



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Deaf Personal Study Guide



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... of the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 7:16-18).
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... sion of a restored remnant, Achor was a
... perous place. See Hos. 2:15 for a simi-
... "Achor" in a positive prophetic context.

... ch. 66:4;
... on. 36:15-
... Prov. 1:24,
... Jer. 7:13;
... Zech. 7:7; Matt.
... 21:34-43
... Matt.
... 8:12; Luke 13:28
... See Jer.
... 29:22; Zech.
... 8:13
... 4:22
... ch. 62:2; Acts
... 11:26
... Ps.
... 72:17; Jer. 4:2
... ch. 19:18; 43:23;
... Deut. 4:13; Ps.
... 63:11; Zeph. 1:5

U N D E R S T A N D

E X P L O R E

A P P L Y

Isaiah



JESUS

Seven centuries before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah described Him in detail. Isaiah wrote about one who would be “despised and rejected by men” (Isa. 53:3), “pierced because of our rebellion,” and “crushed because of our iniquities” (v. 5). The one of whom Isaiah prophesied would die not as a martyr but as our substitute, “for the iniquity of us all” (v. 6). In other words, He would suffer the punishment that we deserve for our sins and suffer judgment in our place. He would do so willingly to provide the way of salvation for sinful people.

Jesus was no afterthought of God nor a “Plan B.” God made a plan for our salvation even before the foundation of the world and predicted it clearly through the prophet Isaiah. This salvation, however, is not automatic. Only the one who “calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic emphasis

MEET THE WRITER

Jeremy Parks grew up near Houston, Texas. Just like his father before him, he was born hearing but began losing his hearing as a young person. Now as an adult, Jeremy is Deaf. Jeremy grew up in church and learned God's Word from his parents. When he was about ten years old, he accepted Christ as Lord and Savior as a result of VBS. During his teenage years, he grew apart from God but as a 22 year old struggling in a new marriage, he and his wife both turned to God for help. She became a Christian and he returned to the faith he found as a child. Since then he has sought to serve God faithfully. Following Christ has led Jeremy and his wife to serve the Lord in many different ways and places. Jeremy has been writing for Lifeway for many years.

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Explore the Bible Deaf

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Send questions/comments to
Explore the Bible: DEAF
Nashville, TN 37234
By email to
explorethebible@lifeway.com

FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

In Acts 8, we find Philip's encounter with an Ethiopian official. As Philip approached the official, he heard the man reading from Isaiah, so Philip asked the official if he understood what he was reading. The official replied that he needed a guide.

Isaiah had told many years before of One who would be pierced and crushed for our sin so that we could be healed by His wounds (Isa. 53:5). The healing would be required because of sin. Isaiah pointed to a coming judgment against the Israelites because of that sin and the salvation God would provide to those who repented. That repentance would not come until after the Israelites were led away as captives. The exile was more than judgment; it was purposeful discipline designed to help people understand their need for God. That realization would lead to repentance and a restored relationship with God.

The Book of Isaiah is filled with insights about the nature of God and our relationship with Him. Part of this relationship includes the promise of God reconciling His people to Himself. The message of Isaiah continues to be echoed today. We are sinners facing sure judgment. The sovereign God disciplines us with a view toward repentance and relationship with Him through faith in His Son.

As we study the Book of Isaiah, we pray that each of us will discover the truth found by the Ethiopian official: we are sinners in need of God's forgiveness which is found only through the sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son.

Humbly,

Dwayne McCrary



INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

Isaiah was born around 760 BC and served as a prophet for 40 years. His career covered the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Much of the book is in poetry form. Bible teachers believe Isaiah's poetry is some of the best in the entire Bible. Isaiah says little about himself in the Book of Isaiah. There are some verses about him in 2 Kings.

The prophet Isaiah wrote the Book of Isaiah. Some Bible teachers think others helped him in later years. They say that the events in the Book of Isaiah cover over 100 years, and Isaiah could not have written for that long. However, New Testament writers quoted from the book. They said Isaiah is the one who wrote the words. Also, the Dead Sea Scrolls had a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah from around 200 BC. The scroll did not show any author other than Isaiah.

We must remember that Isaiah wrote the words of God for the people. God knows everything before it happens. If we can accept that Isaiah wrote prophecy about Christ, we can also accept that the later chapters are from Isaiah. He was not alive when those events happened, but God showed the events to him.

Isaiah wrote the Book of Isaiah for the Jewish people. Isaiah wrote to warn them of God's frustration and anger at their sins. The book has three parts. There is a time of warning about armies which would destroy the nation. Second, Isaiah calls the people to repent and turn back to God. Third, Isaiah predicts a time when the Jews will come back to Israel. God will restore them to a right relationship with Himself.

Many in church history have called the Book of Isaiah "The Fifth Gospel." Isaiah wrote more about the coming Christ than any other Old Testament writer. He predicted the virgin birth, the rejection of Christ, His death, and even His resurrection. The major themes in the book include God's sovereignty, God's holiness, human sin, human faith in God, and the coming Messiah.

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH

- I.** Rebuke and Promise from the Lord (1:1–6:13)
- II.** The Promise of Immanuel (7:1–12:6)
- III.** Coming Judgment upon the Nations (13:1–23:18)
- IV.** First Cycle of General Judgment and Promise (24:1–27:13)
- V.** Woes upon the Unbelievers of Israel (28:1–33:24)
- VI.** Second Cycle of General Judgment and Promise (34:1–39:8)
- VII.** The Greatness of God (40:1–48:22)
- VIII.** Peace Brought by the Servant-Messiah (49:1–57:21)
- IX.** The Program of Peace (58:1–66:24)



ON THE COVER

Miniature column base in the form of a human-headed winged animal, probably a part of a piece of furniture; Assyrian, 7th century BC, from Nineveh. The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of winged, angelic beings (seraphim) attending God's throne and offering praises to Him (Isa. 6:2).

WORD LIST

Assyria—The nation to the east of Israel that totally defeated Israel in 722 BC. Assyria was in the same location as present-day Iran.

Babylon—The nation that is directly east from Judah that totally defeated Judah in 586 BC. Babylon was in the same location as present-day Iraq.

Canaanite Wars—Canaan is the name of the area where the Israelites settled. They renamed the area Israel. The Canaanite wars were various wars the Israelites fought as they settled the land. Canaan is about the same area as what is today called Palestine or Israel.

Discipline—means to correct wrong behavior; God often disciplines His children so they will do right. God’s discipline can be very severe.

Drought—a long period of time without rain; the Middle East often has long times without rain, and this can cause crop failure and famine.

Fallen humanity—Humans have all sinned and have wandered (or fallen) away from God.

Glory—to give or to have high honor; God’s glory is so absolute that it appears as a shining presence

Hebrew poetry—the Jewish people had their own kind of poetry. Instead of rhyming words it rhymed ideas.

Judah—The southern Jewish kingdom after Israel divided into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon.

Justify—In Christian thought, this means for God to label people as innocent of all sins. He does this through Christ’s work on the cross but only for those who respond in faith in Jesus.

Nebuchadnezzar—the king of Babylon when that nation defeated Judah; the final defeat was in 586 BC

Nineveh—the capital city of ancient Assyria

Pagan—a person who does not follow the true God

Pharisees—a sect of the Jewish faith that was important during the life of Christ; Pharisees very carefully kept all the Old Testament law.

Prophets—people who had the spiritual gift to both tell the word of God to the people and tell the people about the future; the prophets also represented the people to God.

Repentance—to turn away from sin and to turn toward God thus obeying God

Righteousness—It can mean to do right. In the Bible it often means to have a right relationship with God.

Ritual—something people do repeatedly in their religious practices; a ritual can easily take the place of truly meeting God in worship

Seraphim—the living creatures Isaiah saw in heaven; many people think they are a type of angelic being.

Sovereign—one in control; a ruler; God is sovereign over all things

Trial—difficult time period or experience

Trinity—The Trinity is God in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one being (God).

BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- 1. Isaiah 1:1-15
- 2. Isaiah 1:16-31
- 3. Isaiah 2:1-11
- 4. Isaiah 2:12-22
- 5. Isaiah 3:1-15
- 6. Isaiah 3:16-26
- 7. Isaiah 4:1-5:7
- 8. Isaiah 5:8-30
- 9. Isaiah 6:1-13
- 10. Isaiah 7:1-19
- 11. Isaiah 7:20-8:10
- 12. Isaiah 8:11-22
- 13. Isaiah 9:1-21
- 14. Isaiah 10:1-19
- 15. Isaiah 10:20-34
- 16. Isaiah 11:1-16
- 17. Isaiah 12:1-6
- 18. Isaiah 13:1-22
- 19. Isaiah 14:1-23
- 20. Isaiah 14:24-32
- 21. Isaiah 15:1-9
- 22. Isaiah 16:1-14
- 23. Isaiah 17:1-14
- 24. Isaiah 18:1-7
- 25. Isaiah 19:1-15
- 26. Isaiah 19:16-20:6
- 27. Isaiah 21:1-17
- 28. Isaiah 22:1-14
- 29. Isaiah 22:15-25
- 30. Isaiah 23:1-18

MONTH 2

- 1. Isaiah 24:1-15
- 2. Isaiah 24:16-23
- 3. Isaiah 25:1-12
- 4. Isaiah 26:1-13
- 5. Isaiah 26:14-21
- 6. Isaiah 27:1-13
- 7. Isaiah 28:1-13
- 8. Isaiah 28:14-29
- 9. Isaiah 29:1-14
- 10. Isaiah 29:15-24
- 11. Isaiah 30:1-17
- 12. Isaiah 30:18-33
- 13. Isaiah 31:1-9
- 14. Isaiah 32:1-20
- 15. Isaiah 33:1-16
- 16. Isaiah 33:17-24
- 17. Isaiah 34:1-17
- 18. Isaiah 35:1-10
- 19. Isaiah 36:1-22
- 20. Isaiah 37:1-20
- 21. Isaiah 37:21-38
- 22. Isaiah 38:1-14
- 23. Isaiah 38:15-22
- 24. Isaiah 39:1-8
- 25. Isaiah 40:1-17
- 26. Isaiah 40:18-31
- 27. Isaiah 41:1-10
- 28. Isaiah 41:11-29
- 29. Isaiah 42:1-13
- 30. Isaiah 42:14-25
- 31. Isaiah 43:1-13

MONTH 3

- 1. Isaiah 43:14-28
- 2. Isaiah 44:1-20
- 3. Isaiah 44:21-28
- 4. Isaiah 45:1-13
- 5. Isaiah 45:14-25
- 6. Isaiah 46:1-13
- 7. Isaiah 47:1-15
- 8. Isaiah 48:1-22
- 9. Isaiah 49:1-13
- 10. Isaiah 49:14-26
- 11. Isaiah 50:1-11
- 12. Isaiah 51:1-11
- 13. Isaiah 51:12-23
- 14. Isaiah 52:1-15
- 15. Isaiah 53:1-12
- 16. Isaiah 54:1-17
- 17. Isaiah 55:1-13
- 18. Isaiah 56:1-12
- 19. Isaiah 57:1-21
- 20. Isaiah 58:1-14
- 21. Isaiah 59:1-21
- 22. Isaiah 60:1-22
- 23. Isaiah 61:1-11
- 24. Isaiah 62:1-12
- 25. Isaiah 63:1-19
- 26. Isaiah 64:1-12
- 27. Isaiah 65:1-16
- 28. Isaiah 65:17-25
- 29. Isaiah 66:1-13
- 30. Isaiah 66:14-24



God Confronts

God confronts His people about the consequences of their actions.

ISAIAH 1:10-20

God created all things, and He established standards and guides for people. When we obey God in our lives, we can expect His blessing and protection. When we live in sin, we should expect God to judge us. God is Lord and King and Judge, and He is the only one who can truly judge all people.

What would you do if you knew God was going to punish your friend for his sin? Would you tell him? Suppose God was planning to punish an entire city or state full of sinful people. Could you preach to them and beg them to return to God? In the ancient country of Judah, Isaiah received a message from God. He was finished waiting for His people to stop sinning and to return to Him. In today's lesson, we will study why God planned to punish His people. We will see their sins, and will learn what God expects from true followers.

ISAIAH 1:10-20

10 Jerusalem, **A** your rulers are like those of Sodom, and your people are like those of **Gomorrah.** **B** Hear the word of the LORD; listen to the teaching of our God! **11** The LChaparral Pro says, “I do not want all these sacrifices. I have had enough of your burnt sacrifices of male sheep and fat from fine animals. I am not pleased by the **blood of bulls, lambs, and goat.** **C** **12** You come to meet with me, but who asked you to do all this **running in and out** **D** of my Temple’s rooms? **13** Don’t continue bringing me worthless sacrifices! I hate the incense you burn. I can’t stand your **New Moons, Sabbaths, and other feast days;** **E** I can’t stand the evil you do in your holy meetings. **14** I hate your New Moon feasts and your other yearly feasts. They have become a heavy weight on me, and I am tired of carrying it. **15** When you raise your arms to me in prayer, I will refuse to look at you. Even if you say many prayers, I will not listen to you, because your **hands are full of blood.** **F** **16** Wash yourselves and **make yourselves clean.** **G** Stop doing the evil things I see you do. Stop doing wrong. **17** Learn to do good. Seek justice. Punish those who hurt others. Help the orphans. Stand up for the rights of widows.” **18** The LORD says, “Come, let us talk about these things. Though your sins are like scarlet, they can be as white as snow. Though your sins are deep red, they can be white like wool. **19** If you become willing and obey me, you will eat good crops from the land. **20** But if you refuse to obey and if you turn against me, you will be destroyed by your **enemies’ swords.**” **H** The LORD himself said these things.

- a. When Isaiah wrote to Jerusalem, the capitol city, he wrote to the entire nation.
- b. Sodom and Gomorrah were cities in the Old Testament that God judged and destroyed. Read Genesis 18-19.
- c. God was speaking about the different sacrifices the Israelites offered Him as part of their worship. Bulls, lambs, and goats were the main animals used in sacrifices.
- d. God did not mean physically running in the temple. He meant the busyness of the Israelites in the temple was a waste.
- e. The Israelites annually celebrated special feasts. These feasts had been started by God but were being done for other reasons.
- f. The people were sinning. God compared the guilt from sins to having bloody hands.
- g. The cleanness of the people was inside, not on the outside of the body.
- h. God often used armies from other nations to discipline His people.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. What does it mean to confront someone? How did God confront His people in this chapter?**
- 2. Since we do not make animal sacrifices to God anymore, what should we offer to God today?**
- 3. How do you think God confronts His people today?**
- 4. Will God ignore our prayers the same way He ignored the Israelites' prayers? Why?**
- 5. What habits or rituals do we have in church? Will our church habits make God angry if we are sinning?**
- 6. How can we make ourselves clean before we approach God?**
- 7. Does God expect churches to punish those who hurt other people? Why do you think this way?**
- 8. How can people today do the things God asked the people to do in verse 17?**
- 9. Instead of punishing His people through an enemy army, how might God punish His people today?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Find and compare verses.*

In today's verses, we see God did not want worship from people whose lives did not show a commitment to holiness in action and thought. Isaiah was not the only person to say or write these things. Read the verses below. Look for the same idea Isaiah expressed. Write a short summary of how the verses below compare with today's text.

Malachi 1:6-11 _____

Matthew 5:21-24 _____

Amos 5:21-23 _____

Jeremiah 6:19-20 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- Christians cannot depend only on religious actions when approaching the holy God.
- God expects His followers to show righteousness and justice through their actions.
- God offers forgiveness to those who repent.

Discuss with your Bible study group the practices used in your church today. What can you do that would make those rituals help you more in your relationship to God?

How can you show justice and righteousness in your daily actions? What changes do you need to make in your life so that your actions will please God?

Work with your group to write a definition of repentance. Pray with your group for God to lead you all to godly repentance. From what do you personally need to repent?

MEMORY VERSE

“The LORD says, “Come, let us talk about these things. Though your sins are like scarlet, they can be as white as snow. Though your sins are deep red, they can be white like wool.” – Isaiah 1:18

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 1:10-14a, paying attention to how God feels about the people's religious activity.

God mentioned several religious rituals the Israelites had in the temple. He talked about sacrifices, burnt offerings, blood of bulls and rams, incense, feasts, festivals, and holy meetings. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy include the many religious habits God expected His people to have. These were good rituals and habits; they were not bad.

God said He was tired of their habits and rituals. He had enough of the sacrifices. He called the sacrifices worthless. He hated the special incense the people burned on His altar. God could not stand the habits He told the people to have. Why? He gave a reason in verse 18—the people were sinning during the holy meetings. Their faith was not true, sincere faith. Their actions proved their faith was fake. Rituals and ceremonies are not bad. But religious practices must come from holy lives. One cannot practice the habits of worship and the habits of sin. This is what God hates.

What religious rituals do you have at home or in church? How do you think God feels about your rituals? Do you have sin in your life that might cause God to ignore your worship?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 1:14b-15, noticing God's response to the empty worship.

Halfway through verse 14, God described how the religious rituals made Him feel. The Lord said He was tired of the rituals, and they were like a heavy weight. Isaiah used this phrase to show a clear picture of how God felt. God said He would refuse to watch or listen to their prayers because they were guilty of sin. The phrase Isaiah used, “your hands are full of blood,” does not mean the people murdered others. The blood was a way of saying their hands were dirty from their sins, especially the sins against other people. This means they were guilty of many sins done again and again.

God expects His people to be holy and to live holy lives. We will sin, but we have a responsibility to reject our sins and return to Him. When

we choose to sin again and again, we become the same as the ancient Israelites who sinned repeatedly. When we come to church to worship, we should not expect God to honor our praise, our prayers, our service, or our offerings if we are refusing to repent of our sins.

What sins do you struggle with day to day? Do you truly fight against those sins, or do you make excuses for your mistakes? How do your sins influence your worship of God?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 1:16-17, drawing lines under the actions God wanted the people to do.

God gave the people very clear commands. His commands helped guide His people away from sinful lives toward holy lives. His commands were not complicated. What did He want? Look at the action words in the passage. They needed to wash themselves (their hearts) and become clean. They needed to stop doing bad things and learn to do good. They should protect people who were weak or alone. God did not tell the people to be better and then let them figure it out themselves. He told them exactly what He wanted them to do.

Walking with God is more than good feelings. We must also have proper behavior. The New Testament said something similar in James 2:14-26. Faith is our doorway to God, but we must pair faith with actions. True followers of Christ believe the right things and those beliefs then lead people to right actions. Always remember, God does not save us because of our actions. Instead, as we put our faith in God through Jesus, right actions will come from that faith.

Do your daily actions match your faith in Jesus? What are some ways you need to improve your behavior as you grow as a true follower of Christ?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 1:18, looking for what God wants for His people.

God is never far away from His people. He is as close as a conversation. In verse 18, God wanted to talk His people into returning to Him. God did not want to punish or discipline His people. Instead, the Lord wanted to have a healthy relationship with them. How could they have this relationship?

In verse 18, the Lord called to the people and told them He could remove their sins. Isaiah used colors to show the difference between the stain of sin and the cleanliness of holiness. Scarlet and crimson (other words for red) describe sin. White, like the purity of clean snow and pure wool, describe holiness. To have a relationship with God, people must first see their own sin and be willing to set their sin aside (repent). When we are willing to change and follow God, He will remove our sins and make us clean again. True followers of Christ repent of their sins when they come to Him and continually repent throughout their lives.

Why is it important to repent and turn to God for cleansing? Why is it hard to do this?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Sinful Humanity*

All people sin. We cannot avoid sin. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose to sin. People have sinned ever since. Today, we face the choice of whether to sin or to accept Christ's sacrifice for our sins. We cannot live in sin and have a relationship with God. Only through repentance (turning away from our sins) and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross can we have a relationship with God.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 1:19-20, finding the options the people had for their future.

God explained carefully the two choices for His people. The first option was to return to Him and obey Him. If the people were willing to obey God, He would give them what they needed (good crops) to live and thrive in the land. The second option was to refuse to obey the Lord. If the people chose that option, God would destroy them. He would send the armies of other nations to invade the land.

People have always faced the choice of obedience to God or rebellion against Him. When we repent of our sins and live in obedience to Him, He protects us and blesses us. Even though we will continue to struggle with sin and problems, God will always be with us to help us through our struggles. When we choose not to obey Him, we should expect to suffer. Anyone who lives in opposition to a king or leader can expect to suffer. We should not expect our lives to be any different when we live in rebellion against God.

What are some ways you have seen people's lives improve as they turned to God? How have you seen people in sin continue to struggle?

Have you ever suffered because you turned against God for a short time? How did you return to Him?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 1:10-20. Meet with one or two members of your study group over coffee and find ways to live what you have learned.

Does your lifestyle during the week match your actions during worship? How can you encourage each other to be consistent in life and in worship?

With your small group ask God to lead you to show righteousness and justice today through your actions.

What are some struggles with sin that you have? How can you set those sins aside and return to God?



God Sends

God is sovereign. He has goals and plans for the world and His people. He calls His people to recognize His plans and tell others about them.

ISAIAH 6:1-13

Most people prefer to be free and independent. They struggle against their parents, teachers, bosses at work, and the police. Many people struggle against God, too. They do not want Him in authority over them. They do not want Him to tell them what to do. Often, even Christians want to have salvation, but they do not want to obey God.

God made everything, and everything belongs to Him. He even made us. We are His whether we like it or not. Like a king, God can command us and we should obey Him. We cannot be like the people of the world who refuse to accept His authority. We must obey Him and follow His commands. Isaiah responded when God called. God shared His plans with Isaiah and gave him a command. Like Christians today, Isaiah had a hard task. However, Isaiah willingly accepted God's call.

