Brief Introduction To Isaiah:

"[The book of] Isaiah announces God's surprising plan of grace and glory for his rebellious people and, indeed, for the world. God had promised Abraham that through his descendants the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:1–3). God had promised David that his throne would lead the world into salvation (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 89:19–37). But by Isaiah's time, the descendants of Abraham and many members of the dynasty of David no longer trusted the promises of God, aligning themselves instead with the promises and the fears—of this false world. Judah's unbelief in God during the pivotal events of Isaiah's lifetime redirected their future away from blessing and toward judgment. At this historic turning point, Judah moved from independence under God's power to subservience under pagan powers.

What, then, of God's ancient promises? Is the gracious purpose of God defeated by Judah's sin?.. The purpose of Isaiah, then, is to declare the good news that God will glorify himself through the renewed and increased glory of his people, which will attract the nations. The book of Isaiah is a vision of hope for sinners through the coming Messiah, promising for the "ransomed" people of God a new world where sin and sorrow will be forever forgotten (35:10; 51:11)." – ESV Study Bible

Literary Structure of Isaiah

- 1. Longing: the love of God (63:15,16) a. Lamentation: our hardened hearts (63:17-19)
- 2. Longing: the presence of God (64:1-5a)
 - a. Lamentation: our long-standing sins (64:5b-7)
- 3. Longing: the touch of God (64:8,9)
 - a. Appeal: the unrestrained God (64:10-12)

"From thanksgiving and confession, the people betake themselves to prayer, and beseech God to look down from heaven once more, to have compassion on them, to acknowledge them, and to save them alike from themselves and from their adversaries." -Rawlinson

"The manner is that of a liturgical psalm; the prophet, as it were, leads the devotions of the assembled Church." - Cheyne

"The people of God to whom Isaiah's prayer was originally given needed urgently to rediscover God in just this way. Judah had been conquered by the muscular, vigorous Babylonian empire early in the sixth century B.C. The forces of evil stood triumphant over the broken body of God's people, savoring their victory with sadistic glee. To the Jewish survivors it seemed as if the whole moral order of the universe had been overthrown. The temple had been violated and its ministries halted. The holy city had been plundered and its people deported. And the stragglers left behind had to ask, "Where is God now? Has he abandoned us?" The people of God were living in the shadows. And at that moment the prophet Isaiah calls them to pray that God would come down to them again with reviving mercies." – Ortlund

Scripture for Sunday, June 7: Isaiah 63:15-64:9

Chapter One of When God Comes To Church: When God Comes Down

Section 1: Knowing & Understanding

"Isaiah calls us to defy despair and pray for our renewed enjoyment of God's love. Our Father rules all things from his glorious throne in heaven, in full possession of his attributes and powers. Therefore our present experience does not determine our future. God our Father and Redeemer is the true measure of our future prospects. And we may seek him with that confidence."

Isaiah 63:15–64:12 is a prayer for mercy from a people who have turned from God.

- What are some of the words and phrases in Isaiah's prayer for God's mercy and presence that stand out to you the most? Why?
- What do these words and phrases say about Isaiah's view of God?

Section 2: Evaluating

Helpful paragraph from When God Comes To Church:

"Let's not miss the significance of what Isaiah is doing here. The whole passage is a prayer for revival. But revival is not a mere power surge, an emotional blowout. True revival front-loads questions of personal integrity. Verse 6 calls us to an unblinking honesty about ourselves, so that we forsake all self-admiration. It explains why our natural moral potential is ineffective in preserving our marriages and empowering our churches. We are sinful. And sin is not just bad, it is powerful. It neutralizes our good intentions. We do not even have it within ourselves to seek God convincingly."

