of God as a crown of glory and a royal diadem. This language reminds us of 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.”*** The Israelites had been in captivity to the mighty Babylonians, but they, nonetheless, were cared for by God Himself. However much we may be in captivity to sin today, there is the promise that we can be a part of the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people belonging to God. We see here the images of dark and light which we examined when studying Isaiah 9 and which appear in other places in the writings of Isaiah.

The final picture in this set of verses is the rejoicing of the bridegroom. Wedding festivities may vary from culture to culture, but are a universal symbol of rejoicing.

***I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem:
They will never be silent day or night.
You who call on the Lord,
Give yourselves no rest,
And give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem
And makes her the praise of the earth.***

Isaiah 62: 6-7

Watchmen will be posted on the four corners of the city of Jerusalem. These, however, are not guards of the public safety, but intercessory prayer warriors. They will call on the Lord, day and night, to the end that Jerusalem will be established as promised and will be praised on the earth.

This dramatic picture of the need for our involvement in prayer confirms the mystery of prayer. The prophet has promised that God will re-establish Jerusalem. Even when the exiles failed to return to Jerusalem as expected and the rebuilding of the city and temple was slow to occur, the prophet continued to prophesy God's blessing on the people.

But these verses indicate the need for continuous and concentrated prayer for that to occur. God's sovereign will is not dependent upon us and yet it is somehow related to our faithfulness to seek that will. Daily, intimate conversation with God helps us understand the working of God in the world and helps us respond to it. There are some for whom we are "watchmen on the wall" in prayer. These may include our family, community, friends, leaders of our nation, world leaders. Some of these will overlap with many other people to join in the great uplifting to God of certain needs. But some of those will only be prayed for by you or by me. It may be a grandson or an old friend or a cross neighbour down the street. It may be a spouse, a teacher, a friend of your daughter's. This vivid image from Isaiah 62 serves to remind us that we too have an involvement in prayer which may make all the difference for some one.

***The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his might arm:
"Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies,
And never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled;
But those who harvest it will eat it and praise the Lord,
And those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary."
Isaiah 62: 8-9***

The prophet continues to encourage the returning exiles. You once planted grain and tended vineyards and before you could enjoy the result of your labour, you were sent off into exile. This is a picture of great frustration. One plants, weeds, waters and watches only to have someone else enjoy the fruit and vegetables produced. But now the Israelites are coming home to toil on their own lands and know the goodness of their own products.

Can these verses have meaning far beyond the Old Testament and even the New Testament? On this earth we will in fact toil and not reap the benefits of our labour. These words are written in the midst of the world wide economic crisis of 2009 and bear witness of many whose labour has not brought the expected reward. Yet there is for the believer the sure hope that ***"those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary"***. There is a heavenly reward which is not subject to the ups and downs of this world.

***Pass through, pass through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people,***

***Build up, build up the highway!
Remove the stones,
Raise a banner for the nations.***

***The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth:
“Say to the Daughter of Zion,
‘See, your Savior comes!
See, his reward is with him,
And his recompense accompanies him.’”
They will be called the Holy People,
The Redeemed of the Lord;
And you will be called Sought After,
The City No Longer Deserted.
Isaiah 62 10-12***

The chapter ends with a triumphant cry like the triumphal procession for a conquering army and/or a mighty king. These words are written for the discouraged, defeated returning exiles. There is no parade for them. Their homes have been destroyed or are being lived in by someone else. Their crops are not planted. Their temple was destroyed and its first rebuilding was poorly done. But Isaiah continues his triumphant promise of hope.

When the temple was rebuilt (yet to be destroyed again in 70 CE), the Israelites began to truly long for Messiah.

These words have strong Messianic overtones. The first temple was built while Solomon was king (about 970 to 930 BC, or BCE as those years before Christ are now often referred). That first temple was destroyed by the invading Babylonians in 586 BC.

A second temple was begun by the returning Israelites in 537 BC and finally finished and dedicated in 515 BC. The second temple endured for about 500 years when it was renovated by Herod the Great around 20 BC. In 70 AD (or CE), the Jewish nation rebelled against Rome who then in retribution destroyed the temple. It has never been replaced up to now. Since the 7th century, a Muslim shrine, the “Dome of the Rock” and a Muslim mosque have sat on the site of the temple mount.

