



Growth Group Discussion Questions

1. From Gruesome to Glory via Grace

Read Isaiah 1:1 – 2:5

1. God has a very serious case against His people. He calls all of creation to be witnesses in His case. **Look up Deuteronomy 21:18-21 and describe in your own words what God is doing. What does all this tell us about who God is and who Israel is? What is so frightening about all this?**
2. God's son Israel has become so bad that by verse 10 God says that they have become like Sodom and Gomorrah. **Looking closely at verse 9, if God's people have become as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah – and God completely destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah – why is Israel not completely destroyed? In other words, what makes the difference between Sodom and Gomorrah and Israel? Hint: See Romans 9:15-16**
3. Society is at its lowest spiritual state not when there is no worship, but when worship and morality are separated. **Looking at verse 15-17 discuss whether why you agree or disagree with this sentence. How applicable do you think this is to the church in Australia today?**
4. Compare verse 21-23 to 26-31. **Compare the way God describes His people in these two sections. What is the cause of this spiritual makeover from 'whore' to 'faithful city'? When did God do all this?**
5. **What grounds are there for trusting that God's grand vision in 2:4 will really, really come true?**
6. **In the light of all that God has done, how can we do what 2:5 tells us?**

Leaders Notes

1. God is doing exactly what the Old Covenant law requires. Like a frustrated parent whose children (the word in Hebrews is actually sons not 'children') will not listen, He brings witnesses against them. This tells us that God is a Father and Israel is His Son – a rebellious son. The scary thing is that when a parent resorts to the process in Deuteronomy 21 he is actually seeking the death penalty for his son! God is seeking the death penalty for Israel! Which all means, Another Son will have to die if Israel is to be saved.
2. Verse 9 tells us that the Lord of Hosts is the only answer. God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. This is told to us not so that we can start an argument, or raise questions, but so that we will beg God for mercy. And so that when He does show mercy to us, we can be filled with gratitude and awe. If anyone is not in Hell it can only be attributed to God's mercy.
3. Interestingly enough, in an article I read the divorce rate amongst church goers and non-church goers is roughly the same. It could also be argued that the materialism of Christians and non-Christians is pretty similar! How many Christians watch the same TV shows that non-Christians watch etc. In other words, how much does the church look like the world? God's people ought to be radically different to the world. God is not seeking worshippers but transformed worshippers. You can't help but wonder whether, if Isaiah was alive today, he would be saying the same thing about the modern church today.
4. This is the heart of the passage. It describes the makeover of God's people from the gruesome whore to the beautiful faithful city, Zion, that it will become. The cause of this makeover is God alone. Grace. God will judge His enemies (24), God will purge His people (25), and above all else, God will redeem His people with justice (27). God did all this when He became a man, Jesus, and took upon Himself our sins. He purged His people by carrying their sins and the judgement they deserve. At the cross God redeemed His people. He washed away their sins and made them beautiful. In Jesus Christ God kept all His promises of spiritual cleansing and redemption.
5. God has kept His promise of forgiveness (1:18) and His promise of redemption (1:27). By looking at the cross and seeing to what incredible lengths God went to in order to keep His promise – even at the cost of His only Beloved Son – we have every reason to believe He will keep His promises about restoring the whole world.
6. This is the application of the whole passage. In a world of uncertainty, in the face of our constant backsliding and failure, Christians are called to walk in the light of God's word. Our comfort comes from being certain about the glorious future God will bring about. We have absolute hope that our failings have been finally dealt with on the cross. We are sure about these things. And therefore we are comforted. And we don't just believe them. We *walk* in the light of them. We live according to them.