

# MISSION I'M POSSIBLE

## *The Isaiah Protocol !*

*Coming to a House Group near you!*

*Not in a House Group? Call the Office . . .*

## **MISSION I'M POSSIBLE**

### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this series is to share God's message through the book of the prophet Isaiah: "**Fresh Vision, Renewed Mission**" drawing on presentations by Bishop Rennis Ponniah of Singapore delivered at the Common Life Mission Conference, Waikanae, New Zealand, 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011.

Through a **fresh vision of God** we are able to resist the temptation to give up on God or to retreat into a safe ghetto mentality. In fact, a fresh vision of God moves us to enter with renewed energy, zeal, and realism into the mission of God in God's world.

A **fresh vision of the Church** helps us to resist the temptation to give up on the Church or to make the Church into a vehicle of sociological change which deals only in the methods and mind-set of the world. A fresh vision of the Church reveals what needs to be done, the appropriate attitude that honours God and the source of power with which to do it.

A **fresh vision of the times** reminds us who we are, whose we are, and what we are about because of that. Vision implies perspective – and we have two choices: to adopt the perspective of the world; or to adopt the perspective of God. With Moses, we want to encourage all to "*Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life . . .*" (Deuteronomy 30: 19–20).

A fresh vision reminds us that we are people of hope because of who God is and what God has accomplished in Jesus. This sets us free to trust God; to serve God in His strength; to be faithful and to pay the price; to live as people of the light; to know what we are doing and why; to live now in the light of God's assured and coming future.

## **Outline:**

This series runs over three weeks, with the following themes:

- A Fresh vision of God (Is. 6) – 30<sup>th</sup> Oct
- A Fresh vision of the Church (Is. 42: 1–9) – 6<sup>th</sup> Nov
- A Fresh vision of the Times (Is 60: 1–22) – 13<sup>th</sup> Nov

Week 3 may present some challenges because it picks up themes we don't often reflect on. The hand-out at the service will have some resources that may be useful as people wrestle with the questions.

## **Background to the book of Isaiah:**

Isaiah's ministry takes place in a time marked by political turmoil and uncertainty. It is a time in which the states of Israel (the 10 northern tribes) and Judah (the 2 southern tribes) experienced the destabilising power of the super powers of their time – Assyria and Babylon. They found themselves caught up in the power play between these northern military super powers and their southern enemy, a former super power, Egypt.

Isaiah challenges the common accepted wisdom of the “man in the street” that while it is smart to have a god you can rely on, the really savvy people also have a keen sense of power politics and when to rise up in rebellion against a super power that doesn't look so super any more. In all of this, the pragmatic calculations of human beings are counted as superior to God's view of affairs. It is this attitude that Isaiah opposes. He sets out God's view of matters which explains very clearly that the way people live out God's covenant affects their future and that God can “write straight with crooked lines”. Human beings find this very hard to accept and try again and again to do it “their way”.

Isaiah's vision happens at a crucial point in Judah's history. Uzziah had started out as a good king who built up the nation and was faithful to God. As he prospered, he grew proud and crossed the line between duties God had assigned him and the duties of the temple priests. Here we revisit “Adam's sin” if you like – the human temptation to see if God is as serious about this thing as God says. Uzziah is punished with leprosy which makes him ritually unclean and an outcast – so he spends the rest of his life isolated while his son reigns in his stead. When Uzziah dies, the whole succession debate erupts and as assassination was a fairly common way of sorting out the succession question and it wasn't a foregone conclusion that the “good guys” would win, matters are on a knife edge.

The neighbouring state of Israel is plotting with Damascus to revolt against Assyria and when Judah turns down an offer to join them, they decide to force Judah to “join” them. Humanly speaking this reads rather like our newspapers, until we see Isaiah speaking out in God's name “Thus sayeth the Lord . . .” The prophet challenges us today every bit as much as he challenged the people of his own day. In times of turbulence the similarities can seem forced, but the point to remember is that the prophet is challenging the basic human attitude to God being God and as such, reigning and not humankind.