ISAIAH 6:1-13

1 In the year that **King Uzziah** **A** died, I saw the Lord sitting on a very high throne. His long robe filled the **Temple**. **B** **2** Heavenly creatures of fire stood above him. Each **creature** **C** had six wings: It used two wings to cover its face, two wings to cover its feet, and two wings for flying. **3** Each creature was calling to the others: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD All-Powerful. His glory fills the whole earth." **4** Their calling caused the frame around the door to shake, as the Temple filled with smoke. **5** I said, "Oh, no! I will be destroyed. I am not pure, and I live among people who are not pure, but I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful." **6** One of the heavenly creatures used a pair of tongs to take a hot coal from the **altar**. **D** Then he flew to me with the hot coal in his hand. **7** The creature touched my mouth with the hot coal and said, "Look, your guilt is taken away, because this hot coal has touched your lips. Your sin is taken away." **8** Then I heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Whom can I send? Who will go for **us**?" **E** So I said, "Here I am. Send me!" **9** Then the Lord said, "Go and tell this to the people: 'You will listen and listen, but you will not understand. You will look and look, but you will not learn.' **10** Make the minds of these people dumb. Shut their ears. Cover their eyes. Otherwise, they might really understand what they see with their eyes and hear with their ears. They might really understand in their minds and come back to me and be healed." **11** Then I asked, "Lord, how long should I do this?" He answered, "Until the cities are destroyed and the people are gone, until the land is destroyed and left empty. **12** The LORD will send the people far away, and the land will be left empty. **13 One-tenth** **F** of the people will be left in the land, but it will be destroyed again. These people will be like an oak tree whose stump is left when the tree is chopped down. The people who remain will be like a stump that will **sprout again**." **G**

- a. King Uzziah was king over the southern kingdom of Judah. His throne was in Jerusalem. He died about 740 years before Jesus was born.
- b. This is a vision Isaiah saw. Everything he described here happened in his vision, including the conversation with God.
- c. Many visions in the Bible included non-human creatures. We might never know whether those were real or only images to communicate something from God to the prophets. These same creatures appear in Revelation 4:8.
- d. The altar in this verse was the altar in the temple.
- e. God says, "us" here. Many Bible teachers believe this means the Trinity.
- f. One-tenth means ten percent (10%). Judgment will be heavy but still God will preserve a people in the land.
- g. Oak trees have deep roots and will grow again even if you cut down the main tree trunk.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. What was the point of the vision Isaiah had?**
- 2. What were the creatures around the throne doing?**
- 3. Why did Isaiah believe he would be destroyed?**
- 4. How did Isaiah respond to God's call for someone to preach?
What do you think his attitude was?**
- 5. What message did Isaiah have for the people?**
- 6. Why might the people ignore Isaiah's message?**
- 7. How long would Isaiah preach his message?**
- 8. Why was it important for Isaiah to know some people would
be left in the land?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Find patterns in the Bible.*

Isaiah had a vision and recorded it in Isaiah 6. He saw strange creatures around God's throne. For some reason, visions from God often included strange animals, unique creatures, and impossible events. Read the verses below and write down the odd or impossible events and animals.

Ezekiel 37:1-9 _____

Daniel 7:1-7 _____

Revelation 1:9-16 _____

Revelation 12:1-6 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- God is holy, and when He wishes, He shows His glory to people.
- All people need God's forgiveness for their sins.
- God invites willing followers to share His message with others.
- God's messengers must be faithful throughout their lives regardless of how people respond.

Discuss as a group the glory of God. How does God show us His glory? How can His glory show through your life this week?

Think about your own need for the forgiveness of sin. What must you do to receive God's forgiveness for your sin?

How can your Bible study group lead your church to share God's message with others? With whom can you share God's message?

What will you do if people do not respond positively to God's message?

MEMORY VERSE

Then I heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Whom can I send? Who will go for us?" So I said, "Here I am. Send me!" – Isaiah 6:8

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 6:1-4, looking for the glory of God.

In chapter six, Isaiah wrote about a vision he had. He described strange creatures with six wings. Some translations call those creatures “seraphim,” a type of angel. The angels were around God’s high throne, praising God and calling Him holy. Smoke filled the temple. We do not know if Isaiah was in the temple when he had the vision or if he was somewhere else and the temple appeared in the vision. The Bible often uses smoke and fire to show the presence of God. God appeared to Moses and the Israelites through smoke and fire. The Holy Spirit first appeared in the New Testament as fire.

God’s greatness and glory were clear for Isaiah to see. From the throne to the smoke and the angels singing God’s praises, everything in the vision pointed toward God’s glory. God is the glorious King of all, and He chooses to show His majesty and glory to His people. We may not have visions of God and heavenly creatures, but we can see God’s glory in other ways. We certainly see it in nature. But even more clearly, the Bible, the church, and God’s people show His glory.

How does God show His glory and greatness today? List some ways you have seen or understood God’s glory.

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 6:5-7, observing Isaiah’s response to his vision of God.

The vision of God overwhelmed Isaiah. He cried out, “I will be destroyed.” When Isaiah saw God’s greatness and holiness, he thought of two things. The first thought was of his own sin. Seeing God reminded Isaiah of his own mistakes. He knew he should die for his sins. This thought related to his personal sin. The second thought was of the sins of his people. Isaiah felt a deep connection with his fellow Israelites. He believed the sins of the nation were a part of him. This is called “corporate sin” or “group sin.”

God did not destroy Isaiah for his sin or the sins of the nation. Instead, one of the heavenly creatures took a hot coal from the temple altar and used it to clean Isaiah of his sins. The altar in the temple was the place where the priest burned sacrifices to worship God and ask for the forgiveness of sins. The creature followed the Mosaic habit of using

the altar as a pathway to forgiveness, just as God commanded. God was gracious to Isaiah and wanted to share His grace with all of His people, too.

Can you think of a moment when God’s holiness overwhelmed you and made you aware of your sin? How did you respond when you realized your sinfulness? Share this moment with someone, and ask if they can do the same.

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 6:8-9a, underlining how Isaiah answered God.

After Isaiah’s sins were forgiven, God spoke. God seemed to be talking either to Himself or to the angels. He did not direct His words to Isaiah. He said, “Whom can I send? Who will go for us?” God used the word “us” to refer to Himself. Many people believe He was talking about the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God needed to send someone to do a job for Him. At this point, Isaiah did not know what the job would be. He didn’t know if he would need to travel, or sell all his possessions, or even die. Nevertheless, Isaiah was willing to go and do whatever God wanted. All God said was, “Who...?” and Isaiah volunteered!

The Bible has many stories of God calling men and women to His service. He has plans, and even though God could do everything Himself, He chooses to partner with us to accomplish His plans. Even today, God’s plans continue. He still calls His people—Christians—to do His work. Even now, God is calling you.

What are some ways God uses His people today? How does God want to use you?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 6:9b-10, paying attention to the message God had for the people.

Isaiah wrote down God's message for the people. We can read it in verses 9 and 10. When we read it, we must be sure to understand it as God meant it. God sent Isaiah to tell the nation they would not understand anything he said. He said they would look but not see and listen but not understand. Their eyes, ears, and minds would be blind, deaf, and closed. If they could understand the message, they would return to God. But God knew they would never really understand what Isaiah was saying. This is a prediction. God sent Isaiah to tell the people of their own inability or unwillingness to understand God's message.

The Bible often calls this "hardening your heart." In Exodus, God knew Pharaoh would be stubborn and harden his heart. Later, though, God said He would make Pharaoh's heart hard. In Isaiah, God knew the people would not listen and their hearts would be hard. The people were sinning, and their sins probably made them stubborn and unwilling to listen to a true message from God. Are we listening or do we harden our hearts too?

Have you ever shared part of the Bible with someone who refused to listen? What was their response to your message? How did you handle it?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism*

Evangelism is the act of sharing the good news of Christ with others. The news of Christ's death and resurrection for our sins is the best news we could ever share. Even though Isaiah lived long before Christ entered the world in Bethlehem, the prophet shared the good news with the people. His good news was God loved them, and wanted to clean their sins. He wanted to make them pure and holy. He wanted to partner with them to accomplish His plans. God's message for the world has not changed. He still wants to remove the sins of all people through Christ, and have a relationship with them. This is the news we must share.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 6:11-13, noticing how long Isaiah would preach to people who would not listen.

What a terrible vision of the future! God told Isaiah He planned to destroy the entire nation of Judah. Isaiah's job was to preach while God punished the nation for their sins. He could not stop until the nation crumbled under God's discipline. Faithfulness meant obeying God's call to preach even if no one listened to the message or changed their hearts.

However, God never stops with punishment. A small group of people would stay in Judah, and some day they would grow into a new nation. God compared the people to an oak tree—one that would grow again even if you chopped the tree down. God always redeems His faithful people and restores them to a right relationship with Him.

How do you think Isaiah felt about God's command? What are you willing to do to obey God's commands to you?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 6:1-13. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned or meet with them on the VP and discuss this session.

What does "God is holy" mean to you? How will you live different because God is holy?

Make a list of friends who need to know God's forgiveness. What steps can you take this week to share the message of God's forgiveness with your friends?

How is God calling you to serve Him today? How can the small group encourage each other to obey His call?



God Promises

God's people can trust His promises because God is sovereign.

ISAIAH 7:7-17

Children learn very quickly whether mom and dad keep their promises or not. If parents do what they promise, kids learn to trust their parents' word. If promises are broken, the children will not put their hope in the promises and plans their parents make.

God makes promises to His people. Many of these promises are in the Bible. In our text today, we will read about God's promise to provide hope for King Ahaz and the nation of Judah. In addition, God was willing to provide proof of His plans. How would the king respond to God's plans? Would he think God's plans were dependable? Would King Ahaz trust God? Ahaz failed but his story gives us an opportunity to learn about God and about ourselves. What can we learn about the promises God gives to us? Will we trust what God says or not?

ISAIAH 7:7-17

7 But I, the Lord GOD, say, “**Their plan** **A** will not succeed; it will not happen, **8** because **Aram** **B** is led by the city of **Damascus**, **C** and Damascus is led by its weak king, Rezin. Within sixty-five years Israel will no longer be a nation. **9** Israel is led by the city of **Samaria**, **D** and Samaria is led by its weak king, the son of Remaliah. If your faith is not strong, you will not have strength enough to last.” **10** Then the LORD spoke to **Ahaz** **E** again, saying, **11** “Ask for a sign from the LORD your God to prove to yourself that these things are true. It may be a sign from as deep as the place of the dead or as high as the heavens.” **12** But Ahaz said, “I will not ask for a sign or test the LORD.” **13** Then Isaiah said, “Ahaz, descendant of David, listen carefully! Isn’t it bad enough that you wear out the patience of people? Do you also have to wear out the patience of my God? **14** The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name him **Immanuel**. **F** **15** He will be eating milk curds and honey when he learns to reject what is evil and to choose what is good. **16** You are afraid of the kings of Israel and Aram now. But before the child learns to choose good and reject evil, the lands of Israel and Aram will be empty. **17** The LORD will bring troubled times to you, your people, and to the people of your father’s family. They will be worse than anything that has happened since Israel separated from **Judah**. **G** The LORD will bring the king of **Assyria** **H** to fight against you.

- a. Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, the king of Israel, had agreed to attack King Ahaz and the city of Jerusalem.
- b. Aram was the name of the kingdom to the northeast of Israel.
- c. Damascus was the capital city of the nation of Aram.
- d. Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. In the New Testament era, Samaria was the name of a region of the country between Judah and Galilee.
- e. Ahaz was king of Judah. He was from the family of King David. He was king about 725 years before Jesus was born.
- f. Immanuel means “God with us.” Matthew 1:23 applies this prophecy to Jesus who is “God with us.”
- g. The original nation of Israel split during the reign of Rehoboam, son of King Solomon. The northern kingdom kept the name Israel. The southern kingdom was Judah.
- h. Assyria was a nation which covered parts of modern Turkey and Iraq. Assyria defeated Israel in 722 BC. God saved Jerusalem from Assyria in the siege of 701 BC.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. Why is it possible to depend on God's promises?**
- 2. Who was planning something against Ahaz? Find these kingdoms on a map.**
- 3. In verse 9, what would give Judah and her king, Ahaz, the strength to continue as a nation?**
- 4. What did God tell Ahaz to do? Why did Ahaz refuse?**
- 5. Can we ask for a sign from God? How?**
- 6. What sign did God promise to Ahaz?**
- 7. What trouble was coming for Ahaz and the nation of Judah?**
- 8. Why do you think God planned to bring trouble for Ahaz using the king of Assyria?**
- 9. Do you think God brings trouble to us today using other people? Why do you think that?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare ideas.*

God offered to give a sign (proof) to Ahaz to help build trust in God's plans. God does not always give signs, and sometimes He even refuses to help people by giving them a sign. Read the passages below, and notice whether God gave a sign or proof. Why do you think God chooses to give or not to give proof to people?

Exodus 4:1-5 _____

Judges 6:16-21 _____

Matthew 12:38-39 _____

Luke 1:18-20 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- God's plans give hope to His people.
- God expects His people to respond to problems with faith.
- God is faithful to keep His promises. The birth of Jesus Christ is the best proof of this fact.
- God will judge people who do not trust Him.

How has God's plans for your life given you hope? What can you do that will show others that you live in God's hope?

List some problems people face today and how their faith can help them. With your group, identify some biblical examples of people responding to problems with faith.

How does the birth of Jesus help you trust God's promises? Who do you need to tell about Jesus' birth this week so they can trust His promises too?

What can your group do to help each other trust God even more?

MEMORY VERSE

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name him Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 7:7-9, noticing how God offered hope to King Ahaz.

Verse one mentions a time when two kings, Rezin and Pekah, tried to conquer Jerusalem. Verses 2-6 tell the story of that attempt, and how the people felt about the attack.

Through Isaiah, the Lord told Ahaz the plans of Pekah and Rezin would fail. God knew both the present and the future, and encouraged Ahaz by telling him, “Their plan will not succeed.” He said King Rezin was a weak king and Israel, led by weak King Pekah, would disappear as a kingdom. God encouraged Ahaz to have faith in God because God would give him the strength to fight the coming battles.

The early verses in the chapter described the terrible fear the people felt when they heard about the plans of Rezin and Pekah. God offered the people and their king hope. Even though trouble was coming, they could rest in God’s plans for their future. We live more than 2700 years after Ahaz, but resting in God’s plan is just as important now as it was back then.

What plans does God have for His people today? How do these plans give you hope?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 7:10-12, observing how Ahaz responded to God’s offer.

In 2 Kings 16, we can read a summary of Ahaz’s reign as king along with some details about the attack by Pekah and Rezin. Ahaz worshiped idols and turned to the king of Assyria for help when trouble came. He built a false place of worship in the temple of God. He did not turn to God for help.

We should not be surprised when we read that Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign. He did not put his trust in God. God knew of Ahaz’s character and still offered to prove His power, knowledge, and ability to protect the kingdom. God wanted Ahaz to ask for a sign so he would believe and trust in the Lord. Instead, Ahaz responded with doubt in God’s power or promises.

When God commands us to trust Him, we should. Phil had been a Deaf pastor for many years when the hearing church he partnered with closed. There were many challenges that came including serious health issues. However, Phil continued to trust that God would carry him through and in the end, God did.

How does God prove His power to you today? Does proof of God's power help you stop doubting, or do you continue to doubt Him again and again? Why?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 7:12-13, looking for what God expects from His people.

God planned to protect Jerusalem and the people. He commanded Ahaz to request a sign or miracle to prove His plans. God wanted to show Himself and His power to Ahaz, perhaps to help Ahaz believe in Him. But Ahaz refused to ask for a sign. Isaiah accused the king of testing the patience of both people and God.

Perhaps Ahaz explained his actions by saying, "I trust God, and do not need proof," but that response ignored God's command. God ordered Ahaz to request a sign. Ahaz's response was not holy or considerate, but instead proved his own character. He failed to trust in God, and that failure seemed to push God's patience.

God expects His people to respond in faith, especially when He gives a specific command. Ahaz refused to respond in faith because he did not trust God to provide protection and he did not believe God would provide proof of His power and plans. Ahaz is a great example of what God does not want in His people. Isaiah, on the other hand, is the kind of person He wants you and me to be.

Think of a time when someone encouraged you to have faith in God. How did you act or respond in faith? Did your faith change your view of God or your problems? How?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 7:14-15, drawing a line under how we know God keeps His promises.

When we read the Bible, we must remember we are learning an entire history of God's work. These are not individual stories but instead are moments throughout a long story that began at creation. The story will end when He restores all things to glory. This means we must remember how each moment fits into the entire picture. How does God's sign to Ahaz fit?

Isaiah said God would provide a special sign Himself. A virgin girl would become pregnant. Her child would be a son, and His name would mean "God with us." Ahaz did not know right from wrong, but the boy would know the difference before he was old enough to eat soft foods. Ahaz did not realize God was predicting the arrival of Christ several hundred years later.

How do we know God will keep His promises? The best way is to look at the birth of Jesus. God announced His plan more than 700 years before Mary, the virgin, gave birth to Jesus. That is how God's sign to Ahaz fits God's story and seals our faith.

How does the birth of Jesus help you know that God keeps His promises to you?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Jesus is the Christ, the eternal Son of God. Even though He is God He became a man in Jesus Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly showed and did God's will, becoming human yet without sin. By His death and resurrection, He made a way for people to be redeemed from sin.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 7:16-17, seeing what happens to those who refuse to respond to God in faith.

God warned Ahaz of a time in the future when Pekah and Rezin, the kings who threatened Ahaz, would be dead and gone. Their lands would be empty.

The Assyrians were feared for two reasons. First, they were brutal and cruel. They killed anyone who fought them, often killing women and children as a warning to others. Second, they took many people as prisoners and forced entire tribes to move from their homes. They often caused nations to collapse as their people were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire.

Because of Ahaz's sins and lack of faith in God, God planned to punish him and his kingdom. God would bring an Assyrian king with a mighty army to punish the Jews for their lack of faith and their refusal to obey Him. God had given Ahaz a chance to seek a sign and to trust in God, but Ahaz was not interested. Judgment, not blessing, would come to the nation.

What kind of faith do you have in God? Do you have the faith that God blesses? How can you become like Isaiah and not like Ahaz?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 7:7-17. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What plans does God have for you? How can you respond in faith to God's plans? Be specific with your answers.

List some promises God has made to you. How will the birth of Jesus lead you to live in faith in the future?

Discuss why God brings judgment on those who fail to trust Him. What are you planning to do this week to show that you are trusting God?



God Reigns

God controls the rise and fall of nations.

ISAIAH 23:8-18

If you spend any time reading world history, you know many nations have come and gone. History experts can usually explain what happened to each kingdom. The countries may have had problems with the economy or with their military. However, Isaiah explains things in a different way.

The prophets of the Bible believed God controlled the rise and fall of nations. Armies and kings fought, won, and lost, but behind all these actions, the prophets saw God. When nations succeed or fail God is involved in some way. In this week's session, we will study how God planned to destroy Tyre. Isaiah warned the people of Tyre about the coming destruction, but he also predicted a later time of success. To Isaiah, God was behind every rising kingdom and every dying nation. As we study, we will see how God directs the flow of events in our world.

ISAIAH 23:8-18

8 Who planned Tyre's destruction? **Tyre** **A** made others rich. Its merchants were treated like princes, and its traders were greatly respected. **9** It was the LORD All-Powerful who planned this. He decided to make these proud people unimportant; he decided to disgrace those who were greatly respected. **10** Go through your land, people of **Tarshish**, **B** like the **Nile** **C** goes through Egypt. There is no harbor for you now! **11** The LORD has stretched his hand over the sea and made its kingdoms tremble. He commands that Canaan's strong, walled cities be destroyed. **12** He said, "**Sidon**, **D** you will not rejoice any longer, because you are destroyed. Even if you cross the sea to **Cyprus**, **E** you will not find a place to rest." **13** Look at the land of the **Babylonians**: **F** it is not a country now. Assyria has made it a place for wild animals. **Assyria** **G** built towers to attack it; the soldiers took all the treasures from its cities, and they turned it into ruins. **14** So be sad, you trading ships, because your strong city is destroyed. **15** At that time people will forget about Tyre for seventy years, which is the length of a king's life. After seventy years, Tyre will be like the prostitute in this song: **16** "Oh woman, you are forgotten. Take your harp and walk through the city. Play your harp well. Sing your song often. Then people will remember you." **17** After seventy years the LORD will deal with Tyre, and it will again have trade. It will be like a prostitute for all the nations of the earth. **18** The profits will be saved for the LORD. Tyre will not keep the money she earns but will give them to the people who serve the LORD, so they will have plenty of food and nice clothes.

- a. Tyre was a major city on an island about half a mile from the coast of Israel. It was very wealthy and powerful for many years. Tyre was part of Phoenicia.
- b. Tarshish was a colony of Phoenicia, probably located in Spain.
- c. The Nile River runs the length of the nation of Egypt, from south to north.
- d. Sidon was a port city on the northern border of Israel and was part of the nation of Phoenicia. The city had walls protecting it from land. The ocean protected it also.
- e. Cyprus is an island off the coast of Israel, Lebanon, and modern Turkey.
- f. Babylonians struggled against Assyria several times. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the southern kingdom of Judah and destroyed it in 587 BC. Many English Bibles have the word "Chaldeans" here instead of Babylonians. Both words refer to the same people.
- g. Assyria was an ancient empire which rose and fell many times. Assyria was where Syria and Iraq are today. The Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. How is God involved in the rise and fall of nations?**
- 2. Does God destroy people, nations, or institutions today? If so, what are some examples of this?**
- 3. If God is spirit, how does He have a hand to stretch over the nation?**
- 4. How can people flee from God's anger? Where can they go?**
- 5. Who destroyed Babylon? Who had a part in that destruction?**
- 6. Isaiah predicted Tyre would rise again. How would the city be different?**
- 7. Where would Tyre spend the money they earned in the future? Does that seem fair, to spend the money on others?**
- 8. Overall, what is this passage telling us about God and nations?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Understanding poetry.*

The writers of the Old Testament often used poetry to give their prophecies. Their poetry was in Hebrew and does not always translate very well into English or ASL. This week's session from Isaiah 23, includes some sections of poetry. Read verses 8-12. Try to understand what Isaiah is saying, and either re-write the section in simple English or sign it in ASL. When you write it or sign it, it should make more sense. For more information, look up Hebrew Poetry in a Bible Dictionary.

