



7-SESSION BIBLE STUDY
WITH VIDEO ACCESS

STRIVING LESS
AND TRUSTING
GOD MORE

Isaiah

MELISSA SPOELSTRA



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AND TRUSTING
GOD MORE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melissa Spoelstra is a women's conference speaker, Bible teacher, and author who is madly in love with Jesus. She is passionate about studying God's Word and helping women of all ages to seek Christ and know Him more intimately through serious Bible study. Melissa has a degree in Bible theology, and she enjoys teaching God's Word to the body of Christ, traveling to diverse groups and churches across the nation.

Melissa is the author of many Bible studies, including *Acts: Awakening to God in Everyday Life* and *The Names of God: His Character Revealed*.

She has also authored several books, including *Dare to Hope* and *Total Family Makeover: 8 Practical Steps to Making Disciples at Home*. She is a regular contributor to the Proverbs 31 First Five App, the Girlfriends in God online daily devotional, and many magazines and blogs. Melissa enjoys spending time with her pastor husband, Sean, and their four adult children: Zach, Abby, Sara, and Rachel.

DEDICATION

This Bible study is dedicated to the pastors who taught God's Word to me with clarity and passion during my childhood and teenage years:

Pastor Reggie McNeal
Pastor Mike Kessler
Brother Nick Harris

I'm so grateful for your teaching. It made me hungry for more of God through the study of His Word and helped me learn to strive less and trust God more!

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SESSION ONE

INTRODUCING *Isaiah*

Iwonder if you've ever left a church service, women's conference, or Bible study determined to do better. Maybe your internal dialogue included intentions to pray regularly, show more kindness to others, or be a better person in general. This determination usually springs from a longing to grow spiritually and know God better. Yet where has all our white knuckle grasping at behavior modification gotten us? How's that "striving" been working out for you?

I can tell you how it has worked for me. My attempts at heart transformation have left me with guilt and frustration, and they have caused me to go backward rather than forwards in intimacy with God. When I've succeeded in the short term, I've often become prideful. Then in moments of failure, I've experienced shame. God doesn't want either of these postures for us.

Desiring spiritual change in our lives isn't a bad thing, we just have to guard against relying on our own effort to bring it about. As we embark together on a study of the prophet Isaiah's biblical book, we will discover a simple but life-changing truth: *Following God isn't about striving; it's about trusting God more.* The prophet Isaiah served as God's mouthpiece to the people of God and the surrounding nations. His message reverberates through our lives today as we read Isaiah's call to rely on the Lord.



Using the genres of poetry, narrative, and prophecy, Isaiah teaches that followers of God can trust His:

- **Character**
- **Calendar**
- **Comfort**
- **Commands**
- **Correction**
- **Coming Again**

That all sounds so good! However, I know by now that there are times when I say with my mouth, “I trust God,” but my stress, worry, and lack of peace don’t evidence that kind of faith. Trust can be complicated, especially when people in our lives have broken it. Perhaps someone you counted on for protection and provision let you down. Maybe you invested your time and energy into a church and left feeling betrayed or neglected. It can be easy to transfer our trust issues from people onto our relationship with God.

Then there are other times when we thought we put our trust in God, but the expectations we set for Him didn’t materialize. He may have been working behind the scenes, but we couldn’t see how at the time. When He doesn’t do what we want Him to do, we can inch our way toward self-sufficiency without even realizing it.

Isaiah was human just like us, and yet he radically trusted God and called anyone who would listen to do the same. His message highlights freedom from captivity and light breaking through darkness for those who would heed his words. Anyone in need of a little freedom and light in their thoughts, attitudes, or actions? Hanging out with Isaiah over the next six sessions will be like filling a trust prescription with amazing side effects of hope and peace in your life and mine! Unpacking Isaiah’s words will reveal that we can trust God more than our own human effort or the counterfeits the world suggests.

