

Vision 2005

The City—We have a strong City

10.2.05 | Isaiah 25:6-26:6

INTRODUCTION 10 minutes

Spend some time with everyone answering one or two questions:
Where were you living at age 7? How many people were in your household?
What is one of the better things that happened to you this week?

WORSHIP 20 minutes

Read these verses from Psalm 84 together. The Psalm describes the psalmist's heart of worship, but it also give reasons why God is worthy of worship. How is God described in these verses? What are some of the praiseworthy qualities of God described in this Psalm?

Psalm 84 (NIV)

- ¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD Almighty!
- ² My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.
- ³ Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young—
a place near your altar,
O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
- ⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.
- ⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
- ⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
- ⁷ They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.
- ⁸ Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, O God of Jacob.
- ⁹ Look upon our shield, O God;
look with favor on your anointed one.
- ¹⁰ Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the
house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
- ¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.
- ¹² O LORD Almighty,
blessed is the man who trusts in you.

Spend a moment in prayer together celebrating God's character and the way it has influenced your life.

Isaiah 25:6-26:6 (NIV)

⁶ On this mountain the LORD Almighty
will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷ On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe
away the tears from all faces;
he will remove the disgrace of his people
from all the earth.
The LORD has spoken.

⁹ In that day they will say,

“Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

¹⁰ The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain;
but Moab will be trampled under him
as straw is trampled down in the manure.

¹¹ They will spread out their hands in it,
as a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim.
God will bring down their pride
despite the cleverness of their hands.

¹² He will bring down your high fortified walls
and lay them low;
he will bring them down to the ground,
to the very dust.

^{26:1} In that day this song will be
sung in the land of Judah:

We have a strong city;
God makes salvation
its walls and ramparts.

² Open the gates
that the righteous nation may enter,
the nation that keeps faith.

³ You will keep in perfect peace
him whose mind is steadfast,
because he trusts in you.

⁴ Trust in the LORD forever,
for the LORD, the LORD,
is the Rock eternal.

⁵ He humbles those who dwell on high,
he lays the lofty city low;
he levels it to the ground
and casts it down to the dust.

⁶ Feet trample it down—
the feet of the oppressed,
the footsteps of the poor.

STUDY & DISCUSSION 40 minutes

One of the most basic human instincts described in the earliest chapters of the Bible is the desire to build cities. Many of the forefathers of Abraham described in Genesis 11 would later have cities named after them. In fact, the vision of heaven in the book of Revelation is that of an urban community.

Isaiah also sees the history of the world as an urban history. In particular, he helps us to understand that the story of the world is a "tale of two cities." On the one hand, there is a "city of man" built on the values of self-promotion, pride, and arrogance, which leads to oppression, exhaustion, and cruelty. On the other hand, there is a "city of God" that is a strong city based on self-donation for others and love for God, and therefore this human society is one of joy, justice, reconciliation, and hope. Our calling as the church is to live out and spread the values and transforming influence of the strong heavenly city amidst our fragile earthly one.

- 1. Verses 6-9 use very vivid language to describe the mountain-city of God. What do you think some of these metaphors mean? What do they suggest about the promised city?**
- 2. Verse 9 in particular describes something of the character of God and the response of the people of God. What does verse 9 indicate about God's character and how people react to it?**
- 3. Verses 1-6 describe a bit more about the character of God and His city. What is the source of strength in the city? What are the other characteristics of the city itself?**
- 4. What can you tell about the character of city-dwellers according to Isaiah? What are the people in the city like?**
- 5. How can we embody the heavenly urban ethic here in New York City? The New Testament speaks about the fact that in Jesus Christ, the urban heavenly kingdom has come. If that's the case, what do you think are the implications for how we face and engage the city around us?'**

DIRECTED PRAYER 20 minutes

- 1. Pray for something here in New York that is in the need of healing, perhaps an institution or a cultural value. (e.g. poverty, racism, economic oppression, etc.)**
- 2. Pray that leaders at Redeemer might think creatively and proactively about how our church can be a part of healing broken realities in New York. (e.g. racism, etc.)**
- 3. Lastly, pray that as individuals and as members of Redeemer, you and the others in your Vision Group might actively contribute to healing our broken earthly city by showing the hope and joy of our heavenly strong city.**

ACTIVITY

On your way home, whether by subway or foot or car, each individual in your group will go on a “prayer walk.” In other words, there will be things, people, and places you’ll pass on the way home that are in the need of prayer. Before you leave, share with your group one thing that you’ll pray about on your way home that relates specifically to a broken reality in New York.

Next Week—A Suggestion: Instead of your regular meeting, plan to eat dinner together (it can be as simple as pizza or PB&J or ordering in). Do the entire discussion, etc. over dinner together.

Vision Paper #2—The City: Why We’re Here

As a follow-up to each study, we invite you to read one Vision Paper every week following your small group meeting. These have been written by Tim Keller to explain in more detail how the biblical aspect of the vision each week is fleshed out in the life of Redeemer. Each paper can be accessed at www.redeemer.com—follow the Vision Campaign link.