- Do you feel God is to blame for allowing you to fall captive to sin?
- Why would he allow you to love that sin, why would he withdraw the support of his Spirit?
- Read Isaiah 64:1–3. What is Isaiah's proposed solution for a complacent church that is toying with sin?
- Do you believe God will come down and do "awesome things that we did not look for" if we ask?
- Is it something you have faith in, meaning, you would bank on this, pray expectantly and confidently?
- Let's talk about this what keeps you from this or stirs your heart to trust God?
- Read Isaiah 64:5–6. What effect does our love for sin have on our relationship with God?
- What happens in your life when you try to maintain a close relationship with God while being unwilling to give up certain areas of sin?

Supporting scripture:

Deuteronomy 31:8, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 13:5, Joshua 1:9, Matthew 28:20 James 1:13–15, Gal. 6:7–8 Romans 5:8, Isaiah 53:3–6, Heb. 10:19–22

Section 3: Applying

Ortlund writes,

"Why do we accept the present condition of the church? Where is our sense of humiliation, of indignation, such as we see in these verses? The prophet refuses to rest content when the church is dominated by the world. Rather than following the trends of the world, the church should be setting the trends for the world. We must always be thankful for the wonderful things the Lord is doing in our day. But we must never stop asking God to make his people "the praise of the earth" (62:7) until he does it. The church's unfulfilled potential and the world's undeserved prestige create a scandal contradicting our very identity as the people of the living God."

- Let's take a moment to talk about the dark things that seem insurmountable in our society, the situations that seem hopeless. Let's dream for a moment about how the church could look, if God did come down and act in miraculous ways and if we humbled ourselves before him.
- Lead the group now to pray Isaiah 64:8 and Isaiah 64:1-3. This should be a time of confession, of asking God to come down to his church in a new and powerful way, that he would mercifully rescue us from ourselves and our weak love for sin. Please pray for God to use this nine week series to wake up Vintage Church from areas of complacency to a radical, joy-filled faith.

Chapter Two of *When God Comes To Church*: "God Reinvigorates Us" Scripture for Sunday, June 14: Psalm 85

Section 1: Knowing & Understanding

After prayer that God's Spirit would reveal the truth of his Word and soften our hearts to this, read Psalm 85 aloud.

"This is a community lament, at a time when God has shown his displeasure over his people's unfaithfulness, perhaps by withholding fruitfulness from the land (<u>vv. 1, 12</u>). The people singing this are seeking forgiveness for the whole people ("us"), asking God to show the steadfast love and faithfulness he proclaimed in <u>Ex. 34:6</u>; and because God is righteous (<u>Ps. 85:10–11, 13</u>)—that is, reliable about his promises—the psalm closes with confidence. <u>Exodus 34:6–7</u> provides the background to this psalm, particularly in the terms "steadfast love and faithfulness" (<u>Ps. 85:10; cf. vv. 7, 11</u>) and "forgave iniquity" (<u>v. 2</u>). The Lord explained his "name" to Moses by emphasizing his benevolence, which is where the people's hope lies."

- ESV Study Bible

Breakdown of verses (from ESV Study Bible)

1-3: The verbs in this section are all recounting what God has done in the past.

4-7: The next section appeals to the benevolence God has claimed and shown, asking him to restore us again, i.e., put away your indignation toward us.

8-9: Now the members of the congregation declare their patience in watching for God to act on their prayer. The song has shifted from the plural "we" to the singular "l": let me hear. Each member is thus making this pledge.

10-13: The psalm closes with the confident expectation that God will hear their prayer and give what they ask.

Helpful paragraph from When God Comes To Church:

"It's like a church beginning to realize, 'We aren't what we used to be. We aren't what we ought to be or want to be. It's been too long since the immediacy of God's presence was a vital reality in our midst. It is time to seek the Lord.' That is the burden of Psalm 85—a good church with a strong past seeking the Lord for a fresh visitation in the present. Even good churches need revival."