Isaiah has been referred to as “a Bible in miniature.”¹ The book’s sixty-six chapters and the Bible’s sixty-six books include all genres of biblical literature, such as historical narrative, poetry, and prophecy. Some have compared Isaiah’s first thirty-nine chapters with the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament because of the emphasis on God’s judgment toward sin, while the last twenty-seven chapters parallel the New Testament’s focus on God’s grace.²

Isaiah has also been referred to as the fifth Gospel because of the number of Messianic references found in the book. Isaiah's words are quoted in the New Testament more times than any other Old Testament book. For Day Five of each session of our study, we'll look at the session's theme through a Messianic lens focusing on Jesus in Isaiah. I know it can be tempting to skip days of personal study here and there, especially as you get to the end of a week, but I want to encourage you to press on because of the treasure you'll find in studying Christ during the last study of each week.

Isaiah wrote messages of both judgment and hope. Pastor H. B. Charles wrote, "Real faith is ambidextrous. It can take blessings in one hand and trouble in the other, lifting both in the worship of the God who is worthy of our stubborn trust, complete obedience, and unceasing praise."³ Throughout our study of Isaiah, we'll learn to be ambidextrous. Hopefully by the time we turn the last page, we will be able to lift both hands in worship. We won't be striving harder, but instead trusting more deeply the Faithful One who is so worthy of our utter dependence. These are broad strokes of what awaits us in Isaiah, but I'm already excited to know that in one book of the Bible we'll glimpse so many important biblical themes.

OPTIONS FOR STUDY

Any time we begin a new Bible study, it's important to set realistic expectations for ourselves based on our current season of life. I know in some seasons we have extra time for more in-depth study, Scripture memory work, and additional reading. Other times—such as when our faith is new, our schedule is packed, or our children are small—we don't want to bite off more than we can chew and feel frustrated for not meeting our goals. As we study Isaiah together, I hope you'll choose a study method that is realistic for you but also challenges you to grow in your spiritual rhythms. Consider the following options and prayerfully decide what will be the right fit for your current season and situation:

- 1. Basic Study.** The basic study includes five days of content that combine study of Scripture with personal reflection and application. This includes looking up Scripture, reflecting, engaging in interactive activities, and answering questions.

At the end of each day, you'll find a daily wrap-up, including a reflection question, prayer, and memory verse challenge.

2. In-Depth Study. If you feel up to more study, here are a few ideas I recommend:

- a. **WATCH** the teaching videos that accompany each session after completing the personal Bible study reading each week. You have access to video teaching that provides additional content to help you better understand and apply what you just studied in the previous session. You'll find detailed information for how to access the teaching videos that accompany this study on the card inserted in the back of your Bible study book. You'll also find a Video Viewer Guide page at the end of each session, where you can follow along with the videos.
- b. **DISCUSS** your study and the teaching videos with a group. If you're doing this study with a group, you can use the questions and prompts provided on the Group Discussion Guide pages to help you review the previous five days of study and discuss the video teaching together.
- c. **READ** through the book of Isaiah. Because of the volume and organization of Isaiah's book, we will study it according to major themes rather than chapter by chapter. For those of you (like me!) who like to start with the first chapter and go in order, the "Read Through Isaiah" reading plan (found on p. 184) will be helpful.
- d. **MEMORIZE** the weekly Bible verses. It is helpful to recite these verses with a partner, so find a friend in your group who is also choosing an in-depth option.
- e. **ADD** to your study by using a study Bible or any of these free commentaries:
www.studylight.org/commentaries/
www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/
www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/
<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/>
www.blueletterbible.org/study.cfm

3. Keeping It Simple. Depending on your circumstances, you may want to modify your goals. Perhaps it will be a win if you attend group meetings, complete three out of five days of your study (don't skip Day Five though!), or make some other modification to your plan. Our desire is not to check boxes but to trust God more fully. Pray for guidance, and set your goal accordingly.

Take time now to decide which study option feels right for you, and check it below.

- 1. Basic Study**
- 2. In-Depth Study**
- 3. Keeping It Simple: I will _____.**

Be sure to let someone in your group know which option you have chosen so that you have some accountability and encouragement.

