

Icebreaker:

Judah is described as a rebellious nation. Did you ever rebel against your parents? Curfew? Car? Boyfriend or girlfriend? If you have children, have your children rebelled against you?

1. Prophets were often despised because they shed light on those things that did not reflect God's kingdom. Can you recall a time when someone told you something that you knew was true (immediately or in time) but initially just made you angry at them?
2. When you stray from God, is your impression that God is mad at you, or that God is sad at you? If you tend to see God as being mad, does seeing God as sad change your perspective?
3. God is suffering at the rebellion of his people. If you have parented, been a coach/teacher, or been an employer, have you suffered the rebellion of others against you? What was that like?
4. The Lord says in verse 11, "I have had enough" of the people's sacrifices, and God does not delight in the sacrifices. What does this say about God and the people of Judah and Jerusalem? Does it say anything about what we bring to God today?
5. In verse 17, Isaiah says to "seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." How does ZPC do as a church body (or we as individuals or families) in these areas? What are current situations in our community and world where ZPC might seek to do justice? What are the risks involved in seeking justice?
6. Read Isaiah 1:18-20 in the NRSV. What is the relationship between our arguing with the LORD and our sins becoming snow-white? Do you ever argue with God? What often results from such arguments?

Homework:

Find someone this week who does not have power (i.e. an immigrant or homeless person) and listen to their story. What did you learn?

Prayer:

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

prayer requests

> Prayers of healing for Loretta Bowsher.

[The following are from ZPC's prayer calendar, which is available at the Welcome Center or at zpc.org/prayer.]

- > Pray for our facilities team to be fruitful in providing for the needs of our church and its physical structures.
- > Pray for the Spain Mission Team as they spread the Gospel and strengthen the relationships they have in Spain.

God, through the Prophet Isaiah, immediately laments that his children have rebelled against him. We probably have all experienced when people rebelled against us. We are all guilty of sin, rebelling against God. God is a loving parent, who desires good for his children. God is a disappointed parent here in the passage, wanting his rebellious children to return to him. God calls on his people including us, to seek justice, and to care for the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow. Will we turn our hearts to God and answer his call to seek justice?

1. Most Old Testament prophets experienced rejection and even had their lives threatened. God's goal in utilizing the mouths of prophets is most often to have his people to return to him. When has someone spoken prophetic truth to you, that initially made you angry, but you saw as truth? God is a God of truth and love.
2. People often see God as an angry God. God expresses anger, but often expresses sadness that his people have gone astray. Seeing God as a parent who is sad may help us to see God as a parent who loves us, all his children, and simply wants what is best for us.
3. When someone is in leadership, that person often experiences pushback, criticism, and rebellion. God suffered rebellion. If you have suffered rebellion, does that give you sympathy for how God might feel?
4. The people stretch out their hands in worship but their hands have blood on them (verse 15). Their sacrifices are no good because they have rebelled in sin. God is a holy God who wants his people to follow, and provides a way of forgiveness and desires faith with action. We need to bring our contrite hearts before God (Psalm 51:16-17) and to live out our faith with acts of meekness, service and justice.
5. Isaiah lists traditional ways we might serve those who are powerless. How is ZPC doing with these and how do you do with this call? At ZPC, we might help in areas like Str8up ministry, with Jeremiah House, with homeless families at IHN or other areas in your communities. We risk having to change the ways we think and see others, and we risk having to humble ourselves to be with others who aren't like us.
6. Some scholars feel the word "argue" here is like two parties in a trial or legal setting. The ultimate decision is that we are guilty of sin and must be forgiven to be washed clean of our scarlet sins. We may argue with God. The result will be that God will win. God is God, we are not. God is a loving God who desires for us to come to him crying out humbly for forgiveness and salvation; and God can and will give that to us!

Homework:

Encourage or challenge your group members to talk to someone who is not in power and learn from their experience. Report back to your group next week what you learned.