Section 2: Evaluating

1. Re-read Psalm 85:1-3. Who is the subject of every verb in verses 1–3, who receives the credit? Taking our cue from Psalm 85, what are examples of God's faithfulness to Vintage Church? [Leader, this should be guided by you according to the make-up of your group. If your group has been together for seven years, it should be easy to tell stories of God's faithfulness to the members of your group and Vintage as a whole. If your group is less than a year old, you may need to focus on specific answered prayers within your group from that time]

<u>Supporting Scripture</u> Psalm 14:7, 77:7, 32:1, 78:38, Jonah 3:9

2. Re-read Psalm 85:4-7. While verses 1-3 give evidence that God's people have experienced a joy and vibrancy that comes from experiencing God's faithfulness, vs. 4-7 tell us they're not currently in that place. Psalm 85 is not calling them to repent of sin, but instead it's as if they've fallen half-asleep. The people of God find themselves in a place of complacency, of a sleepy, nominal existence as God's people.

How would you describe the current spiritual condition of this community group? Vintage Church as a whole?

Helpful paragraph from When God Comes To Church:

"What if God always answered our prayers and relieved our distresses quickly? What if God were just a whim away? That kind of fathering produces spoiled brats. God knows when we need to struggle through. Time tests us, and that's good. It deepens us. God has no intention of encouraging superficiality in his children, for God himself is not a superficial person. He loves depth. And the long continuance of his discipline has the power to deliver us from our natural giddiness and set us apart as the very saints of God."

<u>Supporting Scripture</u> Psalm 30:5, 80:3, 79:5, 71:20, 90:14,

Section 3: Applying

Psalm 85:6 is a confident question coming from a proper standing. "Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"

As we embark on this season of seeking the Lord and petitioning him through prayer, this verse should mark the posture of our hearts. Take time as a group to pray this verse, focusing specifically on each part, asking God to bring about a renewal in our church in accordance with every facet of this verse.

"**Will you not**" – "Will you not revive us again? You, the God of the covenant, the God of the promises to the patriarchs, the God of the exodus and our settlement in the land, the God of the Messianic prophecies, the God who will bring everything to consummation in a new heaven and a new earth, our own God and Father—will you not revive us again?"

"**revive**" – The word translated revive is used in 1 Chron. 11:8 for restoring a city, in Neh. 4:2 for recycling stones from an old ruin to build a new structure, in Neh. 9:6 for sustaining the existence of the universe, in Gen. 19:32 for preserving a family line from extinction, in Exod. 1:17 for keeping people alive amid danger, and Psalm 30:3 for restoring a man from near-fatal illness.

"**us**" – In Ephesians 5:25, Paul writes, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." As Vintage Church we are a local church, a part of those Jesus died to redeem. Therefore we have all confidence and expectation to pray this ancient psalm for ourselves, here and now.

"**again**" – "We see the history of God's people stretching out into a panorama of successive eras of strength and weakness, depending on God's reviving power. A season of spiritual vitality, fueling joyful and daring exploits for the gospel, is followed by fatigue, inertia, and a brittle, unimaginative status quo. A fresh wave of grace then washes over the church, lifting us again into vigorous life and mission. The wave recedes, then rises again, and so on. And Psalm 85 urges on us a certainty that God is committed to keep on reviving his people."

"**that your people**" – "In addition to his great love for us, God has another strong incentive to renew us. We are his people. We bear his name here in the world, to bring greater glory to himself. God has made a huge personal commitment not only to us but also to the display of his own glory before the wondering eyes of created beings. And if we exist here on the stage of history to fulfill this purpose, then God has a reason to keep working with us.He has a reason to lift us up out of our natural dullness into the intensity of joy. We are his people."

"**may rejoice**"- "...here in verse 6 the people of God are appealing to something deep and real in the heart of God. Our Father loves to see his children rejoicing. And their renewed happiness finds a very particular focus."

"**in you?**" - "the revitalized people of God rejoice in him. They come back to the basics. They rediscover God. They become preoccupied with the being, works, and ways of God himself, revealed fully in Jesus Christ. They are captivated by a new fascination. The world's allure fades. The pleasures of sin are seen to be a scam. The people of God go back to him with actual experience that in his presence there is fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore (Ps. 16:11)."