A NOTE FOR GROUP LEADERS

If you're leading a Bible study group through Isaiah, then first I want to say thank you! I have no doubt God will use you to encourage the women in your group as you walk through His Word together. Here are a few resources to help as you facilitate your group:

- a. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** found on the Group Discussion Guide pages at the end of each week of study
- b. **TEACHING VIDEOS** to watch at each group session. You'll find detailed information for how to access the teaching videos that accompany this study on the card inserted in the back of your Bible study book. At your first group meeting, watch the Session One video, discuss the questions provided, and make sure all the women in your group have their Bible study book. When you gather for Session Two, you'll watch the Session Two teaching video and then discuss what you studied during the week.
- c. **A LEADER VIDEO** from me to you, available for free at lifeway.com/isaiah
- d. Also don't miss the **FREE CHURCH PROMOTIONAL RESOURCES** found at lifeway.com/isaiah—including a PowerPoint® template, promotional poster, invite card, and bulletin insert—to help you promote the study in your church or neighborhood.

A FINAL WORD

I can't wait to get started on this journey alongside you. I don't want us to keep striving and falling into a cycle of guilt when it comes to our faith. Instead, we can pursue God's heart and seek to trust Him more. Out of that trust, I believe we will find comfort and peace to sustain us as we hold trouble in one hand and blessing in another. I'm praying that you will join me as we let go of striving and answer Isaiah's call to the trust the Lord!

Melissa





Session One

VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your Bible study book.

Šā'an means _____.

In that day the remnant left in Israel, the survivors in the house of Jacob, will no longer depend on allies who seek to destroy them. But they will faithfully trust the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

ISAIAH 10:20

Qāvâ means _____.

But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

ISAIAH 40:31

Bāṭaḥ means _____
_____.

Trust in the LORD always,
for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.

ISAIAH 26:4

We don't always _____ in good directions.

Never changing _____ is what will help us navigate ever changing _____.

Isaiah has been referred to as the _____ Gospel.

In the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah it seems that God is _____ the comfortable, while in the last twenty-seven chapters God is _____ the afflicted.



Session One

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

LEADER: Before your first meeting, watch the Leader Video posted at lifeway.com/isaiah. Use this guide to facilitate your group meeting. If your group members are watching the videos on their own, rather than together during your gathering, you'll want to select two or three questions from the days of personal study to add to your discussion time.

SHARE: Guide each group member to share her name and the town where she was born.

WATCH the video "Session One: Introducing Isaiah" (23:25 minutes) together and follow along with the viewer guide on the previous page.

VIDEO DISCUSSION

1. *Discuss:* From the background information in this week's video, what is something new you learned about the book of Isaiah?
2. Turn in your Bibles to the following passages and ask volunteers to read them out loud: Isaiah 12:2; 25:9; 26:3-4; 40:31; 50:10. *Ask:* What stood out to you from these passages?

STUDY DISCUSSION

1. *Ask:* How does Isaiah's message of "striving less and trusting God more" resonate in your life today?
2. Turn to pages 7-8 and read aloud the section titled, "Options for Study." Give your group time to consider which level of study they will choose. Then ask each person to share which option she marked.
3. *Ask:* What is something you are looking forward to or hoping to learn as we begin studying the book of Isaiah?

REVIEW

Remind your group to complete the five days of personal study for Session Two: Trust God's Character. Take a moment to highlight the Big Idea for each day. These key points will be important to review at the end of their week of study.

PRAYER

Close your group meeting with a time of prayer.* Depending on the size of your group, consider breaking into smaller groups of two or three women and praying for each other. You might have a little extra time since this is the introductory week.

*Be sure to watch the leader video found at lifeway.com/isaiah for some ideas for varying your group's prayer time.

TRUST *God's*
CHARACTER



SESSION TWO



We can't trust someone unless we know that person has our best interests in mind. When it comes to the Lord, you may know He loves you, but have you ever wondered why He isn't fixing something you really want to be fixed? This week, we'll explore God's character. Isaiah reveals the Lord as holy, as the One whom we should revere as Almighty. Isaiah also tells us that our God is forgiving and merciful—He transforms our crimson sins until they are white as snow.

