

1. What comes to your mind when you think of the baby in the manger?

Christmas is drawing near and we each have our own set of memories of what Christmas means to us. This holiday season let us look at the Old Testament and see what Isaiah has to teach us that can draw us closer to the Christ child. Isaiah was a prophet who loved his nation, Israel, and desired that they turn back to God. Isaiah means "salvation of the Lord" and salvation is the main theme of the book. This is a book of prophecy (history written in advance). Isaiah was telling about the birth, life and death of Christ 700 years before the events happened! As you read this passage be aware of how very much God loves you. As you see His love it will give you a joy and peace this Christmas season that the world cannot give. For God so loved you that He came as a baby knowing all that would occur in the years ahead. As Brennan Manning says, "Christmas is the awesome mystery of the messianic Son of God in diapers."

Read Isaiah 53:1-6 six times slowly and reflect on how these truths can draw you closer to God this Christmas. \_\_\_\_\_

Re-read verses 1-3.

2. Isaiah knows that not all are going to respond to his message of salvation but he's faithful to proclaim it anyway. There would be many who would not believe that this was the Messiah, the One sent by God. Read Romans 10:16 and John 12:37-38 (where Isaiah 53:1 is quoted). Also read Hebrews 4:2. Do you think that there are similarities even today as to how people receive "the message"? Explain.

Have you believed the message?

Isaiah asks each of us if we believe the message of salvation. If you have never believed on Jesus as your Lord and Savior, ask Him into your life now and thank Him for dying for your sins. "Turn to me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to your leader.

3. "The arm of the Lord" is referred to several places in Scripture. In the following verses to what does the term refer?

Exodus 6:6

Psalms 89:21

Isaiah 52:10

Isaiah 63:12

Who would have thought that the Lord, the all-powerful One, would come as a baby and would submit to death on a cross!

4. How would Isaiah and the prophets have been encouraged by "the arm of the Lord"?
  
5. a. Take a few minutes now and think about the week ahead of you. Ask yourself, does everything depend on me or am I looking to the "arm of the Lord"?
  
- b. Keeping in mind your answer to the question above, look again at the week ahead of you. Have your perspectives and/or priorities changed? Explain.
  
6. In Isaiah 53:2 we are given two different perspectives - God's and man's.
  - a. How did God view the Messiah? (verse 2a)
  
  - b. Think of the words of imagery that are used here. What pictures come to mind when you think about these words?
  
  - c. How was it predicted that man would perceive the Messiah when He came? (verses 2-3)
  
7. From Isaiah's description of the Messiah write a short paragraph of how you might picture Him in today's society.
  
8. a. Describe the circumstances under which you might give your life or an organ to save someone.
  
- b. Would you be willing to do so if you knew that the person would despise and reject you?
  
9. Christ was despised and rejected. His sorrows included both mental and physical pain. We see His suffering in the following verses: Matthew 26:67, Mark 15:15-20, Luke 22:41-44, and John 19:1-3.
  - a. How was Jesus able to endure such agony? (Hebrews 12:2)

b. Why did He endure it? (Romans 5:8, John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:12-13)

c. What does His suffering say to you?

10. Why do you think the people despised and rejected Him?

11. In Isaiah 53:3 Jesus is described as a man who is very familiar with sorrow and grief (NASB). How can knowing this fact about Him bring you comfort during this holiday season?

12. Verse 3 tells us "we esteemed Him not" (NIV).

a. Look up the word "esteem" in the dictionary and define it.

b. In this passage "esteem" is used as a verb, an action word. How can we esteem Jesus today and throughout the holiday season?

Read Isaiah 53:4-6.

13. Many people have died in inhumane ways and we cannot help but be touched. However, Christ's death is different because it involved everybody in the world.

a. What word is repeated to verify the above statement? In verses 4-5 how many times is it used? \_\_\_\_\_.

b. Take time to write out verse 5; personalize it with your name.

14. The suffering servant is willing to carry their (and our) infirmities and sorrows but how do they respond? (verse 4)

The NIV version translates verse 5 as "...the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him." Other versions use chastening instead of punishment.

15. According to verse 5, what was the cost of the peace we proclaim to one another during the holiday season?

16. Verse 6 tells us that each of us has turned to his own way.

a. What does it look like when you turn to your own way and what are the consequences?

b. What did God do with all our iniquities (sin)?

c. From the following verses what do we see as the result of Jesus bearing our sins upon the cross?

Acts 10:43

Hebrews 8:12

I Peter 1:3-9

“Why is the cross the symbol of our faith? To find the answer look no farther than the cross itself. It’s design couldn’t be simpler. One beam horizontal - the other vertical. One reaches out - like God’s love. The other reaches up - as does God’s holiness. One represents the width of His love; the other reflects the height of His holiness. The cross is the intersection. The cross is where God forgave His children without lowering His standards. (Max Lucado, from his book He Chose the Nails)

17. Instead of all the things we think we want let's take time to thank Him for all the gifts He's already given us. Write a poem, make an entry in your journal, say a prayer, or rejoice in song! Let Him know how thankful you are. Take time to adore Him!

Maybe your circumstances are very difficult this year and you find it hard to rejoice with those singing Christmas carols and wrapping gifts. "If you look at God through your circumstances, He will seem small and very far away; but if by faith you look at your circumstances through God, He will draw very near and reveal His greatness to you." (Warren Wiersbe)

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