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ISAIAH

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

Holy God, Unholy People, Called Prophet — Isaiah 1:1–6:13

Scripture Scope: Isaiah 1:1–6:13 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

Isaiah — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Participant Study Edition)

Week 1: Holy God, Unholy People, Called Prophet (Isaiah 1:1–6:13)

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- **The prophet:** "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (1:1). Isaiah preached in Jerusalem for about forty years in the second half of the 700s BC.
- **The setting:** The Assyrian Empire was swallowing the nations. The northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722 BC, and Judah was nearly overrun in 701 BC. Later chapters look ahead to exile in Babylon and the return.
- **Its form:** Prophetic poetry and preaching, with a few chapters of history (36–39). Words of judgment and words of comfort are woven together.
- **The structure:**
  - The Holy One and a rebellious people; Isaiah's call (1–6).
  - Immanuel and the coming King (7–12).
  - The LORD judges the nations, and a feast for all peoples (13–27).
  - Whom will you trust? Woes, Hezekiah, and Assyria (28–39).
  - Comfort, the incomparable God, and his Servant (40–48).
  - The Suffering Servant and the invitation to come (49–55).
  - True worship and the coming Redeemer (56–59).
  - Good news, the glory of Zion, and new heavens and a new earth (60–66).
- **Why it matters:** Isaiah asks how the Holy One of Israel can dwell with and save a sinful people. His answer reaches from cleansing at the altar to a Child born to reign, a Servant pierced for our transgressions, and a new creation. Isaiah is among the prophets most frequently quoted in the New Testament.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, this 8-week study walks through all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah by following the book's own argument. Some weeks cover many chapters; in those weeks a few focal passages are read closely and the rest is summarized. Each week invites you to listen to the prophet together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Isaiah and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Isaiah:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Isaiah Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**Holy God, Unholy People, Called Prophet** (1:1–6:13)	A Rebellious People and the LORD's Vineyard (1:1–5:30) / Holy, Holy, Holy (6:1–13)	The Holy One seen in Christ; cleansing for the unclean
2	**Immanuel and the Coming King** (7:1–12:6)	Immanuel, God With Us (7:1–8:22) / The Child, the King, and the Branch (9:1–12:6)	Immanuel, the Child, and the Branch fulfilled in Jesus
3	**The LORD Judges the Nations** (13:1–27:13)	Judgment on the Proud Nations (13:1–23:18) / A Feast for All Peoples (24:1–27:13)	Christ the King of the nations; death swallowed up
4	**Whom Will You Trust?** (28:1–39:8)	Woe to Those Who Trust in Egypt (28:1–35:10) / Hezekiah, Assyria, and the Test of Trust (36:1–39:8)	Christ the tested cornerstone; the God who answers prayer
5	**Comfort, My People** (40:1–48:22)	Comfort and the Incomparable God (40:1–42:25) / Redeemed, Called by Name (43:1–48:22)	The voice in the wilderness; the chosen Servant
6	**The Servant Who Saves** (49:1–55:13)	The Servant's Mission (49:1–52:12) / The Suffering Servant and the Invitation to Come (52:13–55:13)	Jesus the Suffering Servant; the invitation to come
7	**True Worship and the Redeemer** (56:1–59:21)	The Worship God Desires (56:1–58:14) / Sin, Separation, and the Coming Redeemer (59:1–21)	A house of prayer for all peoples; the Redeemer who comes to Zion
8	**New Heavens and a New Earth** (60:1–66:24)	Good News and the Glory of Zion (60:1–62:12) / New Heavens and a New Earth (63:1–66:24)	The Spirit-anointed preacher; the new creation

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · ISAIAH 1:1–6:13

Week 1: Holy God, Unholy People, Called Prophet

Scripture Scope: Isaiah 1:1–6:13 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Isaiah 1:1–20; 2:1–5; 5:1–7; 6:1–13 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: Holy God, Unholy People, Called Prophet (Isaiah 1:1–6:13)

Passage Isaiah 1:1–6:13

Opening

Isaiah opens in a courtroom. Heaven and earth are called as witnesses while the LORD charges his own children with rebellion. Their worship is busy, but God cannot bear it, because their hands are full of blood and the widow and the orphan are neglected. Yet the Judge makes an astonishing offer: come and settle the case, for sins like scarlet can become white as snow. The prophet lifts our eyes to a day when the nations stream to the LORD's mountain to learn his ways.