I'm so glad you're joining me on this journey into deeper trust. As we take a fresh look at Isaiah's message in light of God's attributes, we'll understand that our Redeemer is passionately committed to us. We don't want our relationship with Him to be about temporary behavior modification; rather, we want to allow the Holy One of Israel to do real transforming work in our hearts. This won't be accomplished by swatting at our bad habits but by growing a bigger view of our God who longs for us to strive less and trust Him more.

MEMORY VERSE

"Come now, let's settle this,"
says the LORD.

"Though your sins are like scarlet,
I will make them as white as snow.
Though they are red like crimson,
I will make them as white
as wool."

ISAIAH 1:18



Day One

PASSIONATE COMMITMENT

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Isaiah 1

BIG IDEA

We can trust God because He is passionately committed to us.

I hurriedly pulled the clothes out of the dryer until I noticed a huge streak of blue on one of my favorite shirts. Upon closer inspection, I found that most of the articles in the load had similar marks. After rummaging around in the basket, I found a blue ink pen fully emptied of its contents. I had heard that hairspray could remove ink, so I repeatedly sprayed, rubbed, and rinsed until the Aqua Net® fumes were more than I could handle. Finally, I surrendered to the permanence of the stains and threw out the entire load. While the loss of those clothes frustrated me, I wasn't passionately committed to them. I tried to make them clean, but I couldn't.

At times in my life, I've felt like that stained laundry and wondered if I'm worth God's effort in the midst of all my struggles and failures. Can you relate? Thankfully, our God doesn't treat us as expendable. I hope today we can put those nagging thoughts behind us as we discover just how passionately committed the Lord is to His people.

Isaiah is a book of the Bible written more than twenty-seven hundred years ago by a man who obeyed God's call to be His prophet, God's mouthpiece to His people. Isaiah spoke to his original audience regarding current events, but also prophesied happenings that have since been fulfilled, like the birth of the Messiah, and some that have yet to come to fruition as they speak of the future return of Christ. As we move through this study, we'll attempt to practice good methods of interpretation to first look at Isaiah's intent for the initial recipients of his words but also the biblical principles that apply in our lives today. I hope you're as excited as I am to get started.

Isaiah's name means, "Yahweh is salvation."¹

SINS LIKE SCARLET

READ ISAIAH 1:1. Write down what you learn about Isaiah from the introduction to his book.

The Bible doesn't tell us anything about Isaiah's father Amoz, but some commentators suggest that Isaiah was connected to royalty because of his easy access to the kings mentioned here.² Others suggest that the Jewish tradition of Isaiah's royal birth is completely without merit.³ While we want to get to know Isaiah, we'll need to be patient as his first vision tells us more about his people, the Judeans, than it tells us about his person.

NOW READ ISAIAH 1:2-5. Record at least three things you learn about the character of God's people at the time of Isaiah's writing.

-
-
-

Perhaps you listed rebelling against God, not recognizing God's care for them, or inviting judgment. Or you may have written descriptive words, such as *guilty*, *evil*, *sinful*, or *corrupt* (depending on your translation). Did you notice how Isaiah summoned the heavens and earth to listen to God's rebuke (v. 2)? And he used a comparison to donkeys and oxen to illustrate the nation's ingratitude toward God compared with how these animals trust and obey their masters (v. 3).

READ ISAIAH 1:6-9. Summarize in a sentence the circumstances the people of God faced at the time of Isaiah's vision.

Sin brought suffering into the lives of God's people. Let's be clear: Not all of our problems are rooted in *personal* sin, but we would not have any problems if sin didn't exist. We live in a fallen world where even the most innocent children aren't immune to unspeakable suffering. We must exercise caution in assigning specific cause and effect to our trials, but oftentimes we can draw a connection between sin and suffering. Perhaps an infidelity brought consequences into your family, or a lie broke trust in a relationship. God's people reaped what they had sown, and the Lord didn't leave them guessing about what had Him so upset.

