

## Small Group Guide THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. Jim Shaddix*

*December 1, 2013*

*Isaiah 9:1-7*

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

### GETTING STARTED

*Welcome* – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

*Looking Back* – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

*Looking Up* – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

#### *Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)*

- *Pray for Our Lives: Praise God for the promise of Christ proclaimed throughout all Scripture. Pray we will all maintain a focus on Christ throughout the holiday season. Ask God to help us resist the materialistic temptations that face us all this time of year. Pray we will not ignore the needs of others around us. Ask God to continue develop a generous Spirit within each of us. Pray for Him to help us maximize opportunities we have to tell others about Jesus.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for the ministry of East Lake House, an independent living center for adults ages 40-90, most of whom have disabilities. We are also praying for First Baptist Church Birmingham and Dr. Charles T. Carter, Interim Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week as we celebrate how God has used the Global Offering in 2013, let us give Him praise for how He has made His name known around the world through our faith family. Further, as we look toward 2014 and give to the Global Offering throughout the month of December, we want to pray for God*

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*to continue to use these resources for His glory so the church can be established and strengthened around the world. Join us this week as we pray for the Global Offering and for those who will be directly affected by it this next year.*

### MAIN TRUTH

#### Message Outline

#### THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

Isaiah 9:1-7

*The promise of Christ's coming brought...*

- Light into Darkness (Isaiah 9:1-2)
  - The light of the gospel transforms gloomy places into glorious places. (Is. 9:1-2; cf. Jn. 1:46; 7:41,52; Acts 2:7)
  - The light of the gospel transforms gloomy people into glorious people. (Is. 9:2; cf. Mt. 4:12-17; Jn. 1:1-9; 3:19-21; 8:12-20; 9:5; 12:35-36,46; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:9)
- Hope into Hopelessness (Isaiah 9:3-5)
  - The hope of the gospel means inclusion in a family. (Is. 9:3; cf. Zech. 2:11; 8:23; Jn. 14:12-14; Col. 1:5-6)
  - The hope of the gospel means celebration of joy. (Is. 9:3; cf. Lk. 2:10)
  - The hope of the gospel means freedom from bondage. (Is. 9:4; cf. Mt. 11:28-30)
  - The hope of the gospel means peace with God. (Is. 9:5; cf. Is. 9:6-7; Ezek. 39:9; Lk. 2:13-14; Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:9-10; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20)
- God into Godlessness (Isaiah 9:6-7)
  - The Jesus of the gospel is the Wonderful Counselor. (cf. Lk. 7:20-22; Jn. 7:31; 14:10-11; Acts 2:22; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3)
  - The Jesus of the gospel is the Mighty God. (cf. Is. 10:20-21; Jn. 1:1-2; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; 1 Jn. 5:20)
  - The Jesus of the gospel is the Everlasting Father. (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Is. 9:7; Jn. 8:48-59)
  - The Jesus of the gospel is the Prince of Peace. (cf. Lk. 2:14; Jn. 14:27; Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20)
  - The Jesus of the gospel is the Eternal King. (Is. 9:7; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Mt. 1:1; 28:18; Lk. 1:32; Acts 2:29-33; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11)

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### *Message Summary*

As we begin this new sermon series, we reflect on God's promise about the Messiah's first coming. As Isaiah 9 foretells, the Messiah's coming brought light into darkness, hope into hopelessness, and God into godlessness. Through the transformative power of the gospel, we can experience joy, peace with God, freedom from bondage and inclusion in God's family, and all of this is possible because Jesus - God in flesh - entered His people's chaos and rescued them. In light of His promised coming, we should celebrate it as ones who have received His salvation, anticipate His second coming, and proclaim Christ's birth and impending return to the lost.

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

### *Digging Deeper*

For the month of December, our sermon series *The Expected One* will highlight the promises surrounding Christ's coming, birth, life, death, resurrection, and eternal reign. Some people may not be familiar with "Advent" or what practicing Advent looks like in the church. Ask if anyone in the group grew up celebrating Advent in their family and, if so, what that involved. Explain that the word means "a coming into place, view, or being" and describes the commemoration of Christ's coming into the world. Families and churches often participate in Advent before Christmas to heighten our expectancy and celebration of Christ's birth.