He sings a love song about a vineyard that produced only wild grapes. Then he takes us back to the year King Uzziah died, when Isaiah saw the Lord on a high throne, heard the seraphim cry "Holy, holy, holy," confessed that he was a man of unclean lips, was cleansed by a burning coal, and answered, "Here I am! Send me."

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Isaiah 1:1–6:13 (the LORD's charge against his people, hollow worship, the call to wash and the invitation to reason, the mountain of the LORD, the day of the LORD and Zion's humbling, the vineyard song, six woes, and Isaiah's vision and call)
Focal Passages	Isaiah 1:1–20; 2:1–5; 5:1–7; 6:1–13
Literary & Structural Anchor	Chapters 1–5 show the problem: a holy God and a sinful people. Chapter 6 shows the answer in miniature: a vision of holiness, confession, atonement, and sending. "Come" rings through these chapters (1:18; 2:3; 2:5).
Big Idea	The Holy One confronts his people's rebellion, yet he provides cleansing and calls a messenger.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	**Know the Holy One:** Learn the setting and shape of Isaiah and the meaning of "the Holy One of Israel" in chapters 1–6.
HEART	**Be Cleansed:** See that the Lord Isaiah saw is revealed in Christ, whose blood cleanses from all sin.
HANDS	**Answer the Call:** Take one step to join worship with justice and to say "Here I am" to God's call.

Opening Frame: Holy, Holy, Holy

The Song of Solomon closed with a call for the beloved to come and spoke of a woman's own vineyard. Isaiah also sings of a vineyard, but in a different key: the LORD planted it with love and found only wild grapes. Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied in Jerusalem in the days of the Assyrian empire, through the reigns of four kings of Judah. His book moves from judgment to comfort to a new creation. This is an 8-week study, and in some weeks large sections will be summarized so that we can follow the book's whole argument. At its center is one question: how can the Holy One dwell with and save a sinful people? The question for this week: what happens when we see the holiness of God? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Have you ever entered a place or moment that made you aware of greatness beyond yourself? What stood out to you?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: The Prophet in the Days of Assyria (Isaiah 1:1–6:13)

Passage **Isaiah 1:1–6:13**

Entering the World of the Prophet in the Days of Assyria

1. Historical Background

Isaiah's call came "in the year that King Uzziah died" (6:1), about 740 BC. Uzziah's long, prosperous reign ended in leprosy because he proudly entered the temple to burn incense (2 Chronicles 26:16–21). Assyria under Tiglath-pileser III was expanding west; Samaria would fall in 722 BC, and Sennacherib would devastate Judah in 701 BC.

2. Cultural Setting

Ancient Near Eastern treaties called heaven and earth as witnesses, and Israel's covenant did the same (Deuteronomy 30:19; 32:1). Planting a vineyard, clearing stones, and building a tower and wine vat took years of investment.

3. Literary Structure of Isaiah 1:1–6:13

- **The charge** (1:1–9)
- **Hollow worship** (1:10–15)
- **The call to wash** (1:16–17)
- **The invitation** (1:18–20)
- **The faithful city corrupted and restored** (1:21–31)
- **The mountain of the LORD** (2:1–5)
- **The day of the LORD and Zion's humbling** (2:6–4:6)
- **The vineyard song** (5:1–7)
- **Six woes** (5:8–30)
- **The vision and call** (6:1–13)

4. Key Themes

The Holy One of Israel; a courtroom charge and an invitation; worship joined to justice; the nations drawn to God; the remnant and the holy seed.

5. Theological Considerations

God rejects worship that ignores injustice, but he does not reject worship itself; he calls for repentance. His holiness is both the reason for judgment and the ground of cleansing.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Chapter 6 tells Isaiah's call after five chapters of preaching. Some think it was placed later on purpose so that the vision answers the problem the first chapters raise.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: Isaiah saw the Lord's throne in the year a proud, long-reigning king died. Why might a vision of the true King matter most when human leaders fail?

1.2 Q2: The LORD calls heaven and earth as witnesses against his people (1:2). What does this courtroom picture teach about how seriously God takes his covenant?

1.2 Q3: Isaiah speaks of both judgment and hope. Why do you think God's messages so often hold both together?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: A Rebellious People and the LORD's Vineyard (Isaiah 1:1–5:30)

Passage Isaiah 1:1–5:30

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Isaiah 1:1–9** (focal passage) — The LORD's children have rebelled; the nation is like a beaten body from head to foot, and only a small remnant has been spared. (Tell 1:7–8, the land's devastation, in brief.)
- **Reader 2: Isaiah 1:10–20** (focal passage) — God rejects sacrifices, festivals, and prayers from hands full of blood; he calls them to wash, do good, seek justice, and care for the fatherless and widow, and invites them to reason with him.
- **Summary of Isaiah 1:21–31** — The once-faithful city has become corrupt; God will purge her like metal in a furnace and restore her as a city of righteousness.