READ ISAIAH 1:10-15. List some of the verbs God used in describing His reaction to their behavior.

Did you note some words and phrases like *hate, sick, stop, want no more, or cannot stand*? When God reacts this strongly to His beloved people, we should perk up and pay attention so that we can know what hurts His heart. These were some of the complaints He lodged against Isaiah's people: ceremonial display of sacrifices devoid of repentance and obedience; meaningless gifts and offerings; celebrations, fasting, and pious meetings for outward show; and praying to God while simultaneously preying on the innocent.

How would you sum up this behavior in one or two words?

Isaiah 1:4-17 uses the literary genre of an extended poem consisting of four elements: "a general indictment (v. 4), a lament about Israel's true and pitiful situation (vv. 5-9), a refusal to heed Israel in time of need (vv. 10-15), and a summons to reformation (vv. 16-17)."⁴

The word *hypocrisy* came to mind as I read these verses. It wasn't the *use* but the *abuse* of spiritual practices that brought such a strong reaction from God. The people were going through the motions of spiritual worship without a personal connection to the Lord and His laws. God called out the contradiction in their lives of uniting spiritual practices with unrepentant sin. In God's words, they lifted their hands in prayer, but those same hands were "covered with blood" (Isa. 1:15, CSB). God invites His people into relationship, and He expects repentance and obedience to follow.

Before we're too quick to condemn the rebellious people in these pages, let's take a moment to bring Isaiah's words a little closer to home. I know I can relate to projecting a spiritual image on the outside (social media, church services, group gatherings) while struggling to live the truths I espouse or failing to nurture my relationship with God—especially when no one is looking.

Reflect on any spiritual incongruity in your life recently. How have the truths we've read so far in Isaiah brought conviction? Think specifically about your thought life, judgments, attitudes, and actions.

Don't worry, we don't have to leave our first day of study on this heavy, somber note! We're just getting to the best part.

WHITE AS SNOW

READ ISAIAH 1:16-17. What hope do you see for the nation of Judah? What were some changes God required to restore their relationship to Him?

If God had hope for the stubborn, rebellious people of Judah, we know there is hope for us as well! No matter how far we've sunk in our depravity and sin, God remains committed to us, and He invites us to turn from our sin and turn toward Him. Only with repentant hearts are we able to live as the people God created us to be—those who love Him and love others.

The “scarlet” or “crimson” mentioned in Isaiah 1:18 referenced a dye made from an insect that permanently marked garments, such as the clothing of the high priest and the hangings in the tabernacle.⁵ The hearers would have understood it to be something like the ink stains in my laundry with no way to remove the color once it had been applied. As Christ followers today, we see in this verse a picture of the work of Jesus on our behalf. Through the blood of Christ—not through any amount of human scrubbing—the stain of our sin can be removed permanently.

LOVED AND FORGIVEN

Throughout the pages of Isaiah, we'll find God encouraging His people that forgiveness is available. His plan to send Jesus was already in motion—the people of Isaiah's day could believe faithfully that a Messiah would come. In the same way, we can rely on the truth that Jesus makes our scarlet sins “as white as snow” (v. 18).

You can trust God's character because He is passionately committed to His people. His plan is for your cleansing and renewal. The Lord hates sin because of its destructive power, but He loves and is committed to redeeming sinners!

The assurance of forgiveness for those who repent is continually confirmed throughout the book of Isaiah (12:1; 30:18-19; 33:24; 38:17; 40:1-2; 43:25; 44:22; 59:20) pointing ultimately to Christ's sacrifice—prophesied as the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12.⁶



And one more thing: You can't out-sin God's grace. Let's settle this right at the beginning of our study. Lies the enemy may be using against you like . . .