“The promises of the Lord are tied to faithful living as God’s people, promises aimed at restoring a sense of mission to a people falling into pessimism and apathy. There is a sustained call for the people to live responsibly in the world as God’s people, to live the life of *torah* (God’s law leading to holy living) that had always marked God’s people. While there is still a clear sense that God and only God will bring the full restoration for which the people long, there is an equal sense that the people share some responsibility for fulfilling God’s purposes in the world.” (See:

<http://www.crivoice.org/lectionary/YearC/Cepiphany2ot.html>

for very helpful concepts about the last chapters of Isaiah).

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

This passage in Isaiah 62 may not be familiar to participants. Your goal is to help students realize and value God's promise to care for the Israelites and His promise to care for us today.

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)

Trusting in God's Promises

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 62

Background Text

Isaiah 62

Main Idea

A genuine celebration of Christmas includes trusting in God's promises of a hopeful future.

Question to Explore

What does the future hold?

Teaching Aim

To lead the group to describe ways of facing the future with confidence.

Connect with Life:

Read to the group: In some Spanish speaking countries of which Mexico is one, families are indentedified by both the Father's name and the Mother's name. If the mother's name was Maria Martinez and the father was Juan Ramirez, the family name would be Ramirez Martinez. The mother would become Maria Martinez de Ramirez (Martinez wife of Ramirez). This way of identifying both families is helpful, but it also signifies that both families are important. In North America, many women choose to use only their husband's name while others like to keep their maiden name in addition to their husband's name. Occasionally, a woman chooses to keep her maiden name in her professional relationships. A few choose to use only their maiden name. All of

these variations speak to the reality that our names are very important to us. They speak to our identity. They help us understand who we are and to whom we belong.

Today's lesson is a good example of the importance of names. We sometimes live up to a name or find ourselves assuming the characteristics implied in a name. Athletic teams like to choose strong, aggressive, winning names which inspire the members of the team. No one would want to be on a team called "Losers" or "Wimps" or even "Kittens". However, "Tigers", "Cougars", or "Wolves" connote strong, winning teams.

Guide the Study:

The emphasis on a new name is strong in chapter 62 of Isaiah. Begin today's session with asking what is important to group members about their own name.

Then ask: Has any in the class ever chosen a new name? What did that new name mean to you?

Explain that Zion and Jerusalem have several meanings.

Say: Zion may mean "the promised land" or "heaven" as in the old song "We marching to Zion." It also refers to the people of Israel and in its largest context to Christians of all the ages. Jerusalem is a place, of course. But it also stands for the most important religious center for both Jews and Muslims and is therefore important to Christians as well. In today's world, it stands for conflict between Jews and Arabs. Jerusalem symbolizes the Israeli people throughout the generations.

Inform the participants that the "New Jerusalem" term stands for heaven and, like Zion, Jerusalem stands for the church of the ages – for believers throughout time. Have someone read 62:1.

Ask why the prophet will not keep quiet.

Then ask them: When will he be willing to keep quiet?

Question the group: How will the Israelite people achieve righteousness? (It will be given by God – it is grace)

Ask: What is the significance of "righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch"? (Our salvation by grace is always a light to others)

Have someone read Hebrews 12:22-23a and discuss the meaning of Zion and Jerusalem in this passage.

Have someone read verses 2-3.

Ask a member to explain: What will be the future of the Israelites?

Have a different person read verse 4.

Ask: What names are given to the Israelites as an exiled people? (Deserted, Desolate)

Now ask: What names will be given them? (Hephzibah – my delight in her and Beulah – married).

Explain that these are intimate names expressing love.

Ask if anyone can guess the reason why these names were given to the people. (In this case it refers to the love of Jehovah God for his people.)

Have someone read verses 6-7.

Explain that the watchmen on the walls were a part of the fortification of Jerusalem and other ancient cities. These watchmen are praying. When do they rest? (Never – they are never silent day or night)

Ask the group to comment on this question: Do you see a connection between watchmen as important to the fortification of a city and prayer watchmen as important to the safety and well being of a country, a church or a family?

Have someone read verses 8-9

Seek comments on these questions:

1. What is the picture given here?
2. Can we relate this to modern events?
3. What is our ultimate hope? (Suggest this answer: “Those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary” is a picture of our eternal, heavenly reward.)

Have someone read verses 10-12.

Tell the group: This triumphant cry will form the basis for our Worship Time.

Encourage Application:

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.

Ask the group to suggest a few ways that this Bible lesson might be applied to their own lives or to your church as a group, i.e. your congregation.

Have someone pray that all who are in the church will commit to fulfilling our promises to God and to others just as God fulfills His promises to us.