Supporting Scripture Psalm 71:20, Eph. 3:17b–19

When God Comes To Church Chapter Two: "God Reinvigorates Us" & Psalm 85 (Sunday, June 14)

Section 1: Knowing & Understanding

After prayer that God's Spirit would reveal the truth of his Word and soften our hearts to this, read Psalm 85 aloud.

Use these helpful notes from the ESV Study Bible:

"This is a community lament, at a time when God has shown his displeasure over his people's unfaithfulness, perhaps by withholding fruitfulness from the land (v. 1, 12). The people singing this are seeking forgiveness for the whole people ("us"), asking God to show the steadfast love and faithfulness he proclaimed in Ex. 34:6; and because God is righteous (Ps. 85:10–11, 13)—that is, reliable about his promises—the psalm closes with confidence. Exodus 34:6–7 provides the background to this psalm, particularly in the terms "steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ps. 85:10; cf. v. 7, 11) and "forgave iniquity" (v. 2). The Lord explained his "name" to Moses by emphasizing his benevolence, which is where the people's hope lies."

Breakdown of verses (from ESV Study Bible)

- **1–3:** The verbs in this section are all recounting what God has done in the past.
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Helpful paragraph from When God Comes To Church:

"It's like a church beginning to realize, 'We aren't what we used to be. We aren't what we ought to be or want to be. It's been too long since the immediacy of God's presence was a vital reality in our midst. It is time to seek the Lord.' That is the burden of Psalm 85—a good church with a strong past seeking the Lord for a fresh visitation in the present. Even good churches need revival."

Section 2: Evaluating

1. Re-read Psalm 85:1-3. Who is the subject of every verb in verses 1-3, who receives the credit? Taking our cue from Psalm 85, what are examples of God's faithfulness to Vintage Church?

[**Leader's Note:** this should be guided by you according to the make-up of your group. If your group has been together for seven years, it should be easy to tell stories of God's faithfulness to the members of your group and Vintage as a whole. If your group is less than a year old, you may need to focus on specific answered prayers within your group from that time.]

<u>Supporting Scripture</u> Psalm 14:7, 77:7, 32:1, 78:38; Jonah 3:9

2. Re-read Psalm 85:4-7. While verses 1-3 give evidence that God's people have experienced a joy and vibrancy that comes from experiencing God's faithfulness, vs. 4-7 tell us they're not currently in that place. Psalm 85 is not calling them to repent of sin, but instead it's as if they've fallen half-asleep. The people of God find themselves in a place of complacency, of a sleepy, nominal existence as God's people.

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Helpful paragraph from When God Comes To Church:

"What if God always answered our prayers and relieved our distresses quickly? What if God were just a whim away? That kind of fathering produces spoiled brats. God knows when we need to struggle through. Time tests us, and that's good. It deepens us. God has no intention of encouraging superficiality in his children, for God himself is not a superficial person. He loves depth. And the long continuance of his discipline has the power to deliver us from our natural giddiness and set us apart as the very saints of God."

<u>Supporting Scripture</u> Psalm 30:5, 80:3, 79:5, 71:20, 90:14

Section 3: Applying

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Supporting Scripture Psalm 71:20; Eph. 3:17b–19

When God Comes To Church Chapter Two: "God Heals Us" & Hosea 14 (Sunday, June 21)

Section 1: Knowing & Understanding

After prayer that God's Spirit would reveal the truth of his Word and soften our hearts to this, read Hosea 14 aloud.

Theme of Hosea from the ESV Study Bible:

"Hosea depicts Israel's unfaithfulness with a number of images from family and nature. Israel is like: a promiscuous wife, an indifferent mother, an illegitimate child, an ungrateful son, a stubborn heifer, a silly dove, a luxuriant vine, and grapes in the wilderness. Yet Israel's unfaithfulness and obstinacy are not enough to exhaust God's redeeming love that outstrips the human capacity to comprehend.