PRAYER

*Lord, thank You for
Your passion and
commitment to me.
Most days I don't
feel white like snow.
I battle against the
problems in life
and my own sin on
a regular basis.
Help me to strive
less and trust more.
I'm so glad You
don't require me
to earn my way
to You through
religious works
and instead invite
me into a personal
relationship. Remind
me of this truth
often because I'm so
prone to forget it! In
Jesus's name, amen.*

- You are just too much to handle;
- You will never be able to change;
- Your sins are worse than other people's sins; or
- The stain of your mistakes will always follow you.

. . . are NOT true. Your God is *passionately committed* to you!

Take a moment to feel the full weight of God's passion and forgiveness for you. Write your name in the blank:

"Come now, let's settle this," says the LORD.
"Though [_____]'s] sins are like scarlet,
I will make them as white as snow.
Though they are red like crimson,
I will make them as white as wool."

ISAIAH 1:18

I need constant reminders of these truths about God's love, His wrath toward sin, and the sacrifice of His own Son to remove my sin stains. Even if it feels like your life has been through the spin cycle followed by heat that set the stains of your past, you can become white as snow because the God you serve is passionately committed to you.

DAILY WRAP-UP

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Read Isaiah 1:18 aloud three times. You can find it printed on this page.

Today we focused on this truth: *We can trust God because He is passionately committed to us. How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today's study?*

Day Two

HOLY AND HIGHER

During my children's elementary school years, they had chore charts to give them structure and responsibility. However, when they didn't accomplish all their tasks, we would have a conversation about allowance reduction or possible consequences. Can you imagine if one of my children said, "I know I've been slacking off recently. If I get all my chores done every day this week and even do some of my sibling's chores, can I remain your child?" They understood that they were assigned work because they were part of our family, not that they were working to stay in it. Sometimes I can bring a "working to earn my place in the family" mentality into my relationship with the Lord.

As we dig into Isaiah 6 today, we find a progression of belief, which leads to a sense of belonging, which then results in transformed behavior. The order of this progression is important:

SEEING THE LORD (6:1-4) → BELIEF

SEEING OURSELVES (6:5-7) → BELONGING BECAUSE
GOD CLEANSSES OUR SIN

SEEING OUR NEXT STEPS (6:8) → BEHAVIOR

I often desire clarity in decisions but first need to focus on the Lord—and myself in relation to Him—so that I can have a proper perspective to receive direction. Let's begin by seeing the Lord's character through Isaiah's vision.

SEEING THE LORD

READ ISAIAH 6:1-4. Either sketch or write a short description of the scene Isaiah encountered.



SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Isaiah 6

BIG IDEA

We can trust
God because
He is holy.

One distinction of Isaiah's writing is his use of the name for God as the "Holy One of Israel." While it is found thirty-one times in the Old Testament, no fewer than twenty-five are found in Isaiah.⁸

When words are repeated twice in Scripture, it indicates superiority (like "Lord of lords" in Ps. 136:3). Repeating a word three times indicates that this is the ultimate/highest point of that feature. Isaiah used "holy, holy, holy" to mean God is absolutely, perfectly holy. He is more holy than everyone and everything else.

Whether you drew or wrote the details, take a moment to visualize this scene. The ultimate authority of heaven and earth sits on His throne wearing a robe that fills the temple. He is attended by angels called seraphim who call out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy" (v. 3). This is the only biblical passage where heavenly beings are called "seraphim." "The seraphs are bright creatures, for the word means 'burning ones'; yet they hide their faces from the greater brightness and glory of the Lord." Their words shake the room and smoke fills the entire temple.

If you were Isaiah and actually witnessed this with your own eyes, what reactions might you have had?

I think I would have been overcome with the holiness or "otherness" of it all. No movie, novel, or dream could compare with a glimpse of the living God. While God forgives and loves us as sinners, desiring a relationship with us like we saw yesterday, we should not be tempted to bring Him down to our human level. These verses remind us that He is holy. The Hebrew for holy is *qadowsh*, which means "sacred, holy, Holy One, saint, set apart." To say God is holy means He is set apart. He is not like us. He is perfect in all He does. He rules supremely and receives the worship of an array of heavenly beings.

