

Small Group Guide **A God Who Can Be Trusted**

The Church at Brook Hills

July 19, 2010

Isaiah 24-26

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Isaiah 24-26

The book of Isaiah was written during the second half of the eighth century B.C. (approximately 750-700 B.C.). During that time, five different kings reigned in the southern kingdom of Judah, the kingdom built around Jerusalem. The Assyrian empire had grown in strength and ambition. It destroyed the northern kingdom and eventually pushed its borders to within eight miles of the walls of Jerusalem. The king at that time, Ahaz, then made a bad decision. He decided to put his trust in the Assyrian emperor. So he made a treaty with him, paid tribute to him, and even sent Israelites to Assyria to study their styles of worship to bring back to Jerusalem. In other words, Ahaz made Judah a vassal of Assyria and Assyria's gods. Following Ahaz's death his son Hezekiah followed him and reigned twenty-nine years as one of Judah's best kings, but the threat of Assyrian invasion was alive and well. Therefore, the people in Judah faced a crisis of belief; do they trust in God to deliver them or the surrounding nations for protection. It's within this context that the prophet calls for the people to make a commitment to honor God and trust Him for deliverance and victory.

Study the Text...

Judgment on the Whole Earth (24:1-23)

This chapter contains announcements of future judgment on sinful humanity and the places where they live. As in chapters 13-23, similar images of destruction, death and ruin are used to describe the demise of individual cities and nations, however now one finds a climactic curse on all humanity and the whole earth (24:1-13, 18-23). This destruction of wickedness will bring relief to the oppressed, and the righteous will exalt God's name because of His great and mighty deeds (24:14-16), but these events will not happen immediately. Instead, God's people must now endure trouble and hardship (24:16-18) as they wait for that future day when God will reign as king from Zion (24:23). Nevertheless, the outcome of their struggle is set and is absolutely sure; God will be victorious. In light of this future victory and deliverance the people should commit to Him and trust Him in their present trouble.

- How does Isaiah describe the condition of the earth in the last days (24:1-6, 19-20)?
- What caused this condition (24:5-6)?
- Why is there a connection between human sin and the earth's curse? See Genesis 1:28, 2:15, 3:17-18; Romans 8:18-21.

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- What is the meaning of verse 2 within the context of the chapter? What does this teach us about the day of judgment? (social status makes no difference on the day of judgment)
- What is the general attitude of the people during the last days (24:7-13)? What will come to an end during this time? What will take its place?
- How does 24:14-16 fit within the context of the chapter?
- According to 24:21-23 who also will face judgment in the last days? (also note Ephesians 6:11-12 and Revelation 20:7-10)

Group Discussion...

- What thoughts and feelings come to your mind as you read through the descriptions of judgment and destruction in the chapter?
- What initial questions does this chapter provoke? Did anything from the chapter surprise you?
- In what ways would the truths of this chapter provide hope and encouragement to the people of Israel? How about you?
- This chapter describes the future reality of those apart from Christ. Who do you know that doesn't know Christ? How can you begin to practically share the gospel with them?

Study the Text

Praise to God for the lavish banquet to come (Isaiah 25:1-12)

Whereas chapter 24 involved doom and destruction, chapter 25 pictures a celebration in which God and His people rejoice over His establishment of His victorious reign over the world. This victory celebration involves:

Singing God's praise	25:1-5
Enjoying God's bountiful feast	25:6-8
Expressing trust in God	25:9-12

The song of thanksgiving in 25:1-5 serves as the response of God's people for the victory He will win over His enemies and for the establishment of His reign as king over heaven and earth (24:1-23). The final paragraph of trust and confidence (25:9-12) is a response to the announcements made at the banquet in 25:6-8. The overall picture of the chapter is that of trust and praise in the God who sovereignly reigns over all. This chapter should provoke hope and trust in the people while the Assyrians surround them.

- What are the reasons the people are thankful and sing praise to God in 25:1-5?
- What are the wonderful deeds a reference to in 25:1? (the events described in chapter 24) When were these wonderful deeds planned by God?
- What is the positive result of the destruction and devastation described in chapter 24 (25:3)? Do you think this is the appropriate response or a little strange?

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- What picture is used to describe God's deliverance of His people in the kingdom (25:6-8)?
- Who is included at this magnificent banquet (25:6)?
- What will God do at this lavish banquet for all the peoples (25:6-8)?
- How do the people respond as they look ahead to the banquet that awaits them in the future (25:9-12)?
- What is the people's posture or attitude in regards to their coming salvation (25:9)?

Group Discussion. . .

- The prophet declares that God will abolish death but does not describe the details of how this will take place. How do New Testament writers explain God's elimination of death? (see Romans 6:13-14; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28; Revelation 21:1-4)
- List out the attributes of God's character that are manifested throughout this chapter?
- Read 1 Peter 1:13. How can you actively set your hope on the promises found in Isaiah 25?
- How should the present hope found in Isaiah 25 (particularly 25:6-8) affect your present choices and attitudes?
- Of the events described in 25:6-8 which do you most anticipate? Please explain.
- In light of the fact that "all peoples" will be present at the Messianic banquet (25:6-8), how are you actively seeking to spend your life for sake of the nations?
- In what ways are the events described in chapter 25 partly fulfilled today? In what ways are they yet to come?

Study the Text...

Trust in God for Deliverance (Isaiah 26:1-27:1)

The prophetic message now moves from future eschatological events when God rules the world from Mount Zion (24:23) to the present situation of the people of Judah. The people are in great pain (like the pain of childbirth) in light of the Assyrian threat with no salvation in sight. They continue to hope for God to act (26:8) and see God's zeal for His people soon (26:11).

In the context of chapters 24-27, the prophet describes the eschatological picture of God's destruction of all of His enemies (chapters 24-25) to convince the people of Judah to place their faith in God now (chapters 26-27). In the future God's people will trust God and experience His salvation when He destroys all His enemies (25:9), therefore the prophet exhorts His audience in Jerusalem to trust God to do the same thing now in the midst of their present Assyrian distress. The chapter can be divided into three general sections:

A community song of trust	26:1-6
A community lament	26:7-18
A salvation oracle	26:19-27:1

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Each section expresses the need to trust and have confidence in God's ability to save His people and defeat their enemies. Each section also exhorts the audience to act in faith because they know what God can do for them.

- How is the “strong city” that God creates for His people described throughout the chapter?
- What do these descriptions communicate about the nature of the city?
- Who dwells in the “lofty city” (26:5)? What is the ultimate outcome for those who dwell there?
- What are the characteristics of those who will enter into the “strong city”?
- Why are the people waiting on the Lord (26:8)? Specifically, what are they waiting for?
- Who do the people give the credit to for the victory and peace they enjoy (26:12-15)?
- In the midst of their present distress, what three promises can the people be assured of (26:19-27:1)?

Group Discussion...

- What does it mean in practice to trust the Lord?
- Take some time to think about 26:7-9. The people claimed that God's name was the desire of their souls. Can you make the same claim about God? Are there things you desire more than God and His glory?
- In 26:10, Isaiah says that the wicked person ignores God's majesty and upholds his own pride, despite the “grace” God shows him. How do even wicked people experience God's grace?
- In what ways do you ever take credit for that which God alone deserves credit for?
- What does this chapter teach us about the nature of unregenerate (unsaved) man apart from Christ?
- How does this chapter point to man's need for Christ?