APPLY THE TEXT

- All God's actions and attitudes are fair and show justice.
- God actively directs what happens in His creation.
- God's plan includes having all nations honor Him.

Discuss with your group what it means to say God's actions are fair and show justice. How will you respond to God when He disciplines you?

How can you explain God's control of the world and your own free will to follow or reject God? In what parts of your life do you need to willingly submit to God's control?

What can you and your Bible group do to influence your community (Deaf and/or hearing) to honor God?

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD All-Powerful has made this promise: "These things will happen exactly as I planned them; they will happen exactly as I set them up. – Isaiah 14:24

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 23:8-9, looking for who will cause cities and nations to rise or fall.

The nation of Phoenicia was on the coast, just northwest of Israel and Judah. They had big cities such as Sidon and Tyre. Tyre was on an island just off the coast, and because it was an island, it was hard to defeat in war. Tyre used shipping to become wealthy. Ships sailed to Spain, Egypt, Cyprus, Israel, and more, doing business with everyone and collecting wealth. The people of Tyre had a reputation in Israel for being full of pride.

The Lord, the Judge of all creation, looked at Tyre and decided its time was up. Even though they had wealth and power, God would bring an end to the city. Their pride would end and their money would disappear. Isaiah did not give the exact reason in chapter 23 for God's decision to destroy Tyre, but we know this: God is the king over all nations and the judge of all people. When He decides to punish, we can trust He is fair. As Christ said many years later, we can trust His testimony because He is God. In the same way, we can trust God's judgment is fair even if it seems harsh.

Has God ever disciplined you? How did you know that God was fair with you?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 23:10-12, finding that we cannot escape God's judgment.

Verse 10 does not translate into English easily. Some Bible versions tell the people of Tarshish to farm their land like the Egyptians do because their safe harbor, Tyre, would be destroyed. Other translations tell the people to fill their land (spread out) like the Nile River fills Egypt because their safe markets (Tyre) would be gone. The words are slightly different, but the point is the same.

God's judgment would destroy Tyre and Sidon. Both of the cities depended on the ocean for their business. God's judgment would not stop at the seas. God's punishments would even hit the forts and cities of Canaan. God is the righteous and fair judge of all people in all places, and no one can escape Him.

If God decides to discipline a country or a church, we must accept His

decision. We cannot run to another country like the people of Sidon ran to Cyprus. We must accept His decisions as final. We can trust His discipline just as we learned to trust in His promises. We know He is wise and fair.

Why is it important to trust God even when facing His discipline?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 23:13-14, thinking about how God uses people to accomplish His goals.

After Isaiah warned Tyre and Sidon about God's judgment, he gave them some proof. He pointed to Babylon. Assyria and Babylon were enemies and fought each other to control the entire region. The Assyrian king had beaten Babylon more than once. During Isaiah's lifetime, the Assyrian King, Sennacherib, completely destroyed Babylon. He flooded the area and took away the Babylonian idols.

Isaiah used the example of the struggles between Assyria and Babylon as proof of God's power. The Assyrians defeated a powerful nation. Isaiah meant they did this amazing thing because God used them. If God could send the Assyrians to defeat Babylon, He could easily find someone to conquer the city of Tyre.

God cares about what happens in His world. He is actively involved. He may do miracles, but more often He uses ordinary people, events, and normal processes to accomplish His goals. One Deaf missionary lost his wife in a terrible car accident. No one could see what God would do. But later, God greatly blessed the missionary with the most wonderful wife and three children who all faithfully serve the Lord today. God is still active and present working in our world.

Have you ever thought about God working to influence the world today? List some ways God uses people and events to accomplish His goals.

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 23:15-16, trying to visualize the picture Isaiah described.

Isaiah used a very clear example of what would happen to Tyre. Somehow, people would forget about the city, or they would assume the city was not important. People would ignore the city of Tyre. But later Tyre would rise again.

In ancient Israel, when a prostitute became older, she had a harder time finding customers. Often, the older women would walk the streets and sing, trying to find someone. Isaiah compared Tyre to a prostitute who was old and needed to bring in new business. He had two points. First, like a prostitute, Tyre accepted anyone who would pay. Tyre would celebrate any idol and do business with anyone. Second, Isaiah showed that Tyre would not learn from their 70 years of punishment. They would return to the habits they had before God's judgment.

God wants all people to know Him and to understand His power and glory. Sometimes, He disciplines people. His goal is always to help them realize who He is. Like Tyre, people today do not always respond correctly to His actions. They fail to see God and understand what He wants for us.

How can God's discipline cause us to see Him more clearly? Can you think of a time when you believe God was disciplining you? How did you respond to Him?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God is sovereign.*

God is sovereign. This means He is the highest authority in all the universe. No one is higher than God. All people and things ultimately submit to His control. He created everything, and He holds everything together. While He does give people the ability to choose, our choices cannot change His goals or plans. He is over us, and we must understand we are always under Him and His reign as God and King.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 23:17-18, drawing a circle around God's plan for the nations.

At the end of Tyre's punishment, the city would become successful in business again. They would not keep their money, though. Somehow, according to Isaiah's prophecy, their profits would go toward God's people.

Tyre's money would go to those who serve the Lord, or those who dwell in the Lord's presence (NASB). The people who live before the Lord would need sacred clothes (CSB). Isaiah seemed to be talking about the priests and the Levites who serve in the temple in Jerusalem. The success of Tyre in the future would honor God.

Isaiah's words offer us hope that even the nations must submit to God's plans. The prophecy concerning Tyre tells us that God's plan for the nations is that, in time, they will all honor Him.

How will your life honor God?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 23:8-18. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How does today's lesson about God's fairness, justice, and sovereignty help you understand the idea of fair or unfair?

If God is involved with His world, does that mean God chooses who will be Deaf, or blind, or hearing? How does this idea change your view of being Deaf? How can you honor God with your deafness?

What can your small group do to honor God? How can you help others to know and honor God this week?



God Saves

God's plan includes providing a way of salvation for people who believe in Him.

ISAIAH 25:1-10A

We struggle sometimes to praise God with the same excitement we have for our children or sports teams. We cannot see Him and we feel strange cheering for an invisible God. We forget all He does for us. We overlook His wonderful grace which gives us things we do not deserve. All of this stops us from praising Him.

Isaiah gives us many reasons to praise God. We praise Him for the amazing things He does and the great world He has created. Isaiah, however, leads us to praise Him most for His salvation. Through Jesus, God has given us salvation from sin and hope for our broken world. His salvation even overcomes death. Since we now know His great salvation, we can trust Him to give us everything we need.

ISAIAH 25:1-10A

1 LORD, you are my God. **I honor you** **A** and praise you, because you have done amazing things. You have always done what you said you would do; you have done what you planned long ago. **2** You have made **the city** **B** a pile of rocks and have destroyed her walls. The city our enemies built with strong walls is gone; it will never be built again. **3** People from powerful nations will honor you; cruel people from strong cities will fear you. **4** You protect the poor; you protect the helpless when they are in danger. You are like a shelter from storms, like shade that protects them from the heat. The cruel people attack like a rainstorm beating against the wall, **5** like the **heat in the desert.** **C** But you, God, stop their violent attack. As a cloud cools a hot day, you silence the songs of those who have no mercy. **6** The LORD All-Powerful will prepare a feast on **this mountain** **D** for all people. It will be a feast with all the best food and wine, the finest meat and wine. **7** On this mountain God will destroy the veil that covers all nations, the **veil** **E** that stretches over all peoples; **8** he will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away every tear from every face. He will take away the shame of his people from the earth. The LORD has spoken. **9** At that time people will say, “Our God is doing this! We have waited for him, and he has come to save us. This is the LORD. We waited for him, so we will rejoice and be happy when he saves us.” **10** The LORD will protect **Jerusalem,** **F** but he will crush our enemy **Moab.** **G**

- a. Isaiah wrote these verses and the praises here are his own. Isaiah himself offers this word of praise.
- b. Many Bible teachers believe Isaiah was not writing about one specific city but instead against all those who would oppose the Lord.
- c. The Hebrew poetry here compares violent attacks with heavy rains and scorching heat. Then the poetry says God is shelter against both rain and heat. This is a part of Hebrew poetry—comparison and repetition.
- d. The mountain probably means the hills on which Jerusalem is built.
- e. The veil is a symbol for death. The writer means God will remove death forever.
- f. Jerusalem refers to both the physical city of Jerusalem and to the people of God who worship at Jerusalem.
- g. Moab was east of the countries of Israel and Judah. The people of Moab often fought against the Jews.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. How does God save His people?**
- 2. What amazing things has God done for people today?**
- 3. How is God like a shelter from a storm?**
- 4. How would God provide for His people?**
- 5. How did Isaiah describe God's provision for His people?**
- 6. Where would God both provide for His people and destroy death (the veil) forever?**
- 7. When you read verse 8 about God wiping away every tear, what does that remind you of?**
- 8. What does it mean in verse 9 to wait for God and His salvation?**

BIBLE SKILL: *God's Protection*

Sometimes God stops the plans of evil people. He protects His own followers. When this happens, sometimes pagan kings and leaders decide to follow God, too. Read the two passages below and summarize who decided to follow God. How did God's power convince these people to follow Him?

Daniel 3:8-30 _____

Daniel 6 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- God's salvation leads people to praise Him.
- All people who trust God will enjoy His peace.
- God's salvation comes through faith in Him.

How have you experienced God's salvation in the past? Share your story with your group. How can your group offer praise to God for His salvation?

Discuss with the group what it means to enjoy God's peace. How are peace and trust connected? What do you need to do to know God's peace in your life?

Who do you know that needs salvation? How can you share the message of salvation with this person?

MEMORY VERSE

He will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away every tear from every face. He will take away the shame of his people from the earth. The LORD has spoken. – Isaiah 25:8

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 25:1-2, looking for what we can know about God's salvation.

Many action movies end with a scene in which the heroes receive awards; or the people they saved celebrate them. Leaders and people are thrilled to be safe. They honor the men and women who saved them. Perhaps the crowds chant or build a statue to honor their heroes. Isaiah wrote chapter 25 as a song to praise and honor God. Why? He knew God had saved His people and would continue to save them in the future.

Isaiah understood God planned to save His people from evil nations and bad kings. God planned for years to punish those who disobeyed Him. Isaiah praised God for completing His plans. God had destroyed and would again destroy cities like Nineveh and Babylon. In these places, kings worshiped idols and then invaded Israel to kill God's people.

God's salvation will always come, but sometimes we must wait for it. Isaiah said God's plans took years to complete. We know God spent thousands of years waiting for the right time to send Christ. When salvation comes for us, we can praise God because He worked it out years before, and it all turned out perfect.

Write or sign a prayer to God, thanking Him for His great salvation.

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 25:3-5, circling a story of God's salvation.

Isaiah knew God would discipline cruel people who oppressed the Jews. God would save His people. It may seem odd that Isaiah said the first people to praise Him would be those who lived in the nations God destroyed. In verse three, Isaiah said the cruel and powerful would honor and fear God.

Why would they honor God? They would honor and fear God because He would protect the poor and powerless. His strength would block mighty armies and powerful kings. In verses four and five, Isaiah described violent attacks that were like powerful storms or blazing heat. God, in all His power, stands against those violent attacks and protects

His people. Mighty kings and powerful armies would learn they could not overcome the God who created all life.

How often do you praise God for His salvation? How can you help your church improve their times of thankfulness and praise?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 25:6, picturing what Isaiah described.

Isaiah dreamed of a day when God would save His people and provide everything they could ever want. God would provide not just enough food but an abundance of food. In Isaiah's vision, God would provide the best meat and the perfect drink for His people. The feast would happen on the mountain where Isaiah wrote or lived.

Did Isaiah write about a real feast? Probably not. Instead, Isaiah used the example of a feast to show both God's provision and the way people from all over the world would gather to celebrate God's great salvation. Isaiah predicted this celebration would happen on the mountain. This is the same mountain where Jerusalem was. It is the same mountain where Christ died and rose again for us.

God does plan to save people and offers that salvation to all. Someday all God's people—those who have accepted the truth of Christ—will gather with the Lord. He will provide all we could ever want or need. We will have a time of rest and peace. We will have that rest and peace because He gives it to all who trust Him.

Have you ever made the choice to trust in God? Do you have peace with Him today? How can we enjoy the peace of God when we struggle with the different problems we face?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 25:7-8, paying attention to what God would do for all people.

When will God's feast happen? Verse six does not explain how God will gather all His people together and provide for their wants and needs. If we continue reading, we will understand the truth—God's peace will come through the work of Christ.

Isaiah had a way of seeing both his time period, with kings and nations, and a future when God would offer salvation to all people. Verses seven and eight tell us about a future when God will end death forever. Isaiah described death as “the veil that covers all nations.” He was probably talking about the cloth the Israelites used to cover the faces of dead people just before burial. The veil which all people wear some day is their own death. Somehow, on the mountain where Jerusalem sits, God would destroy death.

We know Christ died on the mountain outside the city of Jerusalem. We also know from reading other parts of the Bible that God will end death. He will wipe away the last tears from His people, and they will experience no more pain or heartache. Isaiah was looking far into the future. He saw a time when God would gather all His people together—not in Jerusalem—but in our final home in heaven.

What hope do we have for peace in our future? How can this comfort us as we suffer today?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Last Things*

Eventually, this world will end. The pain and suffering we all experience will stop. On that day, Christ will return. He will gather all His followers and take them home with Him. God, who sits on His throne, will judge all people. People who believe in Christ will enter into eternal presence with God. He will provide all our needs. People who choose to live apart from God will spend eternity living out their choice, suffering far away from God's presence.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 25:9-10a, searching the verses for who will be saved.

The people waiting for God will say, “We have waited for Him!” These are people who knew God. They understood He would save them. They had faith in His power to save and waited patiently for Him to complete His plans for salvation. Who will be saved? People who have faith in God through Jesus will have access to His salvation. No one else.

Today, many people cannot accept the idea of God only saving certain people. They want God to save everyone. These people change their belief about God to match what they want. They say, “God will save everyone. God loves all people and will save all people.” Isaiah told a different story. God’s rest and His feast and His salvation are for those who choose to accept Him. They put all their hope in God and trust Him to save them. Salvation comes through faith in His grace. Without faith, we cannot experience His salvation.

Who do you know that needs salvation? What steps can you take this week to share the story of Jesus with this person?

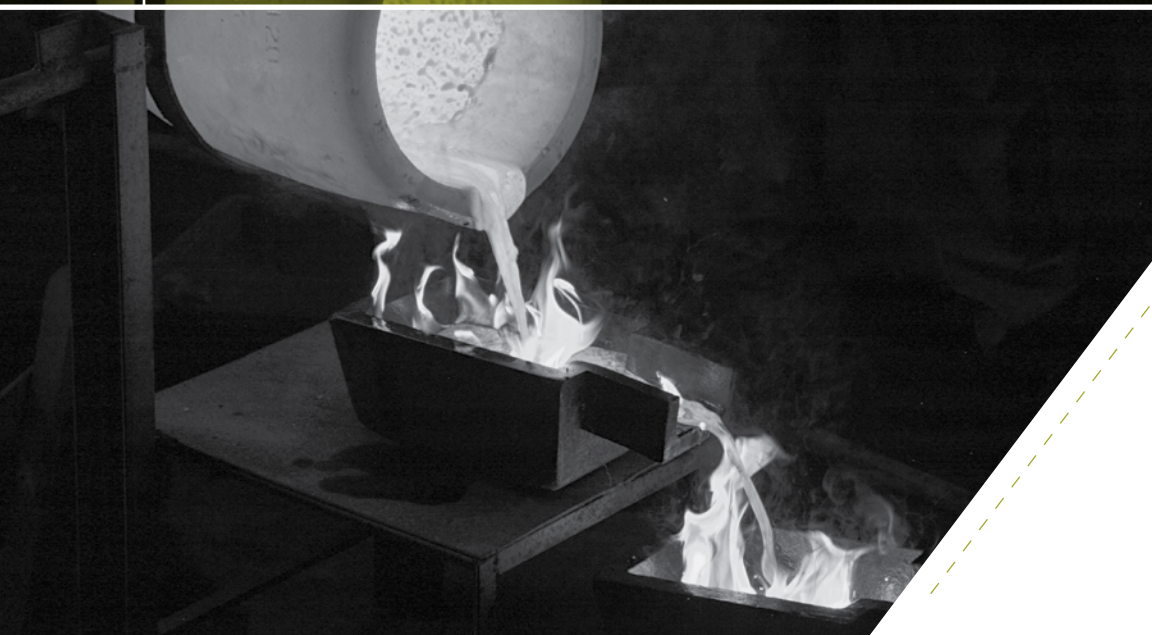
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 25:1-10a. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Talk together with your small group about the many ways to give praise to God. What do you need to change in your life to begin to praise Him every day?

How does trusting God help you have peace? What difference does God’s peace make in your life?

Who can you and your small group tell about the salvation we have through faith in Christ? Pray together today for those you need to tell about Jesus. Make a plan to tell them this week.



God Protects

God is able to protect His people from enemies.

ISAIAH 31:1-9

Do you remember studying for a hard exam in school? You asked your friends about the subject or checked with your parents. On exam day, you sometimes failed the test even though you asked all your friends for help. What did you do wrong? You didn't ask the one person who could really help—the teacher.

In Isaiah's time, the kings of Israel and Judah knew of God's great power because of their own history, but they usually did not ask Him for help. Instead, they asked other kings for help. They made agreements with other armies and asked people who did not worship God for help.

In today's session, we will study what happens when God's people ask others for help, but do not ask God to save them. We will see how God responds to their lack of faith. We will also see what happens when God's people return to Him.

ISAIAH 31:1-9

1 How terrible it will be for those people who go down to **Egypt for help**. **A** They think horses will save them. They think their many chariots and **strong horsemen** **B** will save them. But they don't trust God, the **Holy One of Israel**, **C** or ask the LORD for help. **2** But he is wise and can bring them disaster. He does not change his warnings. He will rise up and fight against the evil people and against those who try to help evil people. **3** The Egyptians are only people and are not God. Their horses are only animals and are not spirit. The Lord will stretch out his arm, and the one who helps will stumble, and the people who wanted help will fall. All of them will be destroyed together. **4** The LORD says this to me: "When a lion or a lion's cub kills an animal to eat, it stands over the dead animal and roars. A band of shepherds may be assembled against it, but the lion will not be afraid of their yelling or upset by their noise. So the LORD All-Powerful will come down to fight on **Mount Zion** **D** and on its hill. **5** The LORD All-Powerful will defend Jerusalem like birds flying over their nests. He will defend and save it; he will **'pass over'** **E** and save Jerusalem." **6** You children of Israel, come back to the God you fought against. **7** The time is coming when each of you will stop worshipping idols of gold and silver, which you sinned by making. **8** "**Assyria** **F** will be defeated by a sword, but not the sword of a person; Assyria will be destroyed, but not by a person's sword. Assyria will run away from the sword of God, but its young men will be caught and made slaves. **9** They will panic, and their protection will be destroyed. Their commanders will be terrified when they see God's **battle flag**," **G** says the LORD, whose fire is in Jerusalem and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

- a. The kings of Israel and Judah often made agreements with other nations. Egypt was one of those nations.
- b. The Egyptians had horses and chariots as part of their army. The Israelites usually depended on foot soldiers.
- c. The Holy One of Israel was another name for God. The covenant name God gave for Himself was Yahweh (Jehovah in the KJV).
- d. Mount Zion is the name of one of the mountains where Jerusalem sits. Mount Zion became a kind of nickname for Jerusalem.
- e. The Hebrew word used here for "pass over" is the same verb from the story in Exodus about the angel of death passing over the houses marked with the lamb's blood.
- f. Assyria was a powerful nation to the northeast of Israel. The Assyrians often threatened to invade the nations of Israel and Judah.
- g. A battle flag was a banner armies carried into battle to identify themselves.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. How does God protect His people from enemies?**
- 2. Should we ask other people to help us if we have problems? Why or why not?**
- 3. What does it mean to depend on God instead of depending on people?**
- 4. Why would God cause the armies helping Jerusalem to stumble?**
- 5. Why does the writer use images like lions, birds, and shepherds?**
- 6. How had the Israelites fought against God?**
- 7. How would Assyria fall if the sword is not from a person?**
- 8. Summarize this passage. What is Isaiah's message?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Suffering in the Bible*

The Bible has many passages about suffering. It is not easy to understand suffering and to see how suffering fits with God's victory over sin and evil. Read the verses below. Discuss with your class ways these examples of suffering fits with God's victory.

Colossians 1:24	Paul suffered for the church
2 Corinthians 12:7-10	Paul's thorn in the flesh
Matthew 10:16-24	Jesus promises suffering
Revelation 13:5-8	The war of the beast

APPLY THE TEXT

- Trusting in human strength rather than God's power will lead to defeat.
- God continues to be faithful even when we are not faithful.
- Trusting in God will lead to victory in the end.

Discuss with your group the difference between trusting human strength and trusting in God's power. What can you do this week to move from trusting yourself to trusting in God?

How does knowing God is faithful even if we are unfaithful change your life? How can your life show that you are grateful to God for His faithfulness?