After laying out a series of 'accusations, warnings, appeals, and enticements for God's people to return,' Hosea writes his closing appeal in chapter 14."

Section 2: Evaluating

Re-read Hosea 14:1-3. Romans 8:1 tells us "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

If this is the case (that Jesus died for our sins), what is repentance and why are we called to repent?

Re-read Hosea 14:4-8, noting God's response to our repentance.

If this is his promise to us, what keeps us from repenting more?

Supporting Scripture Luke 13:3; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 1:9; Acts 3:19, 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 2:5

Section 3: Applying

How can we support and encourage one another in turning from idols and returning to God?

<u>Supporting Scripture</u> Galatians 6:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Luke 17:3; Proverbs 27:17

The Awakening When God Comes To Church Chapter Four & Joel 2:28-32 (Sunday, June 28)

Intro

This passage is the third of three sets of speeches made by God given to Joel to communicate to his people. What makes this set of speeches unique is the movement of the conversation from restoring what has been destroyed to implementing something brand new.

Section 1: Knowing & Understanding

Joel's prophecy is describing the events that will take place in the "last days," both things that were soon to come and things that were far off. This was not intended to be used to calculate the exact day but rather to provoke repentance through the outpouring of God's gracious love for his people.

The Day of the Lord should be a day that all followers joyfully anticipate.

What thoughts and images come into your mind when you think about Jesus' return?

Read Joel 2:18-32 How will God restore his people? What signs will take place before the "great day of the Lord?" (2 Tim. 3:3; Mat. 24:9-14; Luke 21:9-11)

Section 2: Evaluating

God brings change by awakening us to his presence through the outpouring of his Spirit. This allows for both our conversion from spiritual death to spiritual life (salvation) and a lifelong commitment to joining God on his mission to do the same for others.



Re-read today's passage and then read together Jeremiah 31:31–33. This is an opportunity to better understand the gift of salvation as well as our need for it so that our hearts can be stirred to see the same work done throughout our city.

Who will be saved?

Ask everyone to briefly share in their own words and based on their own experiences why salvation was necessary.

Read Acts 2:14-24 & 37-38 together. Who were the ones that were filled with the Spirit? What are evidences in your life to demonstrate the Holy Spirit lives in you?

3. Applying

What have we learned from Joel about the Day of the Lord? How can we prepare for Jesus' return in community? What is one thing we can all commit to today to help prepare our city for Jesus' return?



The Awakening When God Comes To Church Chapter Five & Ezekiel 37: 1-14 (Sunday, July 5)

Intro

Ezekiel's prediction was fulfilled but did that fulfillment exhaust the value of our passage? Does Ezekiel's text now lie dormant on the biblical page as merely a historical artifact? I don't think so! This passage is more than an ancient prediction of an event long past. It declares the eternal ways of God, for what he promises to do here emerges out of his unchanging character. Ezekiel's great burden is not just a particular moment in the history of Israel, but the nature and purpose of God for his people.

1. Knowing & Understanding

Imagination is the vehicle through which faith finds expression allowing us, as Cheryl Forbes says, "to complete the story." We have a profound need to see the conclusion of it all, especially what will come of God's own people. It is impossible for God to tell us the future, so he shows us. But an inspired vision of the end is different from invented endings. Ezekiel's word pictures envision what God will actually do, thereby feeding faith rather than fancy.

When you dream about the future, what brings you the most anxiety and fear? As people began to list their fears and anxieties, encourage them to openly share them with God in prayer. After everyone prays, read Psalm 23 as a source of comfort.

