

(This is a bonus introductory lesson. If you are planning for ten weeks, you can start at Week 1!)

Introductory Week:

Opening Prayer:

Good and Gracious God,

Thank you for this time. Thank you for the opportunity to study scripture and grow in relationship with those around us. Lord, as we get into the swing of this semester, please calm our fears and anxieties. Give us peace. Help us to be open to learning and growing. To willingly ask hard questions, and to push ourselves. God, please guide us through this year.

As we study Isaiah together, help us to learn more about your story and your people. Lord, help us to love and serve you, by loving and serving those around us.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen

Get to it!

Leaders begin, go around the group and introduce yourselves. Take this time to get to know one another and begin to cultivate your Bible study community! Here are a few questions you could ask:

What's your name?

What's your major or job or calling?

Where are you from?

Why did you sign up for this Bible study?

What do you hope to take away from it?

How do you hope to be formed and shaped by it?

We are once again excited to study scripture together as a community here at Calvin (and beyond)! We do this because it gives us the opportunity to study God's Word together. We have the opportunity to share conversations about the book of Isaiah with each other over coffee, in the classroom, at worship and on many other occasions, as well. We take encouragement and challenge from this practice, and it brings our community together!

The book of Isaiah is both beloved and unknown within the Christian community. Its passages are read and sung every Christmas and Easter season. People are used to hearing the words and phrases on the lips of Jesus as he explains his ministry (Luke 4:16-21). And although sixty-six chapters of prophetic literature may be too much to fully wrap our minds around in a semester, we hope to bring you to a place of appreciation for what this prophet has to say.

It's our aim to provide you with an overarching view of the prophetic message through the study of ten selected passages from Isaiah. We encourage you to read the book of Isaiah and ask good questions of the text. Wonder out loud with people, and if something is confusing, bring it up in your community.

To help you read this book of the Bible well, it might be helpful to have some context. Isaiah is a prophetic book – that is, a book that pronounces blessings and curses that come from keeping and disobeying God's law. It's a specific genre, or type of writing in the Bible. The prophetic books were written between 760BC and 460BC. This was a time of unprecedented religious disobedience and social upheaval within Israel. The distinctive mark of the prophet was that they were called by God. Nearly all were reluctant to accept the divine call. If someone just decided to call himself or herself a prophet it was cause to question whether they were a false prophet. The prophet was God's spokesperson, so phrases like 'This is what the Lord says' appear regularly.

For the next ten weeks, we get to study Isaiah together! The overall theme of Isaiah is this: “The Holy One of Israel challenges his people to respond appropriately to his presence among them.” That phrase, “The Holy One of Israel” is a title for God that occurs twenty-six times in Isaiah and only six times in the rest of the Bible. The repetition of this key phrase shows Isaiah’s deep concern that his people respond to this holy, awesome God in their midst in reverent obedience.

Suggestion:

Close by taking time to pray for one another. Invite members of your group to share specific prayer requests. Maybe there are things they are really excited about too! Take some time to come to God as a group and share joys, concerns, and burdens.