What does victory look like for you in your struggles? How can you trust God more, so you live in greater victory?

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD wants to show his mercy to you. He wants to rise and comfort you. The LORD is a fair God, and everyone who waits for his help will be happy. – Isaiah 30:18

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 31:1, finding where true help comes from.

The kings of Israel and Judah often had small armies and could not defeat the big armies from other countries. Many times God showed He was willing to protect His people. But the kings of Israel and Judah often did not ask Him for help.

Some kings, such as Ahaz in Israel, did not ask God for help because they worshiped other gods. Other kings forgot the many times God saved Israel, so they asked other kings for protection. Isaiah refers to one of those agreements in verse 1. The last king of Israel, Hoshea, asked Egypt to help him fight against Assyrian armies, but the Egyptian king was weak and could not help. Isaiah warned Judah not to follow Hoshea's example.

We face trouble—though not from armies—and we ask friends for advice. We get help from families or neighbors. This is not wrong; but how often do we look to God for His help? People have human answers and human power. Only God, who reigns over all the earth, can truly help us.

Is it wrong to ask people for help? How can you depend on God's help, but still give help and receive help as Christians should?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 31:2-3, reading a story about finding help in God.

Isaiah reminded the people of God's great power and wisdom. God could fight Judah's enemies. The Egyptians were powerful, but they could not compare to God. They were people who bled and died. God is all powerful. He could not and would not die. In the end, the alliance between Judah and Egypt fell apart, and both nations suffered.

We might feel like asking people for help is a smart choice. But when we ask only people for help, we ignore God's ability to help us. In our minds, we picture God as a weak god. We think He cannot save us, or solve our problems, or give us strength for difficult times. Instead of praising God for what He can do, we disrespect God and look only for human answers.

Jim and Kathy stood with their interpreter outside the door of the divorce court. Even at that late hour they turned to God for help, and He saved their marriage. As long as they followed the Lord, their marriage continued. In the end, they turned away from the Lord's help and their marriage and family fell apart. Sadly, they did not stay with the only One who could help.

List some times you asked friends to help you solve a large problem. Consider honestly: did you depend more on your friends or on God? How can you depend on Him more?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 31:4-5, finding three pictures of God's faithfulness.

God used three examples to explain His willingness to protect His people. First, the Lord said He was like a lion preparing to eat. Shepherds could gather, yell, and throw stones, but a lion would ignore them. This was a picture of God's power in comparison to the various nations who wanted to take over Jerusalem. They were weak, and God could ignore them. Second, God compared Himself to a bird flying over His nest, watching carefully for dangerous animals. In the third example, the Lord said He would "pass over" Jerusalem and save the city. The verb Isaiah used (pass over) was the same verb Moses used in Exodus to describe the way the angel of death passed over Jewish homes and struck Egypt. Isaiah and his readers understood these examples as pictures of God's salvation.

The people betrayed God by asking Egypt for help. Still, God was willing to defend them. His people rejected His presence, but God loved them anyway. The people were not faithful to Him, but God continued to be faithful to His promises. The people needed to repent, and when they did, God would be right there as always.

Think of a time when you strayed from God's path. Looking back, can you see how God was still there for you? Share some stories with someone about God's faithfulness to you during those times.

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 31:6-7, drawing a line under what God expects.

Isaiah called God's people to return to Him. The Jews fought against God by trusting in false gods. The nation of Israel was already destroyed because of their idol worship. Under King Hezekiah, the nation of Judah returned to God and threw away their idols. Still, they fought against God by depending on allies. They were not faithful to Him.

God expected the people to repent, to turn away from their sins and return to Him. He wanted them to destroy the idols they made and follow only Him. Destroying the idols was a way to show their inner change. Repentance begins in our hearts but shows itself through our actions.

People today often talk about the need to be holy, but their lives do not change. True repentance and holiness always show up in our actions.

Think about sin in your own life. Are you willing to repent and change? How can you move to true holiness?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Scriptures*

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It comes from God Himself, and we can trust it. Through the Bible, we can know God and study His character. Sometimes we read it and do not understand, but that is because we are not perfect humans. God wants us to understand Him. He will help us to figure out what He wants us to know from His Word.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 31:8-9, signing to yourself the story of God's victory.

God was going to be faithful to the people of Judah. He would use His great strength and wisdom to defend Jerusalem. If the people would repent and return to God, they would see something amazing. You can read how this prophecy came true in 2 Kings 19. In 701 BC the Assyrian army fought against Judah. One night while the Assyrian army camped around Jerusalem waiting to destroy the city and the people in the city, God struck dead 185,000 Assyrians. Immediately the remaining army withdrew and went home. God had saved His people.

Isaiah started the chapter by saying terrible things would happen to people who depended on human allies and ignored God. He ended the chapter with a more positive thought. He gave an example of how God would provide for people who depended on Him alone for help in times of trouble. God would fight for His people, and He would win easily.

We will suffer many things in life. We will hurt. If we trust God, we will someday win. We might not overcome every problem. But in the end we will triumph because He is faithful.

How do you know God is faithful to you? What kind of victory in life does God give you?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 31:1-9. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

List some ways you depend on the wrong people instead of relying on God. Pray with your group for God's help to trust His power in times of trouble.

Share stories with your small group of when God was faithful to you. Who can you share these stories with that needs to know about God's faithfulness?

How has trusting in God ultimately given you victory in life? How can you change areas of defeat in your life to areas of victory?



God Listens

God hears and sees the prayers of His people and will fulfill His purposes for them.

ISAIAH 37:14-20,30-35

Some people pray for small things. Others pray for things that seem impossible. Some pray selfishly for things they want without considering if their desires are holy.

Hezekiah, king of Judah, faced the mighty Assyrian army. King Sennacherib of Assyria had beaten the Babylonians and the Egyptians. Sennacherib then invaded Judah and captured all the walled cities. Only Jerusalem was left. Nevertheless, Hezekiah prayed.

Hezekiah recognized God's greatness. He prayed boldly, but he was also humble. By studying Hezekiah's prayer we can learn how to adjust our attitudes in prayer. We, too, can show boldness and humility in prayer. We can pray knowing that God always sees (or hears) our prayers and He will give us His perfect answer.

ISAIAH 37:14-20,30-35

14 When **Hezekiah** **A** received the letter from the messengers and read it, he went up to the Temple of the Lord. He spread the letter out before the LORD **15** and prayed to the LORD: **16** “LORD All-Powerful, you are the God of Israel, whose throne is between the gold **creatures with wings**, **B** only you are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth. **17** Hear, LORD, and listen. Open your eyes, LORD, and see. Listen to all the words **Sennacherib** **C** said to insult the living God. **18** “It is true, LORD, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all these countries and their lands. **19** They have thrown the gods of these nations into the fire, but they were only wood and rock statues that people made. So the kings have destroyed them. **20** Now, LORD our God, save us from the king’s power so that all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you, LORD, are the only God.” **30** “Then the LORD said, ‘Hezekiah, I will give you this sign: This year you will eat the **grain that grows wild**, **D** and the second year you will eat what grows wild from that. But in the third year, plant grain and harvest it. Plant vineyards and eat their fruit. **31** Some of the people in the **family of Judah** **E** will escape. Like plants that take root, they will grow strong and have many children. **32** A few people will come out of Jerusalem alive; a few from Mount Zion will live. The strong love of the LORD All-Powerful will make this happen.’ **33** “So this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or even shoot an arrow here. He will not fight against it with shields or build a ramp to **attack the city walls**. **F** **34** He will return to his country the same way he came, and he will not enter this city,’ says the LORD. **35** ‘I will defend and save this city for my sake and for **David**, **G** my servant.’”

- a. Hezekiah was king of Judah.
- b. These creatures were called cherubim, and they were on the top of the ark of the covenant. The presence of God stayed with the people in the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant was.
- c. Sennacherib was king of Assyria. He is famous in history for his battles against Israel and Babylon. He was king from 705 to 681 BC.
- d. Wheat is a kind of grass and will grow wild in some areas. God said the people would have to eat wild grain instead of grain people planted.
- e. These are the people of the southern kingdom of Judah. Most of them were from the tribe of Judah, and so their kingdom was named for that tribe.
- f. The city had large walls. The only way for an army to enter the city was to break the gates, break the walls, or build a long ramp of dirt over the wall.
- g. King David was dead, but God continued to keep the promises He made to David.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. How did King Hezekiah respond when he received the threats from Sennacherib?**
- 2. How did God respond to Hezekiah's prayers?**
- 3. Do you think God hears our prayers today? Why or why not?**
- 4. What reason did Hezekiah give for wanting God to help?**
- 5. How would planting grain in the third year show trust in God?**
- 6. What would the king of Assyria do to the city?**
- 7. Why would the Lord defend the city?**
- 8. Will God always protect us from physical harm? Why or why not?**
- 9. Why was it important to know that God would defeat the king of Assyria?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Find verses about prayer.*

Hezekiah prayed boldly for God's help. At the same time he was humble as he talked with God. Find the verses below in your Bible and write what you learn about prayer from each verse.

Hebrews 4:16 _____

James 5:16 _____

Philippians 4:6 _____

Matthew 6:6 _____

Romans 8:26 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can approach God with bold requests because of who God is.
- God wants believers to trust Him as He answers our prayers following His will and purpose.
- God answers our prayers in ways that show His power and fit with His plans.

Since we can go to God with bold prayers because of who God is, how will your prayer life change this week? Make a list of what you plan to pray about.

With your Bible study group, share stories about God answering your prayers. What can the group do to encourage each other to trust God to answer our prayers as they fit His purposes?

How do you see God's power in His answers to your prayers? Pray with your group now for a great outpouring of His power in all of your lives.

MEMORY VERSE

“I will defend and save this city for my sake and for David, my servant.” – Isaiah 37:35

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 37:14-15, noticing how Hezekiah responded to the threats from Sennacherib.

King Sennacherib invaded Judah and captured all the major cities. Finally, he arrived at Jerusalem. Sennacherib mocked King Hezekiah of Judah. He also mocked God. You can read his words in Isaiah 37:9-13. He offered safe passage to a new home for any of the people who would surrender. When King Hezekiah received the message from the enemy, he did not talk to advisors. Instead, he went directly to the temple of the Lord. He took the written message from the enemy king, laid it out before God, and he prayed. The king's first response to the terrible threat from Assyria was to pray.

What is it about God that allows His people to pray to Him? When we pray, we are talking to the Creator of all things, and yet He lets us talk to Him. He is not far away, and He does not ignore us.

When you face problems, do you think of God first? Why have you sometimes in the past failed to pray? How can you change so that prayer is your first response to every problem?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 37:16-17, underlining what Hezekiah knew about God.

Hezekiah's prayer focused on God. He described God as being all-powerful. In the ancient world, many cultures believed in gods with limited power. Hezekiah knew the true God had power over everything. Also, Hezekiah said the Lord was God over all the kingdoms of the earth. Earlier, Sennacherib said he had beaten other kingdoms. He said their gods were useless. Many cultures believed their gods were only powerful in their own lands and did not rule over all kingdoms. The Lord God—the one true God—was and is God over the entire earth.

When Sennacherib said God would not protect Jerusalem, he was trying to scare the people. He was also insulting God. Hezekiah understood Sennacherib's insults. He showed in his prayers he knew the real nature of God. Hezekiah knew he could pray to God for help because God alone was strong enough to stop the enemy. Sennacherib thought

God was too far away or too weak to help. Hezekiah knew God was near, strong, and could do all things.

What subjects do you sometimes decide not to talk to God about? How can you improve your prayers and recognize His power to help?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 37:18-20, looking for two lessons on prayer.

Hezekiah admitted the truth—the Assyrian king had defeated many other kingdoms and their gods. Other nations had gods made by people. Their gods were stone and wooden statues. The Lord of Judah was real. People did not make Him. He could actually save the people if that was His will and plan.

Hezekiah's entire prayer focused on God. He recognized God as great and all-powerful. He confessed that God created all things and ruled the entire earth. Hezekiah knew God was strong and the idols were weak. Hezekiah closed his prayer by finally asking God for something—to save His people. What was Hezekiah's reason for wanting salvation? He wanted all the nations of the earth to know the Lord was the only God.

Two lessons are clear. The first lesson is we can pray to God because He is the only one who can help us. He loves us and pays attention to our prayer. The second lesson is that prayer is more about who God is than what we want. Too often, our prayers focus on us, and not on the God who listens.

When you pray, do you spend more time thinking of God or about yourself? How can you change your prayers to focus more on God's wonderful character?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 37:30-32, paying attention to how long Hezekiah would have to wait to see God's sign.

In Isaiah 37:21-29, God spoke of His own power and glory. He invited Sennacherib to compare achievements with Him and see who would win. God promised to force the Assyrian king to leave Judah and return home.

For Hezekiah, God had a different response. Grains are a type of grass and will grow wild in the fields sometimes. When people are not able to plant grain, they can still find wild grain. The Lord said for two years, the Jews would only have wild grain. Perhaps invading armies had burned all the fields, or maybe they were too busy fighting battles. They did not have time to plant and harvest crops. During the third year, the land would have enough peace for people to plant grain and grapes. Many would die but a few would remain, and the nation would rise again.

God would save His people, but suffering would still come. As long as Hezekiah was patient and trusted in the Lord, salvation would come just as the Lord planned it.

Why is it hard to wait while God answers prayers? How can you have the patience you need to wait on the Lord?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Prayer*

Prayer is the word we use to describe talking with God. God knows all things, and so He knows our needs before we tell Him; still He wants to hear from us. He wants us to come to Him and communicate from our hearts and minds. He will respond to prayers from those who truly seek Him. He will answer them in ways that fit both His plans and meet our deepest need. We may not always understand His answers, but we can trust that our sovereign God knows what is best.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 37:33-35, finding the prayers God responds to.

God promised to protect the city from the Assyrian army. In fact, the army would not even begin to fight. Instead, the Assyrians would go home and leave the city in peace. Yes, much of the country suffered from the Assyrian invasion, but it all ended at Jerusalem.

God responds to prayers which glorify Him. He responds in ways that meet His timeline, His plans, and His goals. When His people praise Him in prayer, He will respond. When His people accept His will in all things, they will glorify Him even when His answers are not what they expect. Hezekiah perhaps did not expect a three-year recovery, but he was willing to accept God's decision and ways. Like Hezekiah, we can graciously accept God's answers to our prayers when we realize His greatness and majesty.

How should you pray to glorify God? What kind of answers to prayer should you expect from God?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 37:14-20,30-35. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What ideas about prayer do you need to change? How can you approach God more confidently in your prayers?

How has God responded to your prayers in the past? Now that you understand more about God's responses fitting His will and purpose, how will you show greater trust for God in the future?

How can you make sure your requests to God show His power and fit His will?



God Renews

God provides strength for people who trust in Him.

ISAIAH 40:18-31

Isaiah made several prophecies about the future. He knew the people of Judah would soon leave their homes, forced to move to Babylon. They would cry as they left and wonder where God was. They would doubt His knowledge of their problems. They might even believe God could not help them. Isaiah wrote part of chapter 40 to encourage the people as they left their country and moved to a far away place.

Can we trust God to help us through hard times? Isaiah believed we can. The God who could make the universe certainly has the power to help us. We can learn that Isaiah was right—those who trust in the Lord will have the strength they need to face all of life.

ISAIAH 40:18-31

18 Can you compare God to anything? Can you compare him to an **image** **A** of anything? **19** An idol is formed by a craftsman, and a goldsmith covers it with gold and makes silver chains for it. **20** A **poor person** **B** cannot buy those expensive statues, so he finds a tree that will not rot. Then he finds a skilled craftsman to make it into an idol that will not fall over. **21** Surely you know. Surely you have heard. Surely from the beginning someone told you. Surely you understand how the earth was created. **22** God sits on his throne above the **circle of the earth**, **C** and compared to him, people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the skies like a piece of cloth and spreads them out like a tent to sit under. **23** He makes rulers unimportant and the judges of this world worth nothing. **24** They are like plants that are placed in the ground, like seeds that are planted. As soon as they begin to grow strong, he blows on them and they die, and the wind blows them away like **chaff**. **D** **25** God, the Holy One, says, “Can you compare me to anyone? is anyone equal to me?” **26** Look up to the skies. Who created all these stars? He leads out the **army of heaven** **E** one by one and calls all the **stars by name**. **F** Because he is strong and powerful, not one of them is missing. **27** People of Jacob, why do you complain? People of Israel, why do you say, “The LORD does not see what happens to me; he does not care if I am treated fairly?” **28** Surely you know. Surely you have heard. The LORD is the God who lives forever, who created all the world. He does not become tired or need to rest. No one can understand how great his wisdom is. **29** He gives strength to those who are tired and more power to those who are weak. **30** Even children become tired and need to rest, and young people trip and fall. **31** But the people who trust the LORD will become strong again. They will rise up as an eagle in the sky; they will run and not need rest; they will walk and **not become tired**. **G**

- a. Isaiah asked if the people could possibly compare God to any of the idols of the ancient world.
- b. Wealthy people would pay for someone to make a solid stone idol with gold and silver covering it. A poor person would order a wooden idol because gold and silver were too expensive.
- c. People in the ancient world looked up and saw the vast sky—especially the night sky. God, in His position of greatness sat above that and looked down on the smallness of humans.
- d. The leftover bits of leaves and stalks from the wheat harvest. It was lightweight and would blow away easily.
- e. This is a creative way to say the stars. Stars covered the sky like an army covered the land, with campfires that twinkled.
- f. The writer means God’s knowledge of the stars is personal and complete, similar to the way we might know a person. Calling by name meant being superior to the stars.
- g. Trusting in the Lord is a never-ending source of strength.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. According to the text, what will God do for those who are willing to depend on Him?**
- 2. Why are idols useless?**
- 3. Why do you think people make gods for themselves instead of worshiping the one true God?**
- 4. How did Isaiah describe the greatness of God?**
- 5. How do nature and beauty point us to God?**
- 6. Why do people think God is unfair? Have you ever felt like God was unfair to you? Why or why not?**
- 7. How does Isaiah relate God’s power to the natural world? Why is God’s power important to us today?**
- 8. What does it mean for God to make us strong like eagles?**
- 9. Who would become strong again—everyone or only certain kinds of people?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Understanding Idols*

God told Moses to write the Ten Commandments. One of those commandments forbids the use of images or idols in worship. Another command told the Israelites not to worship things other than God. Read the verses below, and summarize how God feels about idols.

1 Samuel 5:1-5 _____

Judges 6:25-26 _____

Exodus 32:1-10 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- All idols are made by people. They are nothing compared to the one true God.
- God is the only creator of the universe, and He directs the events of His creation.
- God gives strength to those who trust Him.

Discuss with your group some things people value more than they value God. What do you need to change in your life so that you do not honor or trust anything or anyone more than God?

List some ways God is active in the world today. How does the fact that God created the world and is active in the world shape the way you think and live now?

Think of a time when God helped you go through a bad situation. Who do you know that needs to see your story about God's help? When can you give them this encouragement?

MEMORY VERSE

But the people who trust the LORD will become strong again. They will rise up as an eagle in the sky; they will run and not need rest; they will walk and not become tired. – Isaiah 40:31

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 40:18-20, looking for what people worship instead of God.

In the ancient world, almost everyone worshiped idols. Temples had fancy idols. Wealthy people had expensive idols which they kept at home. They would ask a local craftsman to carve an idol from stone or wood and cover it with gold. Silver decorations were next, making the idol beautiful. A poor man, though, could only afford a wooden idol. He would make sure the wood did not rot and was heavy enough and wide enough to not fall over.

Isaiah asked, “Can we compare God to an image?” The word for “image” here means stone, wood, or metal carved to look like something. Isaiah asked whether we could possibly look at anything and say, “That is just like God.” Of course, the answer is NO. We cannot compare God to something humans created. God is powerful. He does not need a wide, strong base to stand up. He is beautiful. He does not need gold and silver to make Him attractive. Nevertheless, even today people worship things instead of God. Money, power, things, entertainment, sex, and fun all become today’s idols. These too are worthless, powerless gods.

What do you value more than you value God? How does your life show that God is all that you worship?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 40:21-24, comparing Isaiah’s words with the natural world.

Isaiah was a wonderful poet and writer. He used clear pictures and questions to force readers to think about the size, power, and greatness of God. He first called attention to what everyone should know—God made all things. In fact, God made the world as easily as someone spreads a blanket over the ground. People were prideful, but they were as small as bugs compared to the Creator God.

What about kings and rulers? Isaiah compared leaders of men to plants. Someone planted seeds. They grew, and someone cut them down. Their leaves dried and crumbled, and the wind blew them away. Leaders

were similar to this. God planted them, but soon they withered and died. His mere breath brushed away these “powerful” men as if they were nothing.

God’s greatness is clear in creation. Why do we forget His strength and power when we can open our windows and see evidence of Him everywhere we look? Isaiah tried to teach the people to trust Him. Isaiah’s path to trust began with this idea: “God is powerful, and if you look around, you will see I am right.”

Think of a time when God reminded you of His greatness. How did you feel?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 40:25-26, appreciating the comparison Isaiah makes using stars.

Isaiah used a wonderful example from daily life to help the people appreciate God’s greatness. The prophet pointed toward the stars. In ancient Israel, no one had streetlights. So, at night the stars would fill the sky with millions of twinkling lights. Isaiah reminded the people who made the stars—God.

Next, Isaiah compared the stars to a mighty army that God leads. The people of Judah knew about invading armies. Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt had fought against Israel and passed through the nation many times. At night, the campfires from thousands of troops would cover the hills and valleys, seeming to stretch for miles into the darkness. They twinkled just like the stars.

God, in all His power, controls the universe. He started it years ago, and someday He will end it. In between those times, He will accomplish His plans. Our plans are like the plans of ants and spiders—small things compared to God. God’s plans and His power are what is important. Like He leads the stars, He leads all His creation.