Read both the vision in verses 1-14 and the parable in verses 15-23. **Describe in your own words the future that God portrays in this passage.**



2. Evaluating

God is bearing witness to us through Ezekiel's prophesying and through other Scriptures, that authentic renewal is a ministry of his Word. Not only does the Word preserve us from imitation revival, but it is itself God's primary means of sparking genuine revival. Why? Not because the Bible is a magical book, but because God engages us primarily through our minds and transforms us through new understandings.

What does Ezekiel's response affirm about God's character? What does it reveal about man's weakness?

God breathes life into us through his Word. Read verses 4-6. If God's words are the source of life, why do we avoid it so often?

3. Applying

It is a sheer act of God. True, Ezekiel obeys God's command. But this outcome can be explained only in terms of divine action. The prophet does not create the new life; he only witnesses it and reports it to us. Even so, our confidence is not in ourselves but in God who raises the dead (2 Cor. 1:9). A church may so react against those who highlight the Spirit but neglect the Word that it overreacts by employing the Word only. This is theologically invalid and tactically foolish. What we find in our passage is new life bursting forth as the Word and the Spirit powerfully collaborate. This is the divine strategy, and it works. Whole human forms now stand forth with new life.

What hope does this passage give you of our church and our city?

What are some areas of our personal lives that we would like to see awakened by the Holy Spirit? What are some dead areas of our city that you dream about God taking hold of and bringing to life?



The Awakening When God Comes To Church Chapter Six & Psalm 126 (Sunday, July 12)

Intro

Psalm 126 is woven together into a beautifully coherent whole. The net purpose of the psalm is to encourage God's weary reformers, drawing them into the joys of the coming harvest and sustaining their efforts right now with vivid hope. Psalm 126 affirms the value of our dogged effort, and it lifts our eyes to get a glimpse of the joys of rich divine reward.

1. Knowing & Understanding

Verses 1–3 declare the power of hope. Looking out into their future, the exiles can already taste that moment when God will restore his people to their inheritance. Their spirit of hope transforms how they see themselves in the present.

In your own words, describe the emotions that are illustrated in this psalm.

The second half of the psalm looks to the future. What things does the psalmist expect the future to bring? Are they all good things? Would you describe the tone of this section to be optimistic or pessimistic? Why?

2. Evaluating

Psalm 126 invites us to believe again. It claims that God is able to restore his captive people and do great things for us, replacing our tears with laughter. He promises that our hard sowing will be compensated with abundant reaping

What is the link between joy and sorrow in this psalm? Look at each time joy is mentioned in this passage. What role does God play in each instance? What does this mean in our personal pursuits of joy?



3. Applying

They heap terms on terms to convey something of the fullness and the intensity of joy they know is on its way to them from God. Calvin puts it this way: "[The prophet] describes no ordinary rejoicing, but such as so fills their minds as to constrain them to break forth into extravagance of gesture and of voice."

The Negeb was a group of connected ditches that were dry most of the year except during rainy seasons when the rain would fill the ditches causing flowers of various colors to come alive.

When you read this, what comes to mind? Have you experienced God's blessings in dry seasons? Describe that experience.

How can we use our whole being to respond to the joy that we have in God?

Find a part of the psalm that speaks directly to you. Read it out loud and follow with a prayer of your own.



The Awakening When God Comes To Church Chapter Seven & Joel 2:12-17 (Sunday, July 19)

Intro

In Joel 3:12–17, God gives his people one last chance to avert disaster. It's late in the game, but not too late! A way of escape still remains open, but only by turning in God's direction and repenting. If His people return to him, God will cancel the coming invasion and send blessing instead (verses 18–27). This blessing is so wonderful, and it foreshadows the coming of the Spirit (verses 28–32). What easy terms God offers and what great benefits he promises!

1. Knowing & Understanding

Returning to the Lord is not a brief shot of emotional adrenaline. It means thoughtfully and courageously setting our lives on a new course, and we jettison whatever will impede us in our aim.

How does Joel describe God in verse 13?

In your own words, describe what God requires as a sign of repentance.