## **Week 1:**

### **Isaiah 6**

#### **Opener:**

Share with the group an early memory you have of when you first 'sinned'. **(7 Minutes)**

#### **To-Do:**

- Have one person read aloud Isaiah 6 very slowly, while the rest close their eyes. Share with the group what emotions were stirred up when this passage was read. **(10 Minutes)**

#### **Discussion:**

- Read 2 Chronicles 26: 16–21. In the light of how the Bible treats leprosy, what could be the connection between holiness and leprosy? **(5 Minutes)**
- What is the progression of this text, and what do you think it means for us today? **(5 Minutes)**
- Finish the sentence: "Holiness is..." **(5 Minutes)**
- So many people have a negative image of the word **holiness**; how can Christians be a reflection of God's holiness in such a manner that would draw people to God? **(10 Minutes)**

#### **Application:**

- What practical thing can you do in the next week to align your living with this text? **(7 Minutes)**
- Meditate on the following passage(s) during the week:
  - a. 2 Corinthians 4: 1–6
  - b. Colossians 1: 11–20
  - c. Hebrews 1: 1–4
  - d. Revelation chapters 4 — 5 **(During the week)**

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Choose one of the following to do as a group:

- Spend time in quiet, asking God for a fresh revelation of Him.

#### **OR**

- Pray for the person on your left/right, asking God for a fresh revelation of Him during this week. **(10 Minutes)**

Notes

## **Week 2:**

### **Isaiah 42**

#### **Opener:**

Share with the group what your favourite colour is, and what it reminds you of. **(7 Minutes)**

#### **To-Do:**

- Have somebody in the group read Isaiah 42: 1–9. **(10 Minutes)**

#### **Discussion:**

- What is your understanding of the function of a priest? What other word could we use to convey the same function?
- What do you think Isaiah means by describing people as having “eyes that are blind” (v7)?
- Isaiah describes the world to be reached. How do you feel about sharing the “good news” that you have received to help the blind to see?
- In view of the commission to be “a light for the nations” (v.6), how can St Luke’s better shine that light in its given community?
- Once a quarter St. Luke’s has a time of “Holy Spirit Refreshing” to re-energise followers of Jesus. How could this help to sustain you in being a light?

**(Total of 25 Minutes)**

#### **Application:**

- List the names of five people who are not yet followers of Jesus, and spend this week praying for them. **(8 Minutes)**
- Christians see Jesus as fulfilling the ministry of the “Suffering Servant” – as a follower of Jesus, how do you reflect the ministry of your master? **(During the week)**

#### **Closing Prayer:**

- Spend some time in silence, inviting God to give you a greater heart for the blind world all around us. **(10 Minutes)**
- Close by praying the Grace together (**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .**).

Notes

## **Week 3:**

### **Isaiah 60**

#### **Opener:**

Share with the group what your dream job was when you were growing up. **(7 Minutes)**

#### **To-Do:**

- Have somebody in the group read Isaiah 60: 1–22 aloud. **(10 Minutes)**

#### **Discussion:**

- What does the Bible mean when it contrasts light and darkness? See verses 1-2; 19-20.
- Even though the kingdom of God is now, Christians will still face hardships because of their faith. How do you feel about that?
- The world sees God’s glory and our suffering as contradictory and mutually exclusive. Why can followers of Jesus yet find joy in this apparent contradiction but very real tension?
- How can the promise of future glory motivate us as Christians?

**(Total of 25 Minutes)**

#### **Application:**

- ***“Christians are to be engaged in renewing the face of the earth until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** Do you agree? If so, what specific commitment can you make to be an agent of transformation? **(10 Minutes)**
- ***“Christians can live confidently in the present in the light of God’s assured future.”***
- Make plans as a group to attend next week’s “Time of Holy Spirit Refreshing” (starting time: 19:00).
- Think about how God might be calling you to “arise and shine” for Him in your life today. **(During the week)**

#### **Closing Prayer:**

- Share with the group if you have experienced any hardships because of your faith. Spend the time as a group praying for one another in this area, asking God for the healing of wounds received, and courage to keep standing for Jesus. (cf. Acts 4: 29–35). **(8 Minutes)**

Notes