Write a few sentences below praising God as the Holy One you worship today.

Once we see the Lord, we can then gain clarity about our own position in relation to Him.



SEEING OURSELVES

READ ISAIAH 6:5-7. Summarize Isaiah's response and the angel's actions in your own words.

ISAIAH'S RESPONSE	ANGEL'S ACTION

In response to God's holiness, Isaiah recognized his own sinfulness. He didn't try to hide or pretend; instead, he confessed his predicament. Let's take a moment to join him today.

Write a brief response to the Lord of how you feel about your own sinfulness in light of His holiness.

Confession as a spiritual practice should lead us toward God rather than away from Him. I love that the Lord didn't shame Isaiah in his brokenness, but instead God removed his guilt. The imagery of the burning coal taken from the altar reminds us that the Lord longs to cleanse us as well. Jesus offered His life as payment for our sins. His altar was a cross where He removed our guilt and forgave our sins through His shed blood.

SEEING OUR NEXT STEPS

Every Gospel references the words from Isaiah 6:9-10 in connection with the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-41), and the last verse in chapter 6 speaks of Israel's stump becoming a holy seed.

READ ISAIAH 6:8-13. What did the Lord ask, and how did Isaiah respond (v. 8)?

What is your initial reaction to the message the Lord gave Isaiah (vv. 9-13)?

First, Isaiah saw the Lord (Isa. 6:1-4); then, he saw himself clearly (Isa. 6:5-7). Only then did he receive the call to prophesy (Isa. 6:8). The message the Lord gave him to share wasn't the touchy-feely inspiration I was expecting. The Lord knew that His own people would reject Him for many generations and reap the consequences of their choices. Verses like these give us an opportunity to trust that God knows and sees more than we do.

As Isaiah's calling reveals, God's instructions aren't always what we're expecting. In Isaiah's eagerness to answer God's call, it's hard to believe he knew the difficult task that awaited him and the challenging words God would have him deliver. The moments when life doesn't go as we think it should provide the clearest opportunities to exercise trust in our relationship with Him. Oftentimes the only next step we can take is one of acknowledging to God, "Here I am."

Reflect on a time when what was happening in your life didn't match up with what you thought the Lord should be doing. What were some of the questions you asked God at that time?

When my daughter was twelve years old and lost all her hair to an autoimmune disease called alopecia, she begged God for hair. She prayed until she began to doubt His goodness and power because nothing happened. Perhaps you've encountered something much more significant

than hair loss, and when the Lord didn't intervene, you began to lose trust in Him. These are the moments when we need reminders of His character so that we can press into our faith.

READ ISAIAH 55:8-9 and underline the words thoughts and ways:

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD.

"And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

I wonder if you can look back and see something in your past from the perspective that God's thoughts and ways were higher than yours. Write down anything that comes to mind.

You may not always understand what God is doing in the moment, but you can always trust Him! The God of Isaiah is the same God who invites you to be close to Him. He knows you don't always follow all His instructions, and thankfully, you don't have to earn your way into His family. If you have believed in Him by faith, then you belong to Him. He loves you and knows better than you do what is best for your life because His thoughts and ways are higher than yours.

DAILY WRAP-UP

Today we focused on this truth: *We can trust God because He is holy.* How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today's study?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for reminding me of Your holiness. Help me not to forget Your greatness and power, especially when it comes to trusting You with real life situations. When I drift into grappling for power over my circumstances, help me to remember that Your thoughts and ways are higher than mine so I can trust You! In Jesus's name, amen.

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Read Isaiah 1:18 aloud one time. Then write it down in your book or on a separate piece of paper.





Day Three

POWER IN THE NAME

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Isaiah 45

BIG IDEA

We can trust God because He makes Himself known.