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.

Trusting in God's Promises Isaiah 62

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.

Promises, Promises

Think of a promise you have made which you have not been able to fulfill as of yet. It may be a promise to yourself or to another. It may have been made publically or privately. How important is it to yourself to fulfill that promise? Will God fulfill his promises to us? Try to verbalize a way in which God has already fulfilled a promise?

3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Trusting in God's Promises **Isaiah 62**

Beginning the Service:

Sing "Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know" and "His Name is Wonderful"

Offering:

Praying for the World:

The 16 million Sudanese Arabs have had little opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel in their country where it is illegal to leave Islam. Ask God to strengthen the few believers and to powerfully use their testimony in deed and work to draw other Sudanese Arabs to faith. Pray for God's Word to enter the country through radio broadcasts, the Internet, literature distribution, Christian tourists and in other ways we cannot even imagine, but God can accomplish!

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.

Prepare the Way for the People **Isaiah 62: 10-12**

Introduction:

Have the three readers read Isaiah 62: 10-12

Isaiah's triumphant call is thrilling to read. Pass through, pass through the gates! These words cast the vision of a royal party marching through beautiful gates of a magnificent city. Strong horses carry men and women dressed in rich clothing. Trumpets sound; heralds cry out "Prepare ye the way."

This triumphant entry, however, is not an earthly royal king returning from battle or from negotiating an alliance; it is the cry for the entrance of believers into the presence of God. It is true that Isaiah was envisioning a triumphant return of the exiles to Jerusalem, but as is true with much of his prophetic writing, we can see in it the promise of our future welcome into God's heavenly city.

Prepare the way for the people.

This is the task of the church and of each individual Christian. Everything we do is to enable the gospel message to be brought to someone. That person may be across the world or may be the clerk at the grocery store. Our smile of thanks, our servant attitude, our verbal witness all serve to prepare the way for the people.

Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. This would be a glorious theme for a church or for an individual. All of our actions and attitudes should serve to build the highway; remove the barriers and raise a welcome banner for the nations. In the world today, people from many cultures and nations live side by side. What are we doing to make it easier for that neighbour to understand Christian faith and come to love the Christ of that faith.

See, your Saviour comes!

The Lord has made that proclamation and our lives should share it. It is the Good News of the Gospel. Our Saviour came and comes daily to walk with us. His reward becomes ours. Sharing that news with others is the joy of Christmas time and the happiness of all of the year.

We rejoice in our names – the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord, the Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted. These names indicate God's grace in our lives. We are holy in that we are set apart; it does not refer to some legalistic rule-abiding goodness that we have achieved. Our holiness comes from our relationship to God. The goodness that we exhibit comes from it and is through his power. We are the redeemed of the Lord. Our Salvation is a free gift of God – not of works lest any man should boast.

We are the Sought After. What an amazing name. God sent His son to redeem us; God pursued us with His love; He drew us unto Himself. He sought us.

We are the City No Longer Deserted. Isaiah here refers to the desolation of Jerusalem when so many of the Israelites were in captivity. All that was beautiful about the city

was destroyed or became ugly and worn over time. Many small towns in rural areas have experienced this desertion as people moved away to find better jobs. School houses that were once filled with children are left to decay. Doors bang incessantly on the small churches no longer filled on Sunday morning. The author visited one such rural church and found not only old hymnals scattered around the floor, but Sunday School record and offering envelopes. Deserted and hopeless and immensely sad were words we used to describe the church.

But Isaiah gives another picture. Jerusalem will be the City No Longer Deserted. We are a people no longer alone, destitute, lonely, unforgiven. The Saviour, our Saviour, has come.

The picture is clearly given in 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."

Call to Commitment:

Prepare the way for the people. We have heard the Good News of salvation. What will we do this week to share that good news with the people in our realm of influence?

Concluding the Service:

Isaiah 63: 7 summarizes our thoughts today

**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.**

For use in the Gathering Time and Worship Time. Make three copies.

First reader:

***Pass through, pass through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people,
Build up, build up the highway!
Remove the stones,
Raise a banner for the nations.***

Second reader:

***The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth:
“Say to the Daughter of Zion,
‘See, your Saviour comes!
See, his reward is with him,
And his recompense accompanies him.’”***

Third Reader:

***They will be called the Holy People,
The Redeemed of the Lord;
And you will be called Sought After,
The City No Longer Deserted.***

Isaiah 62:10-12