Isaiah used images of stars and armies. What kind of example or image would he use today to communicate the power of God to the lost?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 40:27-28, noticing what we can trust about God.

The people made two complaints. First, they thought God did not see what was happening to them. In this complaint, they seemed to think that God was limited and could not know their struggles. Second, they complained that God did not help them because He did not care. Basically, this complaint means, “God does not know what He is doing. He should be helping me!”

Isaiah responded to their complaints. He said God is great, powerful, and wise. God’s greatness means He knows everything. God’s power shows He can do whatever He needs to do. God’s wisdom allows Him to know who to help and when to help them.

We sometimes struggle to understand why God doesn’t do what we want when we want it. Maybe we feel like the Israelites; we think God has left us alone. In our hearts, we accuse God of not caring or being too limited to help us. Isaiah pointed us to the truth: God is powerful. He created the world, and He knows everything about it. He knows your struggles and your pain. We may not understand why God delays helping us, but we can trust His wisdom.

Have you ever been frustrated while waiting for God to help you? How can Isaiah’s words teach you to wait patiently for His perfect timing?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God’s Power and Knowledge*

God is all-powerful, meaning He is above all others. No one has more power than Him. He is also all-knowing, meaning He knows everything there is to know in the past, in the present, and in the future. He can make perfect decisions because He has perfect knowledge. He has the power to make His decisions final.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 40:29-31, underlining ways waiting on God is good.

Isaiah closed the chapter with a statement of hope for the Israelites. He assured them God is willing to give strength to all who depend on Him. No one was too old or too young for His help. God would help everyone if only they would wait for Him. They would not simply continue struggling through life. Somehow they would soar like a majestic eagle.

Why is waiting for God a requirement for receiving His help? Waiting for God shows we accept His sovereignty—His position as King over all. When we demand He act now, we show we do not accept Him as King. Also, waiting for God shows we trust His power. No one waits for help from a weak person. When we decide to solve our own problems, we show an inner belief that God is not strong enough. Lastly, waiting for God's timing proves we trust His wisdom. If we rely on our own wisdom to solve our problems, it means we trust our own wisdom instead of trusting Him.

How is waiting on God showing you trust Him?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 40:18-31. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

**What do you depend on more than you depend on God?
How can you shift your time and your dependency back to Him?**

Discuss the examples Isaiah used to show God's power and rule over the whole universe. How is God's rule showing up in your life?

In what parts of your life do you need more of God's strength? How will trusting in God give you more of God's strength?



God Acts

The one true God cannot be compared to anything else. He will complete His plan to save His people.

ISAIAH 46:3-13

The Israelites had a relationship with the real God. Nothing in the world could compare to the Lord. He was not a fake god made from wood or clay. He was true and real. Because He is above all people, His plans always come true. Somehow, though, the Hebrew people forgot this simple fact. They stopped worshiping God and started to worship idols and fake gods. The Lord was patient, but eventually His patience would run out.

God sent Isaiah to remind the people of His greatness. He wanted them to remember who He was and what He could do. Today's lesson focuses on reminding the people and warning them of what would come.

ISAIAH 46:3-13

3 “**Family of Jacob**, **A** listen to me! All you people from Israel who are still alive, listen! I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you **from your birth**. **B** **4** Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will **take care of you**. **C** I made you and will take care of you. I will carry you and save you. **5** “Can you compare me to anyone? No one is equal to me or like me. **6** Some people are rich with gold and weigh their silver on the scales. They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god. Then they bow down and worship it. **7** They put it on their shoulders and carry it. They set it in its place, and there it stands; it cannot move from its place. People may yell at it, but it cannot answer. It cannot save them from their troubles. **8** “Remember this, and do not forget it! Think about these things, you who turn against God. **9** Remember **what happened long ago**. **D** Remember that I am God, and there is no other God. I am God, and there is no one like me. **10** From the beginning I told you what would happen in the end. A long time ago I told you things that have not yet happened. When I plan something, it happens. What I want to do, I will do. **11** I am calling a man **from the east** **E** to carry out my plan; he will come like a hawk from a country far away. I will make what I have said come true; I will do what **I have planned**. **F** **12** Listen to me, you stubborn people, who are **far from what is right**. **G** **13** I will soon do the things that are right. I will bring salvation soon. I will save Jerusalem and bring glory to Israel.”

- a. This is another name for the Jews, who all came from the family line of Jacob, son of Isaac.
- b. God means from the time He established the family of Jacob and started the nation of Israel.
- c. God promised to care for His people forever, using the comparison of age to mean “for a very long time.”
- d. We cannot really know exactly what God means by “what happened long ago.” Perhaps He meant the many wonderful acts He had done for His people. He may have meant the prophecies from the past that came true.
- e. God brought kings with their armies from the east—from Babylon and Persia—to teach His people to return to Him.
- f. God’s plans are perfect because He knows all things. He will do what He has planned because for God there are no surprises.
- g. God says the stubbornness of His people relates to how far they are from the truth of what is right.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. What does it mean to say God is with us?**
- 2. How had God taken care of Israel?**
- 3. How does God take care of His people today?**
- 4. How can wealth get in the way of trusting God?**
- 5. What problem did God have with idols?**
- 6. Why did God encourage the people to remember?**
- 7. What plans does God have today? How can we know His plans will come true?**
- 8. Why did God call people who were far from truth “stubborn”?**
- 9. How does God’s salvation bring glory to Israel?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Search verses.*

The Old Testament often refers to God as a Father to the Israelites. Look up the verses below and read them. Write out the ways God is a father to the people. Notice any emotions or feelings from God about His children.

Hosea 11:1-4 _____

Psalms 103:13 _____

Jeremiah 3:19 _____

Proverbs 3:11-12 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- The one true God is able to save His people.
- The one true God continues to show His power and trustworthiness.
- The one true God provides His eternal plan of salvation for His people.

How does God's salvation change how you live today?

How does God prove that you can trust Him today? Do you have some areas where you struggle to trust God? How can your actions show an increased trust in Him this week?

Discuss with your group God's eternal plan of salvation for His people. How can your group share God's plan with the Deaf people you know in your community?

MEMORY VERSE

Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and will take care of you. I will carry you and save you. – Isaiah 46:4

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 46:3-4, looking for what God has been in the past and will be in the future.

In Genesis 12, God called Abraham and Sarah. He used them to create a large family and then an entire nation. From the very beginning God was with them. Even as the people of Israel sinned and moved away from God, He was there.

In Isaiah 46, God reminded the people of His presence. He brought them into the world. He saved them from Egyptian armies and Canaanite wars. Throughout the time of the judges, God carried the people through hard times. Even when He had to discipline the people for their sins, He was with them. He encouraged them to repent and return to Him.

In another sense God is with all creation. He created everything and has always made sure the universe continues to run. He has been with humanity from the beginning in the garden of Eden. He will continue to be with us until the end of time. He will save His people today just as He saved His people in Judah during the time of Isaiah. God is the same today as He was in the past, and He will continue to be the same forever.

Describe a time when you knew God was with you. How did you know He was there?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 46:5-7, finding who alone can save people.

In the ancient world, many different religions had their own temples and places of worship. Also, many people had idols at home. They could pray, worship, and offer gifts to their gods without going to the temple. Rich people would use their own silver or gold for an idol. They paid a craftsman to melt the metal and shape an idol.

Verses 5-7 describe how people made and cared for these idols. In contrast, verses 3-4 describe how God made and cared for His people. The people paid for the idol. The craftsman made it. The people carried

their idol from place to place. They decided where it should stand. The people called to the idol for help. The idol—the god of the people—did nothing. It did not save. It could not even move itself much less answer their call.

An idol cannot compare to God. Nothing in this world can be truly compared to God. He is Lord. He alone can act to save His people. Idols cannot save us, and neither can we save ourselves.

How would you compare an idol with the true God? How are they different? Why is it that only God can save you?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 46:8-9, drawing a line under what God wants us to remember.

In verse 8, God said, “Remember!” He wanted the people to remember the weakness of idols. In verse 9, he added, “Remember what happened long ago.” The Lord was telling the Israelites to look at their own history and think about everything God had done. He had always been there, and they needed to remember that. God always cared for them, and the people needed to remember His presence.

The people did not need blind faith. All they had to do was look at their own history. They had proof. God was with them and had always been with them. We, too, have a history of God’s salvation and presence in our lives. Ben was a Deaf deacon in Tennessee. He often told his salvation story and how Saul’s conversion in Acts 9 had drawn Ben to the Lord. Ben knew God’s salvation and God’s constant daily presence.

What are some ways you have seen God working in your life? How do you know His salvation and presence?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 46:10-11, paying attention to God's ability to know and decide the future.

God reminded the people that anything He said He would do always happened. If God said it would rain, it rained. If God said He would destroy Sodom, He would destroy it. When the Israelites agreed with God (made a covenant) at Mount Sinai, the Lord said He would bless people who obeyed Him. He also said He would curse (punish) Israelites who disobeyed. Now, in the prophecy of Isaiah, it was time to discipline the people for breaking their promises to Him. He warned them years earlier, and now it would happen.

Isaiah compared the “man from the east” in verse 11 with a hawk or strong bird. Many Bible teachers think this man was Cyrus, king of Persia. Cyrus used an eagle as a symbol on his flag. He was famous for having a very fast army which moved quickly to conquer new places. The point is, before it happened God warned of its coming. Now what God had said would happen was going to come true. The God who knows the past also knows and guides the future.

God knows everything. How can His knowledge comfort us?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Knowing God*

God is all powerful and all knowing. His perfect knowledge extends to (covers) all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures (human and animals). God's perfect knowledge allows Him to make plans. His plans will always work out because He knows everything that will happen before it happens. Nothing ever surprises God, and nothing ever ruins His plans.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 46:12-13, finding how forgiveness is better than rebellion.

God would someday bring a king from the east to teach the people a lesson. He would bring an army and conquer the land. God would do this because of the sin of His people. As we saw in the last section, God's plans always come true. God did not want to discipline the people. Instead, He wanted the stubborn people of the nation to return to Him. They were far from holiness and far from pleasing God. He only wanted them to return to Him and to a healthy relationship.

How wise we would be if we learned from the mistakes of others! When God disciplines us, we must listen. We need to understand what He is telling us. If we are willing to repent of our sins, God is willing to forgive us. He will save us from our sins, just as He would do for the people of Judah long ago.

How is His forgiveness and salvation better than rebellion?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 46:3-13. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How does your life show that God is your Savior? How could you explain God's willingness to save us to someone who does not believe in God?

What will need to change in your life so that God's power can show through the way you live? How is God's power showing through you today?

Practice explaining the plan of salvation so you can tell your Deaf friends how they can be saved.



God Comforts

The one true God is compassionate. He comforts His people.

ISAIAH 49:1-13

Throughout Scripture, God offered His plans to people. His plans gave them comfort. Knowing the Lord had a place in His plans for them gave them hope and peace, even as they faced hard times. Isaiah wrote about a Suffering Servant in four different sections of his book. These are called the Servant Songs. You can read them in Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11, and 52:13–53:12. In some ways, these songs apply to Isaiah as he suffered for the Lord. In other ways, the songs seem to fit the nation of Israel as they struggled through hard times and yet returned to serve the Lord. Most of all, these words apply to Christ. In today's Servant Song, we will see how God's plans include His servants and how He offers comfort to them as they struggle.

ISAIAH 49:1-13

1 All of you people in faraway places, listen to me. Listen, all you nations far away. Before I was born, the LORD called me to serve him. The LORD named me while I was still in my mother's womb. **2** He made my **tongue like a sharp sword.** **A** He hid me in the shadow of his hand. He made me like a sharp arrow. He hid me in the holder for his arrows. **3** He told me, "Israel, you are my servant. I will show my glory through you." **4** But I said, "I have worked hard for nothing; I have used all my power, but I did nothing useful. But the LORD will decide what my work is worth; God will decide my reward." **5** The LORD made me in the body of my mother to be his servant, **to lead the people of Jacob back to him so that Israel might be gathered to him.** **B** The LORD will honor me, and I will get my strength from my God. **6** Now he told me, "You are an important servant to me to bring back the tribes of Jacob, to **bring back the people of Israel** **C** who are left alive. But, more importantly, I will make you a light for all nations to show people all over the world **the way to be saved.**" **D** **7** The LORD who saves you is the **Holy One of Israel.** **E** He speaks to the one who is hated by the people, to the servant of rulers. This is what he says: "Kings will see you and stand to honor you; great leaders will bow down before you, because the LORD can be trusted. He is the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." **8** This is what the LORD says: "At the right time I will hear your prayers. On the day of salvation I will help you. I will protect you, and you will be the sign of my agreement with the people. You will bring back the people to the land and give the land that is now ruined back to its owners. **9** You will tell the prisoners, 'Come out of your prison.' You will tell those in darkness, 'Come into the light.' The people will eat beside the roads, and they will find food even on bare hills. **10** They will not be hungry or thirsty. Neither the hot sun nor the desert wind will hurt them. The God who comforts them will lead them and guide them by springs of water. **11** I will make my mountains into roads, and the roads will be raised up. **12** Look, people are coming to me from far away, from the north and from the west, from **Aswan** **F** in southern Egypt." **13** Heavens and earth, be happy. Mountains, shout with joy, because the LORD comforts his people and will have pity on those who suffer.

- a. In the New Testament, the Word of God is a sharp sword and it comes from the mouth (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16).
- b. These two lines have the same meaning using different words. Hebrew poetry rhymed ideas instead of sounds.
- c. This happened after God finished punishing them. The people were taken to Assyria and Babylon for many years, but God led them back home.
- d. Saving His people, Israel, was important to God, but this verse says that bringing salvation to the world was even greater.
- e. A Hebrew name for God. Writers of the Old Testament used this phrase 22 times, 19 of those 22 times are in the Book of Isaiah.
- f. Aswan is a city in far southern Egypt. Isaiah may have meant this city or some other far away place.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. How does God comfort His people?**
- 2. God said He would show His glory through Israel (Isaiah 46:10). How do you think He planned to do that, based on the chapter you read?**
- 3. Have you ever felt like your work for the Lord was wasted? How did you deal with that feeling?**
- 4. This chapter mentions a servant. What does it mean for you to be a servant of God?**
- 5. Why do you think telling the world about God was more important than bringing the people of Israel back home?**
- 6. What is your service to God worth?**
- 7. Why would kings and leaders honor the servant?**
- 8. Does God choose people today to serve Him? How does that work?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Match the verses.*

Isaiah 49:9 talked about prisoners who would become free. Christ is the one who gives final freedom. How did Jesus free prisoners? Read the verses below, and connect the verses on the left with the correct statement on the right.

Mark 5:1-15	Prisoner of sickness
Luke 13:16	Prisoner of a demon set free
Revelation 1:7	Prisoners of sin and the law
Galatians 3:22-23	Son of Man coming in the clouds

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can find comfort in knowing that God includes them in His salvation plans.
- God calls believers to share the message of God’s salvation to all people with love.
- Believers can live with confidence, knowing that God will support them and prove them right.

Discuss with your group how God includes believers in His plan of salvation. How does being included in God’s plans to save people give you comfort?

What does your church do to share God’s message of salvation with your community? How can you and your church share this message even more?

How have you felt God’s support in the past when you faithfully obeyed Him? How will your experience in the past shape the way you obey Him in the future?

MEMORY VERSE

Heavens and earth, be happy. Mountains, shout with joy, because the LORD comforts his people and will have pity on those who suffer. – Isaiah 49:13

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 49:1-4, looking for what Isaiah said about God's plan and your life.

The prophet wrote a beautiful passage about God's plans. Since the beginning of the world, God has been working His plan through people, especially people who choose to follow Him. In verses 1-2, Isaiah announced that God's plans included working with His people, Israel, to accomplish His goals. Just as God formed Isaiah in the beginning, God also created and shaped the nation of Israel even before Abraham was born. He made them into a nation able to do great things for God. And since these verses also point to Christ, we can see how Jesus' birth as a human was also part of God's plan.

Isaiah, speaking for Israel, showed some sadness. He worked so long, and it seemed like nothing good happened from all his time and energy. Christ also worked hard. When He died, His disciples scattered as if all His time had been wasted. But God knew the value of their work just as He knows the value of our labor. We can find hope, even as we struggle, knowing God includes us in His plans and He knows the good that we do.

Have you ever felt like God has a plan for you? What was that plan? How have you obeyed God's plan for your life?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 49:5, thinking about your role as a servant of God.

We read in the first four verses how God made sure His servant was perfectly ready for some role. What was that role to be? Verse five tells us the servant's job was to lead the people of Israel back to God. Along the way, God would give the servant strength, and He would honor the servant for his hard work.

God's entire plan for humanity is for us to have a relationship with Him. Sin keeps people from God, so He sent servants and prophets to tell the nations how to return to Him. Isaiah's job was to help God's people to repent and return. Christ's work was to bring all nations to God, but even the nation of Israel shared the responsibility of telling the nations to turn to God.

We can see here how this verse applies to both Isaiah and Christ. Both men served because it was part of God's plan. Both preached to people who did not listen. Both suffered for their commitment to serving the Lord. We should expect the same. God made us for a purpose, and we should carry the good news to the nations, even if we suffer along the way.

Do you think Deaf people have a place in God's plan?

What is that place?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 49:6-7, underlining the duty Christians have today.

Verse six states God's desire for all Israel to return to Him. Many Jews had died during the wars. Many more would become slaves after being beaten by their enemies. Still, God wanted a relationship with the Israelites. They were sinners who had refused to repent for many years. They deserved their punishment. Even so, God wanted to renew the relationship He had with them.

But God wanted more. Some translations say that leading the tribes back to God was "too small a task" for His servant. He wanted His servant to be a light for the entire world, leading nations to turn to Him. Isaiah had a part in leading people to God. Israel, as a nation, helped the nations by becoming the country that brought Christ into the world. Christ, in His death, pointed all people to God.

Christians today have a duty to help the world understand how to be saved. When Jesus completed His work, He gave all of us the duty to carry the gospel into the world. (See Matthew 28:18-20.)

What can you do to share the gospel among the people in your town?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 49:8-11, circling the ways God would bless those who returned to Him.

Isaiah, Israel, and Christ would all suffer in their service to the Lord; yet someday God would help them. He would hear their prayers and act. He would protect His servant and strengthen him to finish the job of calling the people back to the Lord. Prisoners would become free. The poor hungry people would find food wherever they went. God would provide completely for their needs. The mountains would become smooth. Roads would appear to make the journey easy.

Much of this passage is a metaphor—a picture. The mountains would not flatten and not all prisoners would leave their jail cells. Isaiah wrote in a poetic style, like in a song. His point was this: God will support His servant, and He will support the people who return to Him. Believers, like Christ, will suffer even as they obey God. Even so, the Lord will confirm His truth in us. He will prove we were right in our message all along. Knowing God is behind us one hundred percent should give us confidence to do His work, even as hard times come our way.

In what ways have you felt God bless you in your life even during hard times?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

God wants to forgive our sins. He has provided a path to forgiveness through Christ. When we come to God and repent of our sins, He declares us clean and innocent at that moment. This is called justification. However, we continue to grow over the years as we serve the Lord and learn more about Him. This long slow process is called sanctification. Salvation includes both.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 49:12-13, paying attention to why our work has not failed.

Isaiah closed this section with an expression of joy. People would someday return to the Lord and all creation would celebrate. We can see a similar set of verses in Psalm 98:7-8. The psalmist said the rivers and streams and mountains would clap their hands and sing. Just as sin has hurt everything in nature, someday God's salvation will make nature better. The mountains may not truly sing, but all creation will improve when God finally saves His people.

Verse 12 mentions a town, and the NCV Bible translates this as Aswan in southern Egypt. Some other translations call this place Sinim, which means either China or simply "a faraway place." Isaiah's point here was not to name a specific site, but instead to communicate that people will come from even the farthest places on the earth to search for the Lord.

The servant can see the result of his labor—streams of people from every tribe and nation, traveling long distances to know the Lord.

How does God help you understand your time and efforts are valuable to His kingdom work?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 49:1-13. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How does it feel to know God has included you in His plans? How can you and your small group join God in His work this week?

When was the last time you shared Christ with someone outside the church? How could you do a better job sharing Christ with your Deaf friends?

List some ways you have known God's support as you have served Him. How will this list inspire you to live faithfully no matter what happens in life?



God Justifies

The one true God is forgiving; He justifies believers by taking their sin on Himself.

ISAIAH 53:1-12

Isaiah is famous for his Hebrew poetry. Many Bible teachers think Isaiah is the best writer and poet in the Old Testament. Isaiah is also famous for his prophecy about the coming of Christ. Bible teachers have identified four chapters that focus on Christ as the Suffering Servant, faithfully obeying His Father in service here on earth. You can find these four songs in Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11, and 52:13–53:12. Isaiah 53 is probably the most famous of the Servant Songs.

As you read Isaiah 53, think about the life and work of Jesus. Compare what Isaiah wrote in poetry with the words of the Gospels in the New Testament. Isaiah probably did not fully understand how his prophecy would work. Now we can look back and use the entire Bible to understand Isaiah's words better.

ISAIAH 53:1-12

1 Who would have believed what we heard? Who saw the LORD's power in this? **2** He grew up like a small plant before the LORD, like a root growing in a dry land. He had no special beauty or form to make us notice him; there was nothing in his appearance to make us desire him. **3** He was hated and rejected by people. **He had much pain and suffering.** **A** People would not even look at him. He was hated, and we didn't even notice him. **4** But he took our suffering on him and felt our pain for us. We saw his suffering and thought God was punishing him. **5** But he was **wounded** **B** for the wrong we did; he was crushed for the evil we did. The punishment, which made us well, was given to him, and we are healed because of his **wounds**. **C** **6** We all have wandered away like **sheep**; **D** each of us has gone his own way. But the LORD has put on him the punishment for all the evil we have done. **7** He was beaten down and punished, but he didn't say a word. He was like a lamb being led to be killed. He was quiet, as a sheep is quiet while its wool is being cut; he never opened his mouth. **8** Men took him away roughly and unfairly. He died without children to continue his family. He was put to death; he was punished for the sins of my people. **9** He was buried with wicked men, and he died with the **rich**. **E** He had done nothing wrong, and he had never lied. **10** But it was the LORD who decided to crush him and make him suffer. The LORD made his life a **penalty offering**, **F** but he will still see **his descendants** **G** and live a long life. He will complete the things the LORD wants him to do. **11** "After his soul suffers many things, he will see life and be satisfied. My good servant will make many people right with God; he will carry away their sins. **12** For this reason I will make him a great man among people, and he will share in all things with those who are strong. He willingly gave his life and was treated like a criminal. But he carried away the sins of many people and asked forgiveness for those who sinned."

- a. Some translations say, "He was familiar with grief." This means He knew about sadness and pain.
- b. Some translations say "pierced." Something stabbed Him and poked through His skin or body.
- c. The wounds were from being beaten with a whip, just as Jesus experienced.
- d. Israel had always been a nation of shepherds. Isaiah's audience would have understood the comparison very easily.
- e. Joseph of Aramathea was a wealthy man who provided a grave for Christ.
- f. Also called a guilt offering. It was a gift the Israelites brought to the tabernacle or temple to show sorrow and repentance for their sins. The animal took the death penalty for the sinner.
- g. Verse 8 says He died without children, but this verse mentions descendants. These descendants were not physically related but were His children spiritually.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. What does it mean that God justifies His people?**
- 2. Why did the people hate Him?**
- 3. Why do some people hate Christians today?**
- 4. Why did the person in these verses suffer so much?**
- 5. What do you think it means that we are healed through His wounds?**
- 6. Jesus was silent as He suffered. Should we also be silent when we suffer hatred from other people?**
- 7. Who decided the man needed to suffer? Why is that important?**
- 8. Why would God make this man someone great? What did He do to deserve that blessing from God?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Match the Old Testament with the New Testament.*

Isaiah wrote about the Suffering Servant. We know today he was writing about Jesus.

Read the story in Mark 15:1-25. Look for the ways the people rejected Christ. Look for similarities in Christ's experience and the experience of the Suffering Servant. Write some things you find.

APPLY THE TEXT

- The Servant faced rejection so that we could have salvation.
- The Servant took our sin and also took the judgment for sin in our place.
- The Servant willingly paid the price for our sin.
- The Servant provides salvation to all who accept His sacrifice.

Discuss with your group how the rejection that Jesus faced provides salvation for us.

How has your life changed since Jesus has taken your sin and judgment? What should you do now that you are no longer in sin and facing judgment?

Make a list of people who need to know that Jesus has paid the price for sin. Who on this list will you tell about Jesus?

Practice telling the story of the sacrifice of Jesus with someone in your group. How can you use VP or text to share this story?

MEMORY VERSE

But He was wounded for the wrong we did; he was crushed for the evil we did. The punishment, which made us well, was given to him, and we are healed because of his wounds. – Isaiah 53:5

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 53:1-3, identifying the Suffering Servant.

Have you ever met an important leader? Famous leaders are often good looking and charming. They often have wonderful personalities and can attract crowds of people. Folks gather around leaders like that. The Servant in this text was different. He would not be someone who drew crowds. Instead, people would reject Him. He would serve, but people would hate Him. He would suffer, but the crowds ignored Him. Even so, He would serve while people passed by without recognizing who He was.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus was popular sometimes. But for most of His ministry people rejected Him. He wasn't good-looking, rich, or from the right area. Instead of being great and mighty, Jesus suffered. While He suffered, He continued to serve. We know Christ's service aimed at a very high goal—our salvation.

Today, we know about His service, but people still reject Him. They prefer to worship things or to spend their energy chasing leaders who promise them money, fame, or success. Christ knew we would do this. Even so, He chose to be the Suffering Servant.

How does this description point to Jesus?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 53:4-6, thinking about what path you are on.

Isaiah described a terrible experience for the Servant. Isaiah said the Servant would suffer for other people. He would take the pain from them and experience it Himself. People who deserved punishment for their sins would be free, and the Servant would take their punishment. The punishment would hurt badly. Isaiah said it would crush Him.

Isaiah compared the people to sheep who wandered their own paths. Sheep usually follow a shepherd, but these sheep wandered where they wanted. By comparing people to wandering sheep, Isaiah was saying when we follow our own ways we are rejecting God's way. Even though the people rejected God's way, the Servant accepted their punishment. His suffering would lead to healing for the people.

Today, we all want to be independent. We want to choose our own paths like wandering sheep. When we choose our own way, we reject God's way. But Christ was our Suffering Servant who has already suffered

for us. He took away the sin of rejecting God's path. What we need to do now is recognize our own sin, understand our need for a Savior, and accept His kind forgiveness.

Do you follow God's path or your own? Have you ever thought about the idea of your own path as a rejection of His? How has Christ provided forgiveness for your sinful choices?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 53:7-9, paying attention to how Jesus responded to His suffering.

If we suffer for something we did not do, we usually complain. We say, "Wait, I didn't do this! Why are you punishing me?" Maybe if we volunteer to take the blame, we won't complain, but we will say, "I'm really innocent, but I volunteer to accept the blame."

Isaiah said the Servant would neither complain or protest. He would suffer without defending Himself. If you read John 18:28-40, you will see the conversation between Pilate and Christ. Jesus said nothing to defend Himself. He went to the cross even without a murmur. He knew the coming pain before He experienced it. Still, Jesus accepted the beating, the emotional pain of rejection, and the hours on the cross. He was willing to suffer for us.

When we choose our own path and reject His plans, we sin. That is our decision. God allows us the freedom to choose sin. Even though our sin is our own fault, the Servant—Christ—willingly died for us. Verse eight says the Servant "was put to death; he was punished for the sins" of the people. That includes your sins, too.

How should you respond to Jesus' willingness to accept your punishment for sin?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 53:10, comparing it with verse eight.

The death of the Servant (who was Jesus) was not an accident. The plan and decision of the Lord God was that Christ's life would be a guilt offering given for the sins of all people. In the Old Testament law, the people needed to go to the tabernacle or the temple. There they would pray and offer sacrifices. One kind of sacrifice was a guilt offering. This was an animal sacrifice. A person would offer the animal as a substitute for himself. The animal would take the death penalty for the person's sin. Isaiah compared the Servant, Jesus, to the animal offered as a guilt offering.

In verse 8, Isaiah said the Servant would die without children, but in verse 10 he said the Servant would be able to see His descendants. Also, the Servant would die, but He would experience long life. How is this possible? We know Christ died, but He also returned to life and lives forever. He had no children, but all people who accept His sacrifice are His descendants, His spiritual children.

Are you a descendant of Christ, the Suffering Servant? How can you explain to a non-believer how to be a child of Christ?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Substitutionary Atonement*

The phrase "substitutionary atonement" is a short way to express a complicated idea. Christ accepted our punishment in our place (substitution). He did this to make payment for or to make up for our sins (atonement). Christians use this phrase to summarize what Christ did and how He did it.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 53:11-12, drawing a line under the work of the Servant.

Isaiah seems to disagree with the idea of God forgiving everyone. In verse 11, Isaiah said the Servant would make many people right with God; he does not say everyone. In verse 12, the Servant would take away the sins of many people; he does not say all people. We need to be careful when we interpret poetry, but Isaiah seems to emphasize his point through repetition. In 2 Peter 3:9, we see God wants all people to know Christ. We also know from Matthew 7:22-23 that not all people will experience salvation. We can best summarize the Servant's work like this—Christ died to offer salvation to all people, but only some will accept His offer of forgiveness. The Servant (Jesus) provides salvation to all who accept His sacrifice.

How would you explain to a friend that Jesus offers salvation to all people, but only those who accept His offer will receive salvation?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 53:1-12. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Why did the Servant suffer and die? How does the death of Jesus pay the punishment for our sins? How should this change the way you live?

Why should you help others know Christ? Who can you and your group tell about Jesus this week?

Pray with your small group for your Deaf friends who need to know the salvation Jesus offers.



God Expects

The one true God is fair and seeks justice; He expects His people to show their faith through right living

ISAIAH 58:1-12

The Hebrew people thought all God expected of them was to worship in the temple and follow the laws in the covenant. They forgot that God expected them to love Him and show that love through right living.

What does God want from us today? The words of Isaiah can still teach us what God expects. He expects us to worship Him, but He also expect our true worship to show up in our changed lives. He expects us to obey Him by treating other people fairly and by caring for the poorest and weakest people in our communities. If we truly love God, then we will truly love the people who live around us. And, when we truly love the people around us by living justly and fairly with them, God will be pleased, and we will enjoy His blessings.

ISAIAH 58:1-12

1 The LORD says, “Shout out loud. Don’t hold back. Shout out loud like a trumpet. Tell my people what they have done against their God; tell the **family of Jacob** **A** about their sins. **2** They still come every day looking for me and want to learn my ways. They act just like a nation that does what is right, that obeys the commands of its God. They ask me to judge them fairly. They want God to be near them. **3** They say, “To honor you we had special days when we fasted, but you didn’t see. We humbled ourselves to honor you, but you didn’t notice.” But the LORD says, “You do what pleases yourselves on these special days, and you are unfair to your workers. **4** On these special days when you **fast**, **B** you **argue and fight** **C** and hit each other with your fists. You cannot do these things as you do now and believe your prayers are heard in heaven. **5** This kind of special day is not what I want. This is not the way I want people to be sorry for what they have done. I don’t want people just to bow their heads **like a plant** **D** and wear **rough cloth and lie in ashes** **E** to show their sadness. This is what you do on your special days when you fast, but do you think this is what the LORD wants? **6** “I will tell you the kind of fast I want: Free the people you have put in prison unfairly and undo their chains. Free those to whom you are unfair and stop their hard labor. **7** Share your food with the hungry and bring poor, homeless people into your own homes. When you see someone who has no clothes, give him yours, and don’t refuse to help your own relatives. **8** Then your light will shine like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your **God will walk before you**, **F** and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. **9** Then you will call out, and the LORD will answer. You will cry out, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ “If you stop making trouble for others, if you stop using cruel words and pointing your finger at others, **10** if you feed those who are hungry and take care of the needs of those who are troubled, then your light will shine in the darkness, and you will be bright like sunshine at noon. **11** The LORD will always lead you. He will satisfy your needs in **dry lands** **G** and give strength to your bones. You will be like a garden that has much water, like a **spring** **H** that never runs dry. **12** Your people will rebuild the old cities that are now in ruins; you will rebuild their foundations. You will be known for repairing the broken places and for rebuilding the roads and houses.

- a. The family of Jacob is another name for Israel.
- b. Going for a period of time without food. The Jews often fasted to focus on God, to express sorrow for their sins, or to prepare themselves for a special religious day. Some did it to show how religious they were.
- c. Some versions of the Bible say the people fasted for the purpose of fighting and arguing.
- d. Isaiah compared the way people bow with a plant drooping because of too little water.
- e. Jews expressed sorrow or grief through putting ashes on their heads and wearing rough clothing.
- f. Some translations say, “Your righteousness will go before you.”
- g. Isaiah used the example of dry lands to mean God would provide all their needs, even in hard times.
- h. We know from reading the Old Testament, water was sometimes very hard to find in Israel. A spring (well or underground stream) was an amazing blessing.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. What does God expect from His people?**
- 2. Why did God want Isaiah to be loud when announcing the sins of the people?**
- 3. The people tried to know God, but it was not enough. Why?**
- 4. What changes did God want the people to make?**
- 5. Why is it wrong to worship God but not obey Him?**
- 6. Why does God expect us to help the poor and the needy? How can we do that?**
- 7. What would happen to our churches if we all obeyed God's commands about the poor and oppressed?**
- 8. How can we make sure our witness brightens our community?**
- 9. How are you, as Isaiah wrote, "a spring that never runs dry?"**

BIBLE SKILL: *What Does God Think?*

The Lord criticized the people of Israel because they did not care for the poor and needy. Read the verses below, and see what God thinks about us when we do not care for people who need help.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 _____

Amos 4:1 _____

Matthew 25:31-46 _____

APPLY THE TEXT

- Worship without obedience does not please God. It makes worshipers feel empty and fooled by their false faith.
- Obeying God by meeting the needs of others brings honor to God.
- Satisfaction comes to those who follow and obey God.

How would you rate your obedience to God? What needs to change for you to improve your obedience to God?

Who are the poor or oppressed in your community? How can you and your Bible study group help those who are needy?

Remember a time when you obeyed God and felt content afterwards. In your group share your stories with each other. How will you obey God this week?

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD will always lead you. He will satisfy your needs in dry lands and give strength to your bones. You will be like a garden that has much water, like a spring that never runs dry. – Isaiah 58:11

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 58:1-3a, learning what a religious ritual is.

The Old Testament law explained how to worship God. The law included rules about sacrifices, who could enter the worship area, fasting, and more. The law also described how the people should treat each other, how to handle crime, and what to do with the poorest people in society. Over many years, the Israelites added more rules to follow.

The Israelites during Isaiah's life followed the rules of worship. They gathered to hear the words of God read to the people. They fasted. They had special religious holidays and did all that their rules told them to do. But God also saw their behavior. They followed the rules and requirements for worship, but they did not do the good things that God wanted. There is more to honoring God than following all the right rituals and rules. Rituals (which are religious habits) are not bad, but like the Israelites, we must learn there is more to our relationship with God than rituals and rules.

What habits or rituals do you have in your walk with God? How do your rituals and religious habits honor God?

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 58:3b-5, looking for what the people did wrong.

The people believed their obedience to religious rituals was good enough. He commented that the people did what made themselves happy without caring about others. Special events were not holy days because the people used those days to argue and fight. They were sinning while doing their religious rituals. God was not interested in special days filled with sadness over sins if the people continued to sin.

The result of their sinful behavior while worshiping was very easy to understand—they had no relationship with God. The Lord said, “You cannot do these things as you do now and believe your prayers are heard.” When the people sinned while following their rituals, God ignored their prayers. He wanted a holy relationship, not empty rituals.

In our churches, our members serve. They help with the children or serve on the church council. Maybe some will volunteer at Deaf camp or give money to the church. We sing, we have Bible studies, and we watch

the preacher. All these things can be good, but they are useless rituals if we continue to live in sin.

How does sin block your relationship with God? How does sin keep us from truly worshipping God?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 58:6-7, underlining things that please God.

God taught the people what He truly wanted. Fasting from food was a part of worship, but what God really wanted was a change of heart. He wanted His people to be just and fair. He did not want them to put people in prison for wrong reasons. He demanded His people feed the poor, welcome the homeless, and comfort relatives.

Part of a relationship with God involves rituals. We should sing, worship, pray, attend Bible studies, fast, and more. These are weekly habits or rituals we have. However, a ritual must come from a changed heart. Our cleaned, holy hearts should worship God through our habits and rituals. If our hearts are truly changed we will want to help those who need help as well.

In Matthew 23:23, Christ criticized the Pharisees for obeying the rules of the law without caring about justice, mercy, and forgiveness. They were guilty of the same mistakes as the Israelites during Isaiah's life. When we worship God on Sundays but do not help others, we are guilty of wasting our time on rituals without a right heart.

What are some ways you and your church can help the poor or needy?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 58:8-10, circling the benefits of helping other people.

What would happen if the people changed? Isaiah listed some wonderful results. Their problems would fade more quickly. God would be present with them and would protect them. He would be available to help and would hear their prayers. Their example as people of God would shine like a light in the spiritually dark world.

God was not trying to tell the people to earn His favor through good works. He was saying, “Change your hearts. As you do, your worship will have added meaning because you’ll be serving and loving other people along the way.” Love for their neighbors would flow out of their renewed hearts, and the worship habits would have more depth and meaning.

We have rituals in our churches, and often those rituals have deep meaning. Imagine how much more depth we could experience as believers if we renewed our hearts, and began to reach out to our community. What would happen if Deaf Christians began repairing the homes of poor Deaf residents? How would our relationship with God change if all church members began to do what God said through Isaiah?

Why do so few Christians consistently reach out to people who need help? How would people view Christians and God differently if Christians were more interested in serving?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Grace of God*

Election is God’s grace by which He makes sinners new, makes them right with Himself, and finally glorifies those who believe. God’s election does not put aside the freedom people have and the responsibility to trust in Christ. In it we see God’s sovereign goodness. Those who are in Christ have no reason to boast but live in obedient humility.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 58:11-12, understanding the satisfaction that God gives.

Isaiah used water imagery in this section because Israel always needed water to support their crops and water their herds of sheep and goats. Isaiah said the Lord would take care of the people during dry times. This meant He would be there to help when problems came. Isaiah compared the people to a lush garden with plenty of water. He also called Israel a spring or well which never ran out of water.

When we come to God, we must be willing to change our hearts. We must look for ways to serve Him. If we have a relationship with Him, we will be willing to serve Him. When we have that relationship, we will experience the satisfaction of having the Lord by our side. Our obedience shows our acceptance of Him as our Lord and God.

What does it mean to find satisfaction in God? How do you experience spiritual satisfaction in God?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 58:1-12. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Many people in society reject Christianity because Christians preach love but do not seem to love the poor and needy. How can you change this idea by helping Deaf people in your area see Christ through your acts of love?

How does serving people honor God?

What goals can you and your small group set for yourselves to follow God better? When He satisfies your deep needs, what will change in how you live?



God Restores

The one true God promises to restore His creation for His people through faith in His Son.

ISAIAH 65:17-25

When God created the world, He enjoyed a perfect relationship with people. However, sin ruined that relationship. Ever since that sin, God has worked to bring people back to a right relationship with Him. Through God's plan, Christ entered the world to remove our sins. Someday we will join God in heaven, and everything will be right again.

Isaiah offered promises of a better future to the people of Israel. They did not have Christ yet, but God still had a plan to bring them into a right relationship with Him. He had plans for a future. His plans included a new relationship in a newly-created heaven and earth. Isaiah wanted the people to live with an awareness of God's amazing plans for their future.

ISAIAH 65:17-25

17 “Look, I will make new **heavens and a new earth**, **A** and people will not remember the past or think about those things. **18** My people will be happy forever because of the things I will make. I will make a **Jerusalem** **B** that is full of joy, and I will make her people a delight. **19** Then I will rejoice over Jerusalem and be delighted with my people. There will never again be heard in that city the sounds of crying and sadness. **20** There will never be a baby from that city who lives only a few days. And there will never be an older person who doesn’t have a long life. A person who lives a hundred years will be called young, and a person who dies before he is a hundred will be thought of as a **sinner**. **C** **21** In that city those who build houses will live there. Those who plant vineyards will get to eat their grapes. **22** No more will one person build a house and someone else live there. One person will not plant a garden and someone else eat its fruit. My people will live a long time, as trees live long. My chosen people will live there and enjoy the things they make. **23** They will never again **work for nothing**. **D** They will never again give birth to children who die young. All my people will be blessed by the LORD; they and their children will be blessed. **24** I will provide for their needs before they ask, and I will help them while they are still asking for help. **25** Wolves and lambs will eat together in peace. Lions will eat hay like **oxen**, **E** and a snake on the ground **will not hurt anyone**. **F** They will not hurt or destroy each other on all **my holy mountain**,” **G** says the LORD.

- a. The ancient Jews used phrases like, “heaven and earth” to mean everything. Isaiah means God will re-make everything to be new.
- b. Isaiah may also have meant simply the place where God’s people live and not the specific city of Jerusalem we know today.
- c. Jews thought if a person died young, it meant God punished that person for their sins.
- d. Some translations say, “will not work without success.”
- e. A large animal similar to a cow. The word “oxen” means more than one ox.
- f. Some Bibles say “the serpent’s food will be dust,” a reference to God’s curse in Genesis 3:14.
- g. The mountain of the Lord, or God’s holy mountain, is the Mount Moriah area where Jerusalem stands.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

- 1. What excites you about a new heaven and earth?**
- 2. Why would God want His people to forget about the past?**
- 3. How can God's promises of a wonderful future give us the strength to endure terrible suffering?**
- 4. Will all people go to heaven or only certain people? Why do you believe that?**
- 5. People always fight and wage war against each other. How can God promise perfect peace in heaven?**
- 6. How does a new heaven and earth change how we might think about work?**
- 7. Why did Isaiah use an example of wolves and sheep to show the idea of peace?**
- 8. What are some other ways Isaiah showed the idea of peace in verse 25?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Find verses about Israel's history.*

Sometimes it is hard to understand the Old Testament. Writers talk about parts of history we do not fully understand. In today's lesson, Isaiah mentioned wars and how some people grew food but did not eat it. Read the verses below to understand better what Isaiah was talking about.

Judges 6:1-6	Story of Gideon
Judges 4:1-5	Story of Deborah
Judges 13:1	Story of Samson
1 Kings 20:1-3	The king of Aram

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can live with hope, knowing God will one day create a new heaven and a new earth.
- Believers can live with confidence, knowing they will experience God's blessing for eternity.
- Believers can look forward to the future, knowing God's peace will reign in eternity.

What are some ways God offers hope to you today? How does your hope for the future change your life today?

Discuss with your group the blessings believers will have for eternity. Which of those blessings are you already beginning to experience? What can you and your group do now to express thanks for God's blessings?

What makes you look forward to the peace of heaven? What can you and your group do to encourage each other as you look forward to heaven? How will you encourage someone this week?

MEMORY VERSE

“Look, I will make new heavens and a new earth, and people will not remember the past or think about those things.” – Isaiah 65:17

DAY ONE

Read Isaiah 65:17-18, underlining God's promise for the future.

The Lord knew the struggles the people faced. They sinned. They suffered. They fought against invading armies and tried to grow crops without rain. They strayed from God, and He disciplined them. The Lord knew their pain very well. Much of their pain was because of their own sin. But God still was concerned for His people.

God promised some day to make all things new. He would remake creation into something better. The new creation would be so good that the people would forget about all their pain and struggles. In this new heaven and earth would be a new Jerusalem. The tears and sadness of the old Jerusalem would fade. The new one would be full of joy. Even the people in this new city would be a delightful group.

Christians today face trials and troubles. We see our families suffer. We watch friendships fade because of conflict. We face people who hate us for our faith. We see our world slide deeper into sin. We should find peace in knowing this is not forever. God sees our pain and plans to remake everything for our comfort and His glory.

Have you ever experienced something so good it made you forget the pain you went through? Compare that experience to what God promised His people for the future.

DAY TWO

Read Isaiah 65:19-20, looking for why we have hope.

Isaiah spent many chapters warning people of a coming discipline from God. The nation would suffer through death, no rain, and from invading armies. They would live in a far-off land. They would naturally cry and be sad. That would not be the end, though. God promised someday He would create a new place for His people. In this new place, no one would be sad. No one would cry. Pain would end forever.

The new heaven and earth will not have marriage (see Matthew 22:30), but Isaiah used ideas from daily life. He used ideas his audience would understand. Babies would not die. Old people would live long lives.

We know in heaven we will not experience death again. So when Isaiah talked about death, it was a way of saying, “Sadness and the source of pain will end.”

Sin ruined the world and changed people. However, we can face the pain of life knowing we will someday have heaven. We can have hope because we know suffering will end. Someday, God will wipe away every tear. He will comfort His people in a completely restored universe, and we will live with God in His new creation.

How does God’s promise of a wonderful future give you hope?

DAY THREE

Read Isaiah 65:21-23, noticing the deeper ideas in the verses.

The Israelites knew about loss. Through the years as a nation, people had planted crops. The Jews worked hard on their farms but did not eat the food. Enemy armies ate it all. War often forced the Jews to leave their homes and crops and herds to someone else. Also, as the writer of Ecclesiastes said it, people work their entire lives to build barns, houses, and empires. Then they die and someone else comes along to live in their homes and eat their food.

Isaiah promised an end to this. Again, he is using familiar pictures to communicate a deeper idea. No one would steal their food because war would end. People would not build homes for someone else to use because no one would die any more. War and suffering do not exist in heaven. The familiar pictures communicate the idea of God’s eternity. As the Lord said in verse 17, in the new heaven people will no longer remember the pain of the past.

How does God’s plan for your future help you have confidence as you live today?

DAY FOUR

Read Isaiah 65:24, thinking about how knowing our future changes our present.

When a woman is pregnant, we say she is expecting. This is a short way of saying she is expecting a baby. A pregnant woman is waiting, knowing someday her child will arrive. Her life becomes an expectant (looking forward) life. Her understanding of a future event changes the way she lives today.

The Israelites heard God's promises through Isaiah. God promised to be present with His people. He would provide for their needs before they asked. They would begin to pray and discover He had already answered. These promises about the future meant the Israelites, like a pregnant woman, could live expectant lives. Their lives would look and feel different because they were looking at the future and knew what was coming.

Like the Israelites, we can face our troubles more easily because we know the future. We know how our story will end. We will live with God in heaven for all eternity. Many people do not have this hope. They do not have God's promises to bring them comfort. What a sad way to live!

How should your view of life change, knowing how our story will end in heaven?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Three Words about Salvation*

God's plan is to restore people to what they were like in the garden of Eden before sin changed us. He sent Jesus into the world as a part of that plan. There are three words that help us understand this plan. The first is *justification*. This means God declares us innocent of all our past sins. The second is *sanctification*. This is the long, slow process of becoming all God wants us to be. The last is *glorification*. This is what happens when God finally takes us home in heaven and makes us completely new.

DAY FIVE

Read Isaiah 65:25, finding word pictures describing God's peace.

Isaiah told the people about God's help and presence. Isaiah also promised God's peace to the people. Israel was in the land of Canaan. It experienced many years of war. The Egyptians to the south used Canaan as a pathway to Assyria (north) and Babylon (east). The land of Canaan was a bridge between Africa in the south, Europe in the northwest, and Asia in the east. Armies fought over the land for years. Israel faced many invaders from their earliest memories as a nation.

Isaiah knew his own history and used images of animals changing their character as a way of communicating peace. Wolves normally hunted sheep, but Isaiah said wolves and sheep would lay down together. Lions were larger and would hunt bigger animals like oxen. But Isaiah described the future as a place where even lions stopped killing and eating meat. He did not literally mean these animals would change. Isaiah used images of peaceful animals to show the Israelites a future where everyone lived at peace with everyone else.

Our future holds more than God's presence. We will also experience God's peace. We will be able to rest completely, knowing we can enjoy peace in His eternal kingdom.

What is God's peace? What makes the promise of peace so exciting?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Isaiah 65:17-25. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned. You can connect by VP if you need to.

What does living with hope mean to you? Who are some people you know with whom you can share this hope?

How does knowing you have eternal blessings in heaven give you greater confidence to live today? What can you do to show your confidence in Christ to the Deaf community where you live?

How does the promise of peace in heaven make your life more exciting and expectant right now? Pray with your small group that you can live expectantly now as you wait for heaven.

LEADER HELPS

As the leader of the group, you can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, and by facilitating smaller groups.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Study the Bible passage.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text section for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.

Through the Week

- Ask God to direct your creation of the group plan. Create a group plan, adapting the group plans to fit the needs of your group.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Connect and Share to start your conversation.
- Create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 144–146.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early.
- Pray for the study and the group members.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Contact all group members, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests.
- Record insights gained about teaching, group members, and Scripture.
- Do it all again.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

- Encourage everyone on your ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily:
- Ask them. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day Three activity for this week.”
- Tell them. Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- Show them. Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day One as a group.
- Invite them. Call on volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they use the Daily Exploration section.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

At the end of every session, you will find a section entitled Connect and Share. This section is designed for smaller groups of two or three people to meet weekly, holding each other accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Allow group members to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups)
- Allow groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new group members and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
- Be in a smaller group as well. You may even want to host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

SESSION 1

God Confronts

Isaiah 1:10-20

PLAN AHEAD

Enlist a volunteer to study the Introduction to the Book of Isaiah (p. 6) and prepare to summarize it for the class.

Recruit three people to sign the three sections of verses for the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

INVITE the volunteer to share information from the Introduction to the Book of Isaiah with the group.

EXPLAIN: *The title for today's session is "God Confronts."* **ASK:** *What does it mean to confront?* It means to face someone and discuss an important issue. Parents confront their children when the children disobey. A boss confronts employees when they need to change their actions. In today's session, God confronted the Israelites because of their actions.

USE the information from the introduction to the session to prepare the group for the study. **EMPHASIZE** that God is the perfect judge. He has the right to tell His people how to behave. The Israelites' hearts were not right with God. He spoke through Isaiah to confront the Israelites with their sin.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Empty Rituals (Isaiah 1:10-15)

EXPLAIN: *We sing the national anthem at games. We do not think about the meaning. We do the same thing in church. We sign songs without thinking about God. We watch someone pray, but we don't pray with them.*

The Israelites had a problem with their rituals. Watch to see how God felt about this. **INVITE** the volunteer to sign Isaiah 1:10-15. **GUIDE** the group to discuss some of the questions from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *The Israelites did the rituals, thinking they would satisfy God. But their lives did not match their worship.*

GUIDE the group to find Matthew 23:27-28 in their Bibles. **DISCUSS** how Jesus confronted the Pharisees.

2. True Followers (Isaiah 1:16-17)

ASK the second volunteer to sign verses 16-17. As they sign the verses, the group should watch for the kinds of actions God wanted from His people. **DISCUSS** questions 6-8 from Explore the Text.

EXPLAIN: *When we make a decision to follow Christ in faith, God expects our lives to show we belong to Him.* As a group, **READ** Matthew 5:14-16.

SHARE some examples of things believers can do to cause others to praise God.

3. Repentance Required (Isaiah 1:18-20)

CALL ON the third volunteer to sign verses 18-20. **ENCOURAGE** the group to watch for the choice God gave the Israelites. **EXPLAIN:** *God gave the Israelites choices before.* As a group **FIND** Joshua 24:15 and Deuteronomy 30:19-20. **TALK** about the choices the Israelites had to make.

EXPLAIN: *As believers, we made a most important choice. We believed in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. He forgave us from all our sin. We have the Holy Spirit in us to help us do the right things. With a thankful heart we can live in a way that draws others to Christ as well. We choose each day whether we will honor God in our lives or not.*

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 14). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us live in a way that honors Him and helps others to know Him.

SESSION 2

God Sends

Isaiah 6:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

Write the outline for the session on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *In the Bible, God spoke to people through visions. Sometimes God used visions to give the prophets a message to tell others. God also used visions to tell someone what to do. For example, God used a vision to help Peter know to go to Cornelius' home. (See Acts 10.) Today we will see how God spoke to Isaiah in a vision.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God's Glory (Isaiah. 6:1-4)

SIGN Isaiah 6:1-4. God had an important job to give Isaiah. He used a vision to communicate with him. The vision made it clear that God is holy, He has all power, and the world shows His glory. **INVITE** the group to share what God's holiness, power, and glory means to them.

Our God—the Creator, the holy One—is the same God who spoke to Isaiah. He speaks to us through His Word today.

LEAD in a discussion of questions 1-4 from Explore the Text (p. 21).

2. God's Forgiveness (Isaiah 6:5-7)

SIGN verses 5-7. **EXPLAIN:** *In prayer, some people use the model A—C—T—S. We begin our prayer with adoring (A) God. We think about His character and praise God for who He is. As we recognize Him and His holiness, we naturally see our sin and weakness. This leads us to confession (C), and we ask for His forgiveness. This is like what happened to Isaiah. When He saw God in His glory, he noticed his own sin. He knew he was not worthy to be with God.*

LEAD the group to find 1 John 1:9 in their Bibles. **DISCUSS** God's promise to forgive and cleanse us from our sin. When God forgives our sins, we respond with thanks (T) to Him.

The last part of the ACTS prayer is supplication (S). This means to ask God for the things we need.

3. God's Call (Isaiah 6:8-10)

SIGN verses 8-10. **EXPLAIN:** *In verse 8, when God said "us," He meant the Trinity—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

DISCUSS questions 5-7 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Verses 9-10 describe how people harden their hearts to God's message. This is similar to the way Pharaoh hardened his heart to God's message through Moses. In Matthew 13:14-15, Jesus quoted verses 9-10 to explain His reason for teaching with parables. It is important for us to keep our hearts open to God and learn from Him. **ASK:** What are some ways we can keep our hearts right with God? How can we share His message with others?*

4. God's Persistence (Isaiah 6:11-13)

SIGN Isaiah 6:11-13. **DISCUSS** question 8 from Explore the Text.

EXPLAIN: *Isaiah is a good example for us today. He knew most of the people would not listen to the message from God. God still expected him to share the message to the end. We may become discouraged when we share God's message with other people. They may not listen. They may even make fun of us for believing in God. But God wants His people to serve Him to the end. We must share His message faithfully. Some people may come to know God through Jesus because of our faithfulness, and we can rejoice when that happens.*

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 22). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, thanking God for His forgiveness and for letting us serve Him.

SESSION 3

God Promises

Isaiah 7:7-17

PLAN AHEAD

Enlist four volunteers to each sign one section of the Bible verses for the session.

Find the countries of Israel, Aram, and Assyria on an Old Testament Bible map. Add labels to the map on the inside back cover.

Write the outline on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

INVITE volunteers to share Bible promises they know. **WRITE** the references on the board as they share. Some promises give comfort. For example, 1 John 1:9 tells us of God's forgiveness. Some promises give us hope. Jesus promised to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3). Some build our faith (Romans 8:28).

ASK question 1 from Explore the Text (p. 29). **REMIND** the group about Isaiah's vision in last week's session. God has all power and glory. We can trust Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God Intervenes (Isaiah 7:7-9)

EXPLAIN: *Israel was divided into two kingdoms during the time Rehoboam (Solomon's son) was king. The northern kingdom was called Israel and the southern kingdom was Judah. There were 10 tribes in Israel and it was sometimes called Ephraim. There were two tribes in Judah—Judah and Benjamin.*

*In today's Bible verses, we see Ahaz was the king of Judah. Ahaz was Uzziah's grandson in the line of David. Ahaz heard that Israel and Aram joined together and planned to fight Judah. Ahaz was very frightened. **POINT OUT** the countries on the map on the inside back cover.*

ASK the first volunteer to sign Isaiah 7:7-9. **ENCOURAGE** the group to watch for God's answer to Ahaz's fear. **LEAD** the group to discuss questions 2 and 3 from Explore the Text.

2. God Expects (Isaiah 7:10-13)

CALL ON the second volunteer to sign Isaiah 7:10-13. **DISCUSS** question 4 from Explore the Text. God wanted to make Ahaz's faith stronger. He offered to give him a sign proving what He said was true. But Ahaz did not want a sign. At first it may look like Ahaz had a good answer when he said he would not test God. But Isaiah's response made it clear that Ahaz was wrong. He did not have faith. He did not even care about having a sign. God expects His people to trust Him.

3. God Announces (Isaiah 7:14-15)

INVITE the third volunteer to sign Isaiah 7:14-15. **EXPLAIN:** *Even though Ahaz did not have faith, God still gave him a sign.* **LEAD** the group to find Matthew 1:23 in their Bibles. **ENLIST** a volunteer to sign the verse. Matthew quoted from Isaiah and applied the words to Jesus. **ASK:** *What does the name Immanuel mean? (God with us) How does this name give comfort to God's people?*

4. God Judges (Isaiah 7:16-17)

CALL ON the fourth volunteer to sign Isaiah 7:16-17. Isaiah made it clear that Ahaz would lose his position of power. God would allow another country, Assyria, to take over Judah. This would happen because Ahaz did not trust God.

LEAD in a discussion of questions 7-9 from Explore the Text.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 30). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CHALLENGE the group to choose one or two promises that were listed on the board at the first of the session. **ENCOURAGE** them to memorize those verses over the next few weeks. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us trust Him and believe His promises to us.

SESSION 4

God Reigns

Isaiah 23:8-18

PLAN AHEAD

Find Tyre on the map on the inside back cover.

Write the outline on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

OPEN today's session with a discussion of God's character. **INVITE** the group to share their ideas of what God is like. Also, **ASK** members to share what their Deaf friends think of God.

We often focus on God's love, His willingness to forgive, that He is fair, and that He is the Creator. As we study the Old Testament, we learn God is holy and powerful. He has plans, and His plans always succeed. God is sovereign. This means He is in full control; He is the King of all things.

EXPLAIN: *In today's session, we will focus on three characteristics of God. Isaiah will prophesy about the city of Tyre and what God planned to do with it.* **SHOW** where Tyre is on the map and use the notes beside the Bible verses (p. 36) to give some information about Tyre.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God is Just (Isaiah 23:8-12)

The first characteristic we will talk about is that God is just. **SIGN** Isaiah 23:8-12. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions 1-3 from Explore the Text (p. 37).

EXPLAIN: *God is just. This means He is fair. His decisions are right. Many times people do not believe God is fair because He doesn't do what they want Him to do. People become angry when they don't get their way, and they blame God. We must remember that His ways are above ours.* **GUIDE** the group to find Isaiah 55:8-9 in their Bibles. **ASK** the group to share their thoughts about how God's ways are higher than ours.

2. God is Active (Isaiah 23:13-14)

ASK: *What does it mean that God is active in our world?* **EXPLAIN:** *Some people believe that God created the world and then left it. They believe He is far away and people cannot reach Him. They think He does not care about people or about the world. Isaiah gave an example of how God is involved in His world.*

CALL ON a volunteer to sign Isaiah 23:13-14. **EXPLAIN:** *Isaiah gave an example of God's work in the world. He reminded them about how the Assyrians destroyed Babylon. The people knew about this. They knew what Babylon looked like after it was destroyed. Isaiah wanted the people to understand that God caused this to happen.*

LEAD in a discussion of how God is active and involved in our lives as Christians. **SHARE** some of the following verses to show how God is involved in our lives today: John 3:16, John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Matthew 7:7, 1 Peter 5:7.

3. God is Honored (Isaiah 23:15-18)

EXPLAIN: *God plans for all people to honor Him. We know from Philippians 2:9-11 that everyone will bow to the name of Jesus. They will give glory to God the Father. We do not know when this will happen, but we can trust God to bring it about.*

SIGN Isaiah 23:15-18. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions 7-8 from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Even though Tyre would go back to her old ways, God would get the honor in the end.*

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 38). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us trust His plans and His work in the world.

SESSION 5

God Saves

Isaiah 25:1-10a

PLAN AHEAD

Enlist a volunteer to share their testimony about when they made a decision to follow Jesus and become saved.

FOCUS ATTENTION

USE the information from the introduction to the session to start the time of study. **FOCUS** on the idea of praising God. Many times we confuse thanking God with praising Him. It is easy to think of reasons to thank Him. Praising Him means to tell Him how wonderful He is. We think about His characteristics and His personality. **LEAD** the group to list reasons believers should praise God. **WRITE** the reasons on the board as people share their ideas. Also **ASK** them to share ways they praise God. This could include prayer, singing, telling others how wonderful God is, obeying Him, etc.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Singing Praise (Isaiah 25:1-5)

CALL ON a volunteer to sign Isaiah 25:1-5. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions 1-3 from Explore the Text (p. 45). **REMIND** the group that in Isaiah 23, he explained how God has the power to do all that He plans. In Isaiah 25, Isaiah praised God for doing what He said He would do. **ENCOURAGE** the group to find things Isaiah said about God in verses 1-5 and share those with the group.

2. Feasting Together (Isaiah 25:6-8)

INVITE another volunteer to sign Isaiah 25:6-8. **EXPLAIN:** *All nations of people who follow God will enjoy the feast. They will have joy together because they trusted Him. Isaiah looked far into the future to see this feast for all nations. He also talked about a veil. This veil is the covering people put on someone who died. Isaiah used this picture to show God would destroy death.*

LEAD the group to find 1 Corinthians 15:54 in their Bibles. Paul quoted part of verse 8 in this verse when he described how God will destroy death. Also, ask the group to find Revelation 7:17 to see how John quoted part of verse 8.

We have seen how God showed Isaiah events that would happen. Some of the events happened during Isaiah's lifetime. Some of the events happened much later. Other events will happen in the future. We know we can trust the prophecy in the Bible. We can trust God to do everything else He has promised to do.

3. Trusting God (Isaiah 25:9-10a)

SIGN Isaiah 25:9-10a. **EXPLAIN:** *Isaiah talked about God saving the Israelites from their enemies.* **LEAD** in a discussion about the salvation God offers through Jesus today. He saves us from our sins and from eternity in hell. He promises us a new home in heaven.

INVITE the volunteer to share their testimony. After the testimony, **SHARE** the plan of salvation with the group. If all of them are already believers, it will still help them to know how to share God's plan with others. One way to present God's plan for salvation is to use the information on the inside front cover with the group. **ENCOURAGE** the group to share these verses with friends who do not follow Christ.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 46). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and to meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us more fully understand His salvation and share it with others.

SESSION 6

God Protects

Isaiah 31:1-9

PLAN AHEAD

Recruit three volunteers to each sign one segment of the Bible verses for the session.

Find the countries of Judah, Assyria, and Egypt on a map.

Write the outline on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *When you have a problem with money, who do you go to for help?*

ALLOW for discussion. Then **ASK:** *When you have a problem with your family, who do you ask for help? What about problems with your job?*

EXPLAIN: *In our lives, we will have many different kinds of problems, and we will need help. When we ask people for help, we need to be sure those people are wise with God's Word. We will see in today's session that God wants us to ask Him for help. He is the one who knows best for us.*

The Jews knew the Assyrians wanted to take over their country. They were afraid. The king knew he needed help. What would he do?

POINT OUT the countries of Assyria and Egypt on the map. Also **SHOW** where Judah was.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. False Hope (Isaiah 31:1-3)

INVITE the first volunteer to sign Isaiah 31:1-3. **LEAD** in a discussion of some questions from Explore the Text (p. 53). **ASK:** *Can you remember some other times in the Old Testament when God fought for His people and protected them?* **ALLOW** for discussion. **GUIDE** the group to find Psalm 20:7 in their Bibles. **REMINDE** them David knew from his experience that God wanted him to depend on Him.

In our lives, we may not fight against armies, but we will face problems and we will need help. **DIRECT** the group to find and read James 1:5.

ASK: *How does God feel about giving us wisdom for our lives? (He is generous; He will not criticize us for asking.)*

2. True Faithfulness (Isaiah 31:4-5)

ASK the second volunteer to sign verses 4-5. **EXPLAIN:** *Isaiah used the examples of a lion and a bird as pictures of God's faithfulness. Last week we discussed some of God's characteristics. One of His characteristics is that He does not change. We can depend on God to be who He is all the time. We do not have to fear that He will be different tomorrow.*

GUIDE the group to find 2 Timothy 2:13 in their Bibles. **LEAD** in a discussion of what it means to us that God is faithful even if we are not faithful.

3. Showing Repentance (Isaiah 31:6-9)

CALL ON the third volunteer to sign verses 6-9. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions from Explore the Text. **EXPLAIN:** *Some people think to repent means to be sorry for their sins. This is part of repentance, but there is more. It means to change direction—to turn to God and follow Him.*

Imagine you have a friend who hurt you. That friend says he is sorry, but then he hurts you again and again in the same way. This is a picture of how many people are to God. We say we are sorry, but we do not change. Isaiah asked the people to show their true repentance. They needed to turn to God and trust Him to help them.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 54). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us turn away from sin and turn to Him.

SESSION 7

God Listens

Isaiah 37:14-20,30-35

PLAN AHEAD

Enlist a volunteer to prepare to sign or summarize the letter from King Sennacherib in Isaiah 37:10-13 for the group session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: King Sennacherib and the army from Assyria came into Judah. They defeated the big cities in Judah. Then Sennacherib wrote a letter to King Hezekiah. **CALL ON** the volunteer to sign what Sennacherib said in his letter. **ASK:** *What kind of attitude did King Sennacherib have about God? How do you think Hezekiah felt when he saw this message?*

We will see today how Hezekiah responded to this letter from the Assyrian king.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Request (Isaiah 37:14-20)

SIGN Isaiah 37:14-20. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions from Explore the Text (p. 61). **EXPLAIN:** *King Sennacherib insulted God. He compared the one true holy God with the idols and gods of other cities and countries. He said God surely could not defeat him. Hezekiah's prayer is a good example for us. He was thinking about God's honor. He wanted God to get the glory. He prayed for God to protect Jerusalem. He wanted God to show the Assyrians that He alone is God. Hezekiah wanted them to see God's power. Hezekiah was humble before God.*

ASK: *In our prayers, do we recognize God as holy? Do we spend time praising God for who He is? Are we more concerned for His glory or for our desires? Our God is the one true God, and He allows us to come before Him boldly as His children.*

2. The Sign (Isaiah 37:30-32)

God answered Hezekiah's prayer. He told Isaiah what to tell Hezekiah. He answered him with a sign. **ENCOURAGE** the group to watch for the sign God would give as you sign verses 30-32.

EXPLAIN: *God said the people would eat grain that grew wild. Apparently they would not be able to plant crops because of the battle going on around them. However, in the third year they would have food from the crops they planted. This was a way of showing the people they would be safe from their enemies. God also made it clear that He is the one who would do this for Jerusalem.*

Hezekiah and the people would need to trust God during the two years they waited for crops to grow. We often need to trust God as we wait for the answers to our prayers also.

3. The Answer (Isaiah 37:33-35)

SIGN verses 33-35. **NOTE** that God planned to save the city because of His promise to David. You can read this promise in 2 Samuel 7:15-16.

God told Hezekiah that the Assyrian king would not come into the city. **INVITE** the group to read verses 36-37 to see how God defended the city.

DIVIDE the group into smaller teams of two or three. **DIRECT** the teams to look up the verses in the Bible Skill (p. 61) and talk about what they learn related to prayer in the verses.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 62). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer. Thank God for listening to our prayers and answering them and ask Him to help us honor Him in our prayers.

SESSION 8

God Renews

Isaiah 40:18-31

PLAN AHEAD

Find some pictures of idols people worship to show to the group during the session.

Enlist three volunteers to each sign a segment of the verses for the session.

Write the outline on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *What is an idol?* Show the pictures you found of idols people worship. **EXPLAIN:** *You may only think of an idol as a statue. But anything people worship other than God is an idol. The Ten Commandments made it clear that God should have first place in our lives. If something or someone else takes the number one spot in our lives, that thing or person becomes an idol for us.*

ASK: *What kinds of things/people are idols in our world?* Answers could include things like phones, boats, cars, children, spouses, friends, etc.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Living (Isaiah 40:18-20)

In today's verses we will see what Isaiah thought of idols. **CALL ON** the first volunteer to sign Isaiah 40:18-20. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions 1-3 from Explore the Text (p. 69).

Isaiah made it very clear that worshipping idols is silly. It makes no sense to worship things. We know the One who created all things. God is the only One worthy of our praise and worship. Of course, we love and care for other people, but no person or no thing should have the number one place in our lives, only God.

2. Sovereign Creator (Isaiah 40:21-26)

INVITE the second volunteer to sign verses 21-26. **NOTE** that Isaiah emphasized that the Israelites knew about God. They knew from the beginning. They really had no excuse for worshipping idols. Isaiah encouraged the people to look around them, to see the stars and God's creation. They needed to remember how much higher God is above His creation.

ASK: *When we think about God as sovereign above all things and the Creator of all we see, what should our response be? How can our lives honor Him?*

3. Strength from God (Isaiah 40:27-31)

Once we understand who God is, how can we complain about what God does? This is the question Isaiah asked the Israelites. **CALL ON** the third volunteer to sign verses 27-31. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions from Explore the Text (p. 69).

EXPLAIN: *God promised strength for people who put their trust in Him. This may remind us of a familiar verse: Philippians 4:13. Some people misunderstand Philippians 4:13. They think it means God will give them the ability to do anything they decide to do. But in the verses before verse 13, Paul wrote about how he learned to be content in all situations. He could be happy when he had plenty and when he was poor. He could be happy in all things that happened. God gave him the strength to go through the things he faced in life for God's glory. Isaiah explained this in a similar way. God gives strength to His people. He wants His people to do the things that make His purposes succeed. He will give His people what they need to glorify Him.*

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and **DISCUSS** questions from Apply the Text (p. 70). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us to be patient and depend on Him.

SESSION 9

God Acts

Isaiah 46:3-13

PLAN AHEAD

Write the outline on the board.

Read Hebrews 12:5-11 so you will be ready to lead in a discussion of how God disciplines His people.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *In the Old Testament, God spoke to His people through His prophets. He gave the prophets messages, and the prophets were responsible to give the messages to the people. Sometimes the people were mean to the prophets. The prophets often had bad news to share. They warned the people to stop sinning and told them God would judge them. These messages sometimes made the people mad, and they did not listen. They did not change their ways.*

God's plans happened as He said. He judged the people for their sins. What does this mean for us? We should trust God to do everything He has said He will do. We need to share His message to others before it is too late.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The True God (Isaiah 46:3-7)

SIGN Isaiah 46:3-7. **EXPLAIN:** *Last week we read in Isaiah that worshipping idols is useless. In today's verses we see some of the reasons idols are useless. Isaiah told the people that idols are not able to save them. Idols cannot act. They cannot DO anything. Idols stay in one place; they cannot move on their own. God carried His people and saved them. Only the one true God can save His people.*

LEAD in a discussion of questions 1-5 in Explore the Text (p. 77).

2. The Trustworthy One (Isaiah 46:8-11)

ASK: *What does it mean to be trustworthy?* **EXPLAIN:** *Perhaps you have a friend that you love but you do not trust. When you tell your friend private things, that friend tells other people. You have learned not to tell that friend*

private things anymore. They do not always do what they say they will do. Your friend is not trustworthy.

ASK: *What about God? Can we trust Him?* **DIRECT** the group to watch for reasons they can trust God while you sign verses 8-11. **INVITE** volunteers to share the reasons we can trust God.

EXPLAIN: *In verse 11, God warned that He would bring a man from the east—a hawk to do His plan. This was Cyrus, the king of Persia, who came to defeat the Israelites. God used Cyrus to punish the Israelites for their sin.*

3. The Just One (Isaiah 46:12-13)

SIGN verses 12-13. **EXPLAIN:** *We have seen in other sessions that God is just and fair. As a good father, He explained what He expected His people to do. He was patient with them. The people disobeyed Him. He finally had to discipline them, as a good father would do.*

God saves people through their faith in His Son, Jesus. We become His children. He teaches us how to live and how to follow His plan. Sometimes He needs to discipline us. **GUIDE** the group to find and read Hebrews 12:5-11 in their Bibles. **INVITE** a volunteer to sign the verses. **LEAD** in a discussion of how God disciplines or corrects His children today.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 78). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us to share His plan of salvation with others.

SESSION 10

God Comforts

Isaiah 49:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

Enlist three people to each sign one of the sections of verses for the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *Have you ever worked hard on a project and then it did not succeed? Or maybe you studied a long time for a test and still failed it?* **EXPLAIN:** *Maybe you feel like your work for the Lord has not been successful because your friends do not follow Christ. We need to remember, “We must not become tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest of eternal life at the right time if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).*

Today’s session will encourage you. Isaiah wrote about how God comforts His people. He helps them to know their work for Him is valuable.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Included (Isaiah 49:1-4)

USE the information from the introduction to the session (p. 83) to introduce the study. **FOCUS** on the meaning of the servant in the Servant Songs. **INVITE** the first volunteer to sign Isaiah 49:1-4. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions 1-4 from Explore the Text (p. 85).

It is fun to be part of an exciting project or plan. The best plan ever is God’s plan to save people from their sin and give them a home in heaven. God included us in His plan. He gives us salvation and allows us to share His plan with others. **ASK:** *What kinds of things can we do to show we are thankful to be His children?*

2. Called (Isaiah 49:5-7)

ASK the second volunteer to sign verses 5-7. **EXPLAIN:** *The servant had a job to do. He was supposed to bring the people back to God. God wanted to have a relationship with the people again. The people would honor God. The servant*

would also be a light to all people. This seems to be talking about Jesus. He is the light of the world and brings people from all parts of the world to Himself.

ASK: Do believers have a part in this work? **GUIDE** the group to find Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 in their Bibles. **LEAD** in a discussion about what these verses say believers should do.

3. Proving the Value of Serving (Isaiah 49:8-13)

CALL ON the third volunteer to sign verses 8-13. **EXPLAIN:** In these verses we see the fruit of the work the servant did. **DIRECT** the group to look back through the verses and list some of the things that will happen. Answers could include: prisoners will be free, there will be plenty to eat and to drink, roads will become smooth for travel, the Lord will comfort His people, etc.

In the beginning of the session, we talked about how sometimes we feel like our work is worthless. Isaiah made it clear that working for the Lord is valuable. Even if people do not accept the message we share with them about Jesus, our time is not wasted. **LEAD** the group to find 1 Corinthians 15:58 in their Bibles. This is an encouraging verse to remind us that our work for Him is important.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and **DISCUSS** questions from Apply the Text (p. 86). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, thanking God for including us in His plan and for allowing us to serve Him.

SESSION 11

God Justifies

Isaiah 53:1-12

PLAN AHEAD

Write the outline on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *The title of the session for today is “God Justifies.” This work God does is an act of His love and His grace. When God justifies, it means He makes people right with Him. He forgives our sin and makes us holy people.*

God cannot fellowship with sinful people because He is holy and perfect. Because of His love for us, He made a plan to remove our sin and make us holy. In this way, we can have a relationship with Him. Today we will talk about God’s plan to bring people to Himself.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Hated (Isaiah 53:1-3)

REMINDE the group that last week we studied one of the Servant Songs. Today’s chapter is another Servant Song. In this song, Isaiah clearly wrote about Jesus as the Suffering Servant.

SIGN Isaiah 53:1-3. **LEAD** the group to find John 12:37-38 in their Bibles. In verse 38 John quoted Isaiah 53:1 to show that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophesy.

ENCOURAGE the group to read verse 3 again. **ASK:** *What kind of suffering did Jesus experience? Why did some people hate Him?*

2. Substitute (Isaiah 53:4-6)

SIGN verses 4-6. **EXPLAIN:** *Verse 4 says some people thought God punished the Servant (Jesus) because of His own sin. They did not understand. Isaiah explained that His suffering was for us. Jesus had no sin. He became the perfect substitute for us. We are the sinners. God should punish us for our wrong actions. But Jesus took the punishment for us. All our sin was put on Him.*

3. Willing (Isa. 53:7-9)

EXPLAIN: *Jesus knew the pain of the cross would be terrible. In the garden of Gethsemane, He asked God to take the suffering away if it were possible. However, He decided to follow God's plan. He was willing to be the sacrifice for our sin. He wanted to obey the Father.*

SIGN verses 7-9. **LEAD** in a discussion of some questions from Explore the Text (p. 93). **REMIND** the group that Isaiah wrote about Jesus hundreds of years before He was born. Still we see that Jesus fulfilled what God said would happen. When Jesus stood before Pilate and Herod, He did not say anything. He was quiet as He accepted the death on the cross.

4. Sacrificed (Isaiah 53:10-12)

EXPLAIN: *You may remember God required sacrifices to cover the sins of the Israelites. The priests made the sacrifices for the people in the temple. They had to do the sacrifices again and again. But when Jesus suffered and died, it was for all time. There is no more need for sacrifices.*

SIGN verses 10-12. **EXPLAIN:** *God's forgiveness is available to all people. We cannot earn our salvation. We can never be good enough on our own. But we must do something. We must accept God's offer of salvation. We must turn to Him and put our faith in Jesus. We must accept His gift.*

DIVIDE the group into teams of two or three. **DIRECT** them to make a list of things they remember about Jesus' suffering that they see in Isaiah 53. After they have had some time to discuss this together, **INVITE** the teams to share with the larger group what they found.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 94). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, thanking God for sacrificing Jesus so that we can have eternal life with Him.

SESSION 12

God Expects

Isaiah 58:1-12

PLAN AHEAD

Recruit three volunteers to each sign one section of the verses for the session.

Write the outline on the board.

Enlist a volunteer to share a testimony about how obeying God brings happiness and satisfaction in the Christian life.

FOCUS ATTENTION

BEGIN the session by creating teams of two or three. **DIRECT** the teams to discuss the following questions: *What does God expect from His people? What kinds of things does He want them to do?* **ASK** them to write down their answers.

ASSEMBLE the group. **LET** teams share their answers with the larger group.

EXPLAIN: *In today's session, we will see how the Israelites failed to please God. We will see what God expected from them.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. True State (Isaiah 58:1-5)

CALL ON the first volunteer to sign Isaiah 58:1-5. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions from Explore the Text (p. 101). **EXPLAIN:** *Isaiah 29:13 says, "The Lord says, "These people worship me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is based on nothing but human rules." Our hearts should desire to obey God. Our worship is not a show where we try to look good. God knows our hearts.*

GUIDE the group to find 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 in their Bibles. **LEAD** in a discussion of what God expects in our actions. We must have love for God and for others. If we do not, our actions are worthless.

2. True Worship (Isaiah 58:6-10)

EXPLAIN: *In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus taught about fasting. He said we should not fast for show or for attention. He said hypocrites tried to look sad when they fasted. They wanted people to know they were fasting. The point of fasting is to spend time with God, not to impress people.* **INVITE** the second volunteer to sign verses 6-10. **ENCOURAGE** the group to watch for actions God wanted the people to do to show true worship. **LEAD** in a discussion of those actions. Also discuss how our actions affect our prayers (compare verses 4 and 9).

3. True Satisfaction (Isaiah 58:11-12)

ASK the third volunteer to sign verses 11-12. **DISCUSS** the benefits of obeying God. **CALL ON** the volunteer to share their testimony about the satisfaction of obeying God. **INVITE** others to share their experiences with deciding to obey God.

As a group, **LIST** some ideas for things your group can do for the Deaf community. Are there families that need help with food or clothing? Are there older people who need help with yard work or chores? Develop a plan of action for your class.

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 102). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to lead us to people we can help with their needs.

SESSION 13

God Restores

Isaiah 65:17-25

PLAN AHEAD

Find a before and after picture of a car or a house that has been restored. You will show this to the group during the session.

Enlist two volunteers—one to sign 2 Peter 3:13 and one to sign Revelation 21:1 and 4.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *The title of today's session is "God Restores." What does the word restore mean?* **SHOW** the group pictures of the car or house that you found.

EXPLAIN: *When people take something like a car or house and fix it up to make it look better, this is called restoring. The car or house might look like it did when it was new. It might look even better than when it was new.*

GUIDE the group to imagine what the world was like when Adam and Eve lived in the garden of Eden. **ASK:** *Why is the world different today? What has caused changes in the world?* There are many good things in the world, but there is also much suffering. People die every day without knowing Christ. Many die because they do not have food. Countries are destroyed by wars. Is there hope for the world? Today's verses will show us how God will restore His creation.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. A Place of Joy (Isaiah 65:17-20)

Isaiah wrote about a time when God will make all things new. He wanted to help the Israelites know they could have hope. We also can have hope because God promised a new heaven and earth. **SIGN** Isaiah 65:17-20.

LEAD in a discussion of questions 1-3 in Explore the Text (p. 109).

EXPLAIN: *The Israelites experienced much suffering because of their sin. They lived through wars. Some were forced to leave their homes. God promised they would forget all those things of the past when He makes all things new.*

CALL ON the first volunteer to sign 2 Peter 3:13. Peter wrote of the promise from Isaiah 65:17. **CALL ON** the second volunteer to sign Rev. 21:1 and 4. John saw the promise also and in verse 4 he quoted from Isaiah 25:8. God showed us this promise more than once to give us hope and confidence that it will happen.

2. A Place of Prosperity (Isaiah 65:21-23)

SIGN Isaiah 65:21-23. **EXPLAIN:** *Isaiah used examples the people could understand. The people worked hard to build homes and plant crops. Then they lost them because of war. Their hard work was wasted. But God promised a new heaven and earth where there would be no more war. The people's work would not be wasted. They would not need to worry for their children and the future.*

CHOOSE more questions from Explore the Text (p. 109) for discussion.

3. A Place of Peace (Isaiah 65:24-25)

Isaiah wrote of a peaceful place. **SIGN** Isaiah 65:24-25. **LEAD** in a discussion of questions 7 and 8 from Explore the Text.

EXPLAIN: *Who will enjoy God's new heaven and earth? Only believers who trust in God through Jesus Christ. It is important for us to tell others this good news. Before Jesus went to the cross, He told His followers He would prepare a place for them. This is the new heaven and earth Isaiah wrote about. Jesus is the way to that peaceful place.*

APPLY THE TEXT

REVIEW the main points of the session and discuss questions from Apply the Text (p. 110). **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer, asking God to help us share His promises with others.

LEADER PACK IDEAS

PACK ITEM 1

Map: Prophets of the Eighth Century—Sessions 1-13

Use the map on page 147 or locate a map in a Bible atlas that shows the locations of Israel during the eighth century. Note that the land of the Chaldeans was southern Babylon where the Tigris River and Euphrates River meet, which is at the tip of the Persian Gulf in southern Iraq today.

PACK ITEM 2

Outline of Isaiah—Sessions 1-13

Refer to the outline for Isaiah in the CSB Study Bible.

PACK ITEM 3

Poster: Themes of Isaiah—Sessions 1,4,9,13

Create a poster that lists the following themes from Isaiah:

- The Holiness of God
- God Versus the Idols
- God, the Sovereign Lord of History
- Faith in God Is True Security
- Trust and Confidence
- Sin and Punishment
- Salvation of Our God
- Messiah and Suffering Servant

PACK ITEM 4

Poster: Primary Idols in the Old Testament—Sessions 8,9

Use a Bible dictionary to create a poster that lists the primary idols at the time of Isaiah (Ashtoreth, Bel/Marduk, Baal, Chemosh, Dagon, Molech, and Nebo) and Scripture references related to each.

PACK ITEM 5

Poster: Names of God in Isaiah—Sessions 4,8

Use a Bible concordance or dictionary to create a poster of the names of God in Isaiah.

PACK ITEM 6

Key Verse: Isaiah 30:18—Session 6

Create a poster that lists Isaiah 30:18:

“Therefore the LORD is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the LORD is a just God. All who wait patiently for him are happy.”

PACK ITEM 7

Handout: Isaiah Time Line—Sessions 2,8

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events leading up to and during Isaiah’s life (from 750 BC–500 BC). Use it as a reference during this study.

PACK ITEM 8

Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark—Sessions 1-13

Make a list of these suggested memory verses to distribute to your group:

- Isaiah 1:18
- Isaiah 6:8
- Isaiah 7:14
- Isaiah 14:24
- Isaiah 25:8
- Isaiah 30:18
- Isaiah 37:35
- Isaiah 40:31
- Isaiah 46:4
- Isaiah 49:13
- Isaiah 53:5
- Isaiah 58:11
- Isaiah 65:17

PACK ITEM 9

Handout: Isaiah’s Messianic Prophecies—Sessions 3,5,10,11,13

Use a Bible dictionary or handbook to create a handout that discusses Isaiah’s messianic prophecies and some of their corresponding New Testament fulfillments.

PACK ITEM 10

Handout: The Kings Isaiah Served—Sessions 3,6,7

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to create a handout that explains the kings Isaiah served: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

PACK ITEM 11

Handout: Primary Idols in the Old Testament—Session 9

Create a handout for your group that coordinates with Pack Item 4 and further explains the idols during the time of Isaiah (Ashtoreth, Bel/Marduk, Baal, Chemosh, Dagon, Molech, and Nebo) the meaning behind fearing God.

PACK ITEM 12

Handout: Judah's Eighth-Century Neighbors—Session 7

Use a Bible dictionary or concordance to create a handout that explains the rulers and significance of the countries surrounding Judah during the eighth century.

PACK ITEM 13

Handout: Isaiah 53 in the New Testament—Session 11

Use a Bible concordance to create a handout that lists the New Testament references to Isaiah 53.

PACK ITEM 14

Handout: Names of God in Isaiah—Sessions 3,4,8

Use a Bible commentary or concordance to create a handout of the names of God in Isaiah.

Prophets of the Eighth Century



"Prophets of the Eighth Century" is adapted from the Holman Bible Atlas (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 72. Used by permission.

ISAIAH



If there is one prophetic book people are familiar with, it is the Book of Isaiah. This is due, in part, to the fact that the New Testament quotes Isaiah extensively. Yet many do not understand the full scope of what it meant to be God's prophet. Isaiah was not a mere delivery person giving someone a certified letter. He felt for his people. He longed for their redemption and hurt at the prospect of their judgment by God. But he also exulted in God's saving work. The knowledge that God was working toward the redemption of His people gave Isaiah hope to continue his mission when it would otherwise have been completely distasteful. Isaiah is one of the Bible's most majestic books, and in studying it we too will find reason to hope in the everlasting power and glory of God.