Recently my husband and I provided respite care to two brothers who were entering the foster care system. They didn't know us, and the air was thick as we tried to welcome them without asking prying questions about their situation. Over the next several weeks we got to know each other as we shared meals, played board games, and talked on the long drive back and forth to school. Both boys expressed surprise that we didn't yell at them when they did something wrong. In time they saw that we genuinely wanted what was best for them. By the time a placement was found much closer to their city, our goodbyes were teary because we had come to love and trust each other in a short time walking with them through difficult circumstances. Trust grows over time as we get to know someone is safe and has our best interests at heart.

Who is someone you've grown to trust as you've gotten to know him or her well? What makes you trust that person?

We'll continue to hear Isaiah mount a call to trust the Lord throughout the pages of his book. One of the best ways for us to trust God and understand His character is by examining some of His names revealed in His Word. God said through Isaiah, "But I will reveal my name to my people, and they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that I am the one who speaks to them" (Isa. 52:6). There is power in God's name!

Many different names and descriptions for God appear in Scripture because His greatness can't be embodied in just one. But for the sake of our study today, we're going to focus on the names of God found in Isaiah 45. I've chosen this passage because it includes so many different names for God that are used throughout the book of Isaiah, and we can flip around our Bibles less by camping out here.

READ ISAIAH 45. Record God’s names in the chart below. (Several are repeated throughout the chapter, so we’ll record only the first mentions.) I’ve also included a space for you to record any thoughts, insights, or comments regarding each name. (I did the first two for you so you get the idea.)

VERSE	NAME/ DESCRIPTION OF GOD	OPTIONAL COMMENTS
1	LORD	LORD in all caps refers to Yahweh in the Bible.
3	God of Israel	He calls us by name.
9		
11		
13		
14		
15		

What stands out to you as you look over the chart you filled in?

You may have been surprised by how many varied names you found, such as *God*, *Creator*, *LORD of Hosts*, *Holy One of Israel*, *Savior*, and so on. These different expressions are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the book of Isaiah. Eighteen times throughout his book, Isaiah referred to God as the “Sovereign LORD” (NLT)—and “Lord GOD” in the CSB)

Yahweh comes from the Hebrew Tetragrammaton made up by the four-letter YHWH and was considered so holy that even scribes didn't say it out loud. Later, vowels from the name Adonai were added to form the name *Yahweh*. Scholars in the Middle Ages were the first to translate *Yahweh* with the English rendering *Jehovah*.¹¹

—which is *Adonai Yahweh* in Hebrew. *Redeemer* is used in thirteen instances with other mentions like *Immanuel, the First and the Last, our Judge, Shepherd, Warrior, Rock, Mighty One, and Everlasting God* also expanding our knowledge of God's character.

Let's take a moment to focus on just four names we discovered in Isaiah 45 and see how they can help us know and trust God more. We'll explore *Yahweh, Elohim, Creator, and Savior*, and then you'll have the opportunity to write a trust statement related to each name.

YAHWEH

Yahweh is translated using capital letters—LORD—to distinguish it from *Adonai* which most Bibles render "Lord" in lowercase. *Yahweh* is the personal name God used when talking to Moses at the burning bush, and God described it as "my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations" (Ex. 3:15). Most scholars associate YHWH with the verb "to be," so this name is sometimes defined as "the self-existent One."¹⁰ *Yahweh* has always been and continues to be completely self-sustaining and self-sufficient.

Take a moment now to fill in the blanks as you think about *Yahweh* and the concerns or blessings in your life:

**I can trust *Yahweh* with _____
because He is _____.**

ELOHIM

When you recorded *God* on your chart, the original Hebrew was either *El* or *Elohim*. (It varied in Isaiah 45. *Elohim* is actually a plural form of *El*.) *Elohim* is used more than two thousand times in the Old Testament, making it the word used to identify God most often in Scripture.¹² While the original audience wouldn't have understood the plural name as referring to the Trinity, we know that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because He has progressively revealed Himself over time.

Scripture tells us that our God is transcendent, creative, and powerful. At times I try to reduce God to something I can understand and define,

but we can't put Elohim in a box. He exists outside of time. He made the beginning and already knows the end. This stretches my brain to its edