



Group Discussion Guide

For group meetings from April 4 afternoon through April 11 morning

Due to the volume of reading, our weekly group guides will not be a detailed commentary of each chapter, but rather an overview that will include some details where needed.

Isaiah 51

Isaiah's ministry occurred during a period of decline for Israel; a time of impending influence by foreign powers. He warned the people of the southern kingdom of Judah that their sin would bring God's judgment in the form of exile. In this chapter, Isaiah wrote to a remnant of God's people who still followed Him. He reminded them of their heritage, the promises made to Abraham, how God had used the nation to defeat enemies in the past, and the unmatched power of the Lord. The prophet delivered the message that although the people had experienced the judgment of God, He had not left them and He would raise them up once again.

Isaiah 52

Isaiah declared there would be a time that Israel would be delivered from oppression and restored to her former glory. The message from the Lord about Israel's salvation is, "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money," (Isaiah 52:3). It is widely believed that this section of Isaiah's writing referred not to Israel's return from exile in Babylon, but to the coming of Israel's Messiah. Though that time was not yet, Isaiah still had the privilege of being the one to bring this good news. Unlike when the people left Egypt, this future time of deliverance would not be in haste. Instead, the nation will be led and guarded by the Lord as they leave their oppressors behind. The section that begins in Isaiah 52:13 continues to the next chapter, and is focused on the Messiah who is here referred to as "my servant."

Isaiah 53

This description of the Servant Messiah describes someone unlike any king that had ever led Israel. This man would not be one of military might or political influence. Instead, he would be "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," (Isaiah 53:3). This passage is directly connected to Jesus in many ways, but especially through the imagery in verses 4-9. Reading these verses and reading the various gospel accounts of Christ's crucifixion, the descriptions are very similar. All of this was according to God's will, so that "the righteous one, my servant" will "make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities," (Isaiah 53:11).

John 1:1-14

The opening of John's gospel account identifies Jesus as the Word who was active in the work of creation and is the source of life. Jesus was the Word that became flesh, and when he came

to his own people they rejected him. However, those who received him also received the right to become children of God.

John 13:1-20

Just before the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples, he washed the feet of these men who had followed him during his earthly ministry. Jesus knew Judas would betray him, but washed the betrayer's feet just the same. After completing this act of service, Jesus told the disciples that he did this for them as an example. Just as he had done this for them, they were to do the same for one another. As his followers, they were to live and love as he did.

John 19:17-30

Jesus was crucified at a place called Golgotha, which meant "The Place of the Skull" due to the rock formation there. The Roman Governor Pilate placed a sign on the cross that identified Jesus mockingly as "The King of the Jews." The soldiers gambled for Jesus' garments as he suffered on the cross. John wrote that several women were present, including his own mother. As he allowed his life to slip away, Jesus said, "It is finished," (John 19:30). He had accomplished the will of the Father as he became a substitutionary sacrifice for all people.

John 20:1-23

John recorded that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb on the first day of the week. She found the stone removed from the opening and ran to tell Peter and John. The two men raced to the tomb and found it empty, except for the grave clothes that had been placed on the body of Jesus. The disciples left, and Mary remained. She looked into the tomb and saw two angels who asked her why she was weeping. After she explained her emotional state to the angels, she turned around and saw Jesus but did not realize it was him. He also asked her why she was weeping, but it was not until he said her name that she realized it was Jesus. He told her that soon he would ascend to the Father and instructed her to go and tell the disciples she had seen him. That evening, Jesus appeared to the disciples, who had locked themselves in a room. He showed them the scars from his wounds and told them that just as the Father had sent him to save people, now he was sending them to continue his work.

Discussion Questions

If you were one of those Jews who had seen Israel's decline, what would it mean to you to hear Isaiah's message in chapter 51? What does it mean to you today?

The Lord said to Israel, "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money," (Isaiah 52:3). How does this apply to them, and to us?

When you consider the way Isaiah 53 described Jesus, how are you moved to respond?

Read John 1:14. How would you explain this truth to someone else?

Think about how Jesus set an example for his disciples by washing their feet. How can you personally follow his example in your own life?

As he died, Jesus said, "It is finished." Why do you think that can sometimes be hard to accept ... that Jesus completed what was necessary to secure our salvation?

Jesus told his disciples that just as he was sent by the Father, so he was also sending them. How are we to live out this mission of being "sent"?