In conjunction with this series, we encourage individuals and families to follow along with *The Expected One Advent Guide*, for each sermon will focus on a different chapter from the Advent Guide and emphasize a particular set of promises regarding God's Son. To download the guide, iPhone, iPad, iPod, and Android users can download The Expected One Advent Guide app, and the guide can also be downloaded as a digital eBook from [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

While many people in the group may be familiar with this particular passage from Isaiah, there may be some who have not read Isaiah or who feel unequipped to study the Old Testament, particularly books containing prophecy. Depending on your group, use this time to show group members how to approach such Old Testament books. Consider bringing any tools such as commentaries, Old Testament survey books, or biblical encyclopedias that they can use to better understand the history and culture surrounding books like Isaiah. During the sermon, Pastor Jim explained that we should look at Old Testament passages from two angles: historically and prophetically. Ask the group to explain what this means and what this practically looks like for them when they sit down to study Scripture. Be ready to share how you study the Old Testament looking through both of these lenses. Also, discuss why it is important to study Scripture through *both* of these lenses and not just through one of them.

- **Historically** – What did this passage mean for the original readers of the book, the people who lived in that time and culture? What was going on when Isaiah penned the words of Isaiah 9?
- **Prophetically** – What does the passage anticipate or look forward to?

In studying **the historic context** of Isaiah 9, believers should know that Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim) had joined forces to fight against the rapidly approaching Assyrian army in what would later be called the Syro-Ephraimite War. The Syrians and Israelites would lose this war and be squashed by the Assyrians, and in Isaiah 9, the prophet Isaiah declares hope in the promises of God despite the approaching darkness and defeat. At the same time, this passage also contains **prophecy** about the coming ruler, Jesus Christ, who would bring light, joy, and peace to the nations. In Matthew 4:13-16, Matthew quotes Isaiah 9 in order to describe how Jesus fulfills the promises of this passage as the Messiah, the anointed one.

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The promises of Christ's coming brought light into darkness, hope into hopelessness, and God into godlessness. Emphasize that these are not just truths to be heard. These truths should inform how we live. Do we live as though they are true? How are we acting upon these truths? What is the application of this text and of this sermon? How are we supposed to live in light of Isaiah 9:1-7? Although this is not in the sermon notes, Pastor Jim gave three directives regarding application: **celebrate, anticipate, and proclaim**. As a small group, discuss how those in the group can celebrate, anticipate, and proclaim the promise of Christ's coming this holiday season and make *this* the focus of the next four weeks.

## NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

### Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Why is it important to study Old Testament texts through *both* the historic and the prophetic lenses?
- What promises does the Old Testament give about Christ's first coming?
- In Isaiah 9:1-2, Isaiah prophesies that "a great light" would pierce the darkness, gloom, and anguish of the people. How does this metaphor of light and darkness help us grasp the change that God brings? Why is it important to know that God brings light to dark places? What are the implications of this truth for our lives?
- Why do people reject light, reject Jesus? What does it mean for Him to be "the light of the world" (Jn. 1:9-10; 3:19-20; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36)?
- How has God transformed "gloomy places into glorious places" in your life? Praise and thank God together for His transformative power.
- Read Isaiah 9:1-2; John 1:1-14; 3:16-20; 1 Peter 2:9. These verses describe what Christ has accomplished and who we are as Christ-followers. Do we live as though *this* is our identity? What would it look like to live in light of who we are: "chosen," "a royal priesthood," a people for God's possession? If we do not live as though this is who we are, why? Why would a Christ-follower not live as though this were his or her identity?
- Isaiah 9:3-5 describes joy brought by the Messiah through a cessation of war, and the analogy in verse 4 is to Judges 7 when God used Gideon to lead Israel to victory over Midian. How is the victory described in Isaiah 9:3-5 greater than Israel's victory over Midian? How does God transform hopelessness into hope in Isaiah 9:3-5? (Verse 5 describes the implements of war being burned, for they will no longer be needed.)
- What are reasons for hopelessness in this world? Define hope. How do we have hope in Christ? How do we live with hope despite hopeless circumstances that often occur in our lives?
- The hope of the gospel means freedom from bondage, but although saved, many Christians continue to live caught up in a cycle of sin. Through His death and resurrection, Christ enables freedom from sin's power over us, but how do we walk in this freedom when stuck in a cycle of sin? How do we with the power of the Holy Spirit stop engaging in habitual sin?
- Read Luke 2:13-14 and Romans 5:1, 9-10. The hope of the gospel also means peace with God. What does this mean? How would you explain this peace to an unbeliever? How would you explain that God extends this peace to them as well?
- Read Isaiah 9:6-7. Explore the meaning of each of the following names for Christ: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and Promised Savior. How do these names bring hope? What do they tell us about Christ? What do they imply about His relationship with His people? Are any of these names what comes to mind when you think of God? How do these descriptions differ or compare with your understanding of who Christ is?
- In our daily lives, how can we celebrate the promise and fulfillment of Christ's first coming? What does it look like to live in anticipation of His second coming? If you do not live with expectancy and enthusiasm about His return, why? How can you begin to cultivate such expectancy about His return?