



## Growth Group Discussion Questions

### 8. Take note of the goodness and severity of God

#### Read Isaiah 64:1-9

1. Evil seems to carry on unchecked. Violence, exploitation, pain, suffering just carry on and it looks like God does nothing. Both Christians and not-yet Christians feel this frustration. **Discuss what different attitudes to God's perceived 'inactivity' might be. Hint: see Luke 18:1-8**
2. Isaiah's confidence in pleading with God to do something is based on God's past performance. **What event(s) in history does verse 3 primarily refer to?**
3. **Following on from question 2, and looking closely at verse 4, what precedent do Christians have to firmly trust that God will act for His people? Hint: see 1 Corinthians 2:8-10**
4. We think sin is a bit of a joke really. Sure, some sins are serious – the ones we don't like. But overall, sin is not that big-a-deal. **Spend some time discussing the sense of the depravity of sin as described by Isaiah in verse 4b-7 in some of the graphic images he uses.**
5. All this brings us to the riddle in the passage. **In your own words describe the dilemma that arises when sinners ask God to come down and sort out the mess in the world.**
6. God is a Beautiful Righteous Judge who will sort all evil out. **How else is God described by Isaiah in verse 8-9? What does Isaiah ask God for?**
7. **In your own words, explain to someone how God can be both perfectly just and at the same time forgive someone who approaches Him and asks for forgiveness? Hint: see Romans 3:26**
8. Putting it all together, we must be careful not to 'play God's perfections off against each other'. Generally speaking, the liberals make God's love triumph over His justice. Legalists prefer His justice to His love. But those who understand what Jesus did on the cross – love and mercy kiss each other. **What then should our attitude to God be according to Romans 11:22?**

## Leaders Notes

This is the last study for the year. My heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to God for everyone of our Growth Group leaders who have 'shepherded the flock of God that is among you' (1 Peter 5:2). Thank you for your love of Jesus Christ as evidenced in your care for His people. As He said, "If you love me, feed my sheep." Thank you.

1. The aim of this question is to get people to see and express that all people are frustrated with the brokenness of the planet. However, the massive difference between those who have faith and those who don't will be seen in their different attitudes to God. For the not-yet Christian the suffering in the world leads to further anger with God; even more rebellion; even more accusing; and even to a dogged determination to believe that God does not exist. Most atheists trace the roots of their faith (because Atheism is a faith like any other) to an inability to deal with the suffering in the world. By contrast, the Christian also feels the pain and frustration. But we wait for God. We are driven in frustration closer to God. Like Isaiah, to plead with Him and to wait for Him to act and above all else, to trust that one glorious day He will act. And we trust His character – He obviously has very good reason to delay. In essence, in the face of awful injustice in the world, some run from God and some run to God.
2. Of course this is the only ground to trust God – His past track record. Verse 3 refers to the history of Israel when God 'came down' and rescued His people from the most awful injustice and cruelty in Egypt. The remarkable thing is that God's people 'did not look for' these things! They had no precedent.
3. If Isaiah had confidence to plead with God to 'come down' because of what He did in the Exodus, how much more can Christians plead with God because of what He did on the cross! Talk about come down! Isaiah didn't know exactly what God had in mind when he begged God to deal with sin – as verse 4 says – but we now do know. And what confidence we can have that evil will be finally dealt with!
4. This is up to the GG to grasp a sense of the heinousness of sin. The truth is, sin is an absolute disgrace. It is disgusting that a human being endowed with such glory and splendour being made in the image of God, should debase himself by sinning against God. Sin gives true meaning to the word 'ugly'.
5. As a great preacher once said, 'If you ask God to come take out the trash, make sure you're not trash.'
6. God is the 'LORD'. This is His covenant title. The God who makes promises and keeps promises. More than promises, covenant. This is the God who enters into marriage with His people. God is the 'Father'. The One who creates His people. He has a responsibility to look after them and protect them. (and discipline them). God is the 'Potter'. He shapes His people as He decides best. All of these things give us wonderful invitation to approach Him and ask Him to forgive us.
7. The key thing is that Someone else will have to bear the penalty for sin thus ensuring that justice is carried out. Jesus Christ did this for us when He died on the cross. This means that God is perfectly just and at the same time, just to justify us when we trust in Jesus and what He did on the cross.
8. See, worship and adore God for all of His perfections. And make sure that we run to the cross and cling to the cross so that we receive goodness from God and not severity. Severity and dreadful judgement will be for all those who despise the cross by either ignoring it, or diminishing it by thinking of it as only an example of love rather than the divine transaction whereby Christ suffered the punishment we deserve so that may receive God's infinite mercy and grace.