- **Reader 3: Isaiah 2:1–5** (focal passage) — In the latter days the nations will stream to the LORD's mountain to learn his ways; swords will become plowshares; Judah is called to walk in the LORD's light.
- **Summary of Isaiah 2:6–4:6** — The day of the LORD will bring down human pride and idols; Jerusalem's leaders will fail; the proud women of the city will be humbled; yet the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful, and God's cloud and fire will shelter a cleansed Zion.
- **Reader 4: Isaiah 5:1–7** (focal passage) — A love song: the beloved planted a choice vineyard, but it yielded wild grapes; the vineyard is Israel, and God looked for justice but found bloodshed.
- **Summary of Isaiah 5:8–30** — Six woes on those who seize land, live for drink, mock God, call evil good, are wise in their own eyes, and take bribes; God will summon a distant nation as his instrument.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Isaiah 1:16–17:**
>
> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
> remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;
>
> cease to do evil,
>
> learn to do good;
>
> seek justice,
>
> correct oppression;
>
> bring justice to the fatherless,
>
> plead the widow's cause.
>
> **Isaiah 1:18:**
>
> “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
> though your sins are like scarlet,
>
> they shall be as white as snow;
>
> though they are red like crimson,
>
> they shall become like wool.
>
> **Isaiah 2:2–3:**
>
> It shall come to pass in the latter days
> that the mountain of the house of the LORD
>
> shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
>
> and shall be lifted up above the hills;
>
> and all the nations shall flow to it,
>
> and many peoples shall come, and say:
>
> “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
>
> to the house of the God of Jacob,
>
> that he may teach us his ways
>
> and that we may walk in his paths.”

> For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
>
> and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
>
> **Isaiah 5:7:**
>
> For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
> is the house of Israel,
>
> and the men of Judah
>
> are his pleasant planting;
>
> and he looked for justice,
>
> but behold, bloodshed;
>
> for righteousness,
>
> but behold, an outcry!

Teaching Narrative: A Rebellious People and the LORD's Vineyard

1. Rebellious Children (Isaiah 1:1–9)

The charge, and a remnant spared.

2. Hollow Worship (Isaiah 1:10–15)

Busy religion that God cannot bear.

3. Wash and Reason (Isaiah 1:16–20)

Repentance, justice, and an invitation to be made clean.

4. The Mountain of the LORD (Isaiah 2:1–5)

The nations come to learn God's ways.

5. Pride Brought Low (Isaiah 2:6–4:6)

Retold briefly, ending with the Branch.

6. The Vineyard Song (Isaiah 5:1–7)

God's care and Israel's wild grapes.

7. Six Woes (Isaiah 5:8–30)

Retold briefly. Sins that call evil good.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

> **1.3 Q1:** God tells his worshiping people, "your hands are full of blood" (1:15). Why does God reject worship that is separated from how we treat others?

1.3 Q2: God commands, "seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (1:17). Who are the vulnerable people in our community today, and how can we seek justice for them?

1.3 Q3: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (1:18). What does it mean to you that the Judge himself invites the guilty to be made clean?

1.3 Q4: Many peoples say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD" (2:3), so that he may teach them his ways. What would it look like for people to be drawn to God by the life of his people today?

1.3 Q5: God "looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed" (5:7). What forms of injustice or unfaithfulness can grow even in a community that has received much from God, and how should a community examine itself?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Holy, Holy, Holy (Isaiah 6:1–13)

Passage Isaiah 6:1–13

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Isaiah 6:1–4** (focal passage) — In the year King Uzziah died, Isaiah sees the Lord on a high throne; seraphim cry "Holy, holy, holy"; the temple shakes and fills with smoke.
- **Reader 2: Isaiah 6:5–7** (focal passage) — Isaiah cries that he is lost, a man of unclean lips; a seraph touches his lips with a burning coal from the altar, and his guilt is taken away.
- **Reader 3: Isaiah 6:8** (focal passage) — The Lord asks whom he shall send; Isaiah answers, "Here I am! Send me."
- **Reader 4: Isaiah 6:9–13** (focal passage) — Isaiah is sent to a people who will hear but not understand; judgment will continue until the land is empty, yet a holy seed remains in the stump.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Isaiah 6:1:** In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.
>
> **Isaiah 6:3:**
>
> And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
>
> the whole earth is full of his glory!”
>
> **Isaiah 6:5:** And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”
>
> **Isaiah 6:8:** And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

Teaching Narrative: Holy, Holy, Holy

1. The True King (Isaiah 6:1–4)

A throne, the seraphim, and the triple "holy."

2. Woe Is Me (Isaiah 6:5)

Seeing God reveals sin.

3. The Coal from the Altar (Isaiah 6:6–7)

God provides atonement.

4. Here I Am (Isaiah 6:8)

The cleansed one is sent.

5. A Hard Commission (Isaiah 6:9–13)

A resisting people and the holy seed.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

> **1.4 Q1:** "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (6:1). How does seeing God as the true King change the way you face uncertain times?

> **1.4 Q2:** The seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts" (6:3). What do you think it means that God is holy, and why is it repeated three times?

1.4 Q3: Isaiah cries, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips" (6:5). Why does a clear sight of God's holiness lead to an honest sight of our own sin?

1.4 Q4: The seraph says, "your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (6:7). What does it show that God himself provides the cleansing before he sends Isaiah?

1.4 Q5: Isaiah answers, "Here I am! Send me" (6:8), even though his message will be hard. What makes a person willing to serve God when results are uncertain?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The Holy One Seen in Christ; Cleansing for the Unclean

Passage Isaiah 6:1

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

Isaiah's vision of the Lord on his throne points to Christ, whose glory Isaiah saw (John 12:41), and the altar coal anticipates the complete purification Christ provides rather than serving as a direct prediction of Christ. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Isaiah Saw His Glory (John 12:41)

John says Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him, linking the throne vision of chapter 6 to Christ.

2. The Vineyard and the Son (Matthew 21:33–44)

Jesus' parable of the wicked tenants deliberately echoes Isaiah's vineyard imagery and adds the owner's rejected son.

3. Cleansed by His Blood (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:11–14)

The altar coal anticipates the complete purification Christ provides as the atoning sacrifice whose blood cleanses from all sin, rather than being a direct prediction of Christ.

4. Still Holy, Still Sending (Revelation 4:8; Romans 10:14–15; Matthew 9:37–38)

The living creatures around God's throne still cry "holy, holy, holy," and the Lord still asks whom he will send.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Isaiah 6:1:** In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: John writes, "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him" (John 12:41). How does it change your reading of Isaiah 6 to know that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus?

1.5 Q2: John writes, "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). How does Christ fulfill what the burning coal pictured for Isaiah?

1.5 Q3: Paul asks, "how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:14). How might God be calling you to be sent to someone this week?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	The Holy One of Israel confronts rebellion and hollow worship, invites the guilty to be made clean, draws the nations, and calls a cleansed messenger.
HEART	Isaiah saw the glory of Christ, whose blood cleanses from all sin.
HANDS	Faith joins worship with justice, confesses sin honestly, receives cleansing, and answers God's call.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: What does God's promise in 1:18 teach about bringing "scarlet" sin to him for cleansing? Take a moment of silent reflection—no one needs to disclose personal sins aloud.

1.6 Q2: What is one way you could seek justice or care for someone vulnerable this week?

1.6 Q3: What might a faithful "Here I am" response to God look like in ordinary obedience this week? (Personal application may remain private.)

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, we heard the LORD's charge against his people, his invitation to be made clean, the vineyard song, and Isaiah's vision and call.

Transition: Next week a frightened king is offered a sign, and Isaiah announces a Child who will reign on David's throne.

Week 2 Overview — Immanuel and the Coming King (Isaiah 7:1–12:6): Movement 1, Immanuel, God With Us (7:1–8:22), covers King Ahaz's crisis and the sign of Immanuel. Movement 2, The Child, the King, and the Branch (9:1–12:6), covers the great light, the Child born to reign, and the Branch from Jesse. The Canonical Horizon traces Immanuel, the Child, and the Branch fulfilled in Jesus.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Isaiah 7:1–17
- Isaiah 8:11–22
- Isaiah 9:1–7
- Isaiah 11:1–16
- Isaiah 12:1–6

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

> **Closing Group Prayer**
>
> LORD of hosts, you are holy, holy, holy, and your glory fills the earth. Forgive our hollow worship, our unclean lips, and our neglect of the vulnerable. Thank you that sins like scarlet can be made white as snow through the blood of Jesus. We pray for those who carry shame. Give us courage to seek justice and to answer your call. Thank you that Christ is the King on the throne. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.