2. Evaluating

Joel's prophecy focuses on explaining the coming day of the Lord. It will be a day of judgment and destruction. Joel is warning us to not live in apathy towards God, but to devote our lives to God, repenting of our sins and living for God alone.

Repentance asks, "How can I lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him?" (Colossians 1:10). In Joel 2:12–14, what hope does God give and why? How do verses 12–17 help us to comprehend repentance? What does God promise to those who repent?



3. Applying

The great encouraging force propelling us forward in the way of repentance is God's own nature. He is merciful to the very depths of his being.

Joel 2:12 say's "return to me with all your heart." How does a person return to God with all of his or her heart? How does the church return to God?



The Awakening When God Comes To Church Chapter Eight & 2 Chron. 15:1-4 (Sunday, July 26)

Intro

2 Chronicles calls us to follow again the course that made the church great at her greatest moments in the past. It instructs us to seek God through worship and prayer, obey his Word courageously, and advance boldly against opposition to see his cause triumph.

1. Knowing & Understanding

Obedience to God's word is a shared commitment. It isn't the sole domain of the pastor, but an equally shared responsibility by all.

What example proves Azariah's opening statement in verse 2 that "the Lord is with you when you are with him?"

What is the main point that God, through Azariah, is trying to make?

2. Evaluating

True seeking is more than a devotional feeling. It includes that, for it engages "all your heart." But it is more. True seeking is a morally cleansing power touching all of life. But faith is a mentality that seeks God. By our seeking we are declaring to God, "Nothing I can do establishes, secures, or maintains my position in your favor. Christ alone is my legitimacy before you. But you are calling me through Christ to turn away from my own poverty and live and labor out of the vastness of your all-sufficiency, and I want to answer your call with all my heart."

What does it mean for the Lord to be with you and what are some of the natural outcomes of his presence in our lives?

What information does this prophecy give us about what God expects from his people?



3. Applying

The promise of his presence is glorious. The threat of his absence is ominous. How we respond in our generation will show either how real or how theoretical God is to us, how precious or how incidental he is to us.

What are some ways you can commit to intentionally seek the Lord:

- In your obedience to God's Word (2 Chronicles 14:4)?
- In turning away from evil (2 Chronicles 15:8, 16)?
- In trusting in the Lord (2 Chronicles 14:11)?
- In your commitment to worship (2 Chronicles 15:8-18)?



The Awakening When God Comes To Church Chapter Nine & Isaiah 57:14-16 (Sunday, August 2)

Intro

Isaiah 57 is a response to Israel's depravity and idolatry highlighted in Isaiah 56:9-12. In Isaiah 57:14–16 the prophet reveals one of the secrets of heaven. To whom does God draw near with renewing mercies? Not to the proud, the self-admiring, the self-centered. They have their reward—the idol, with its harsh demands and bitter miseries. But our God draws near to "him who is contrite and lowly in spirit."

1. Knowing & Understanding

Isaiah 57:3–13 illustrates the ugly moral chaos dominating the world as it is now, reminding us that evil can charm the fancies even of the people of God. We create our own impediments, making our progress in the ways of God the more difficult. But that does not stop our Lord. Read verses 1–13.

What are some of the obstructions that block our path to God?

2. Evaluating

The high and lofty One comes down to live with, abide with, linger with the crushed and lowly of spirit. In verse 19 God calls them "mourners." These are the ones whom God favors. He regards them as his intimates. He draws near with reviving mercies. God has a special place in his heart for the very ones who feel their sinfulness most keenly. How different God is from earthly rulers and worldly celebrities! What does this passage say about God and his relationship to his people? How are the wicked different from God's disobedient but chosen ones?



3. Applying

This passage is both an announcement of what is to come (repentance and conversions) and a to-do list for preparing for what is to come (the removal of obstacles).

When you think of your neighbors, unbelieving relatives, or co-workers, what are some of the obstacles that may be keeping them from God?

What steps can you take to join God on mission to help remove some of those obstacles?

