

WEEK 2

ISAIAH

THE LORD SAVES

CHECK-IN

Before you dig into the passage

Ask your group in which ways they have truly sought the Lord and pursued righteousness in the past week (i.e. where have you seen victory over sin?). Invite your group to confess ways in which they rebelled against God this week (i.e. chose sin and self, instead of holiness and Christ). Remind your group of the hope we have in Jesus, who died and rose again to save sinners.

READ

Isaiah 1:10-20

As the text is central to the discussion, read the week's text together. Consider using a few different translations.

OBSERVE

*Make text-based observations (**What?**)*

Guide your group to make observations from the text. Focus on elements such as words, grammar, structure, tone, literary devices, genre, etc.

1. Compare Is. 1:9 and 1:10. How does Isaiah intensify his confrontation with God's people?
2. What were the animal sacrifices meant to be to God and what were they supposed to achieve? Read Leviticus 1 (especially v. 9, 13, and 17); and 17:11. How does God feel about these sacrifices according to Isaiah 1: 11?
3. How is God's response to the people's religious rites described and why does he respond in this way (v. 12-15)?

4. What does God require of his people (v. 16-17):
 - a. To restore their relationship with God;
 - b. To reorder their personal lives; and
 - c. To reform society?
5. How would you describe the tone of verse 18? What solution does God offer his people?
6. Which two choices do God's people face and what are the consequences of each (v. 19-20)?

If you have extra time:

- Look up other prophetic condemnations of unacceptable worship in Hos 6:4–6; Amos 4:4–5; 5:21–25; Mic 6:6–8; Jer 7:1–12, 21–22.
- Explore the relationship between Israel's redemption (Ex. 12), the law (Ex. 20) and the institution of religious rituals (Ex 25:1 - Lv. 27:34). In what order was each given? What was the purpose of the law and requirements for religious rituals?

INTERPRET

*What does the passage mean (**So what?**)?*

Based on the observations, what did the text mean to its original audience? What is God saying?

1. What is "trampling" (v. 12) a symbol of? What does this show of the condition of the people's hearts and their attitude toward God?
2. What kind of worship is God rejecting? (*God specifically prescribed the mentioned religious rites; he is not rejecting the sacrificial system of worship. What he is rejecting is inadequate repetitious religious acts, without confession of sin, rejection of evil and a commitment to live according to God's revealed standards of holiness and justice.*)
3. What does it mean that sins, though like scarlet and red as crimson, will be made white as snow and like wool? (*Scarlet and red are colours of blood guilt; snow and wool are naturally white. God promises not only to deal with the stain of sin, but with the very nature from which it springs.*)

APPLY

What should we do and why (**Now what?**)?

In light of the meaning of the text in its context, what principles apply to us today?

1. In what ways is religious hypocrisy seen today in leaders?
2. How do you usually respond to the conviction of sin or the call to repent? Do you feel condemned? Do you feel angry and justified in your ways? Do you feel a sense of God's love and mercy? (*See the quote by Ray Ortlund below*).
3. What does God require of us today regarding worship? (*Repentance, not perfection!*)
4. How have your religious rituals (attending church/community group, prayer, quiet time, serving, etc.) become detached from repentance and pursuing righteousness? Or, to put it differently, how consistent is your life at church, at home, in the workplace, and in recreational settings?
5. What is one thing you want to commit to doing this coming week to live out the imperatives in verses 16-17?
6. How is the promise in verse 18 fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
 - a. How can you be included in this promise? (*Through repentance and faith in Jesus.*)
 - b. How does this promise and its fulfillment in Jesus motivate you for true worship (i.e. worship flowing from a commitment to confess sin, reject evil, and live according to God's standards for holiness and justice)?

PRAYER

Lead your group in a prayer of confession. You can pray as a group or let two or three pray together. Encourage your group to be honest before God and one another, holding on to the hope we have in Christ (See 1 John 1:7).

"Conviction of sin is the lance of the divine Surgeon piercing the infected soul, releasing the pressure, letting the infection pour out. Conviction of sin is a health-giving injury. Conviction of sin is the Holy Spirit being kind to us by confronting us with the light we don't want to see and the truth we're afraid to admit and the guilt we prefer to ignore. Conviction of sin is the severe love of God overruling our compulsive dishonesty, our willful blindness, our favorite excuses. Conviction of sin is the violent sweetness of God opposing the sins lying comfortably undisturbed in our lives. Conviction of sin is the merciful God declaring war on the false peace we settle for. Conviction of sin is our escape from malaise to joy, from attending church to worship, from faking it to authenticity. Conviction of sin, with the forgiveness of Jesus pouring over our wounds, is life."

(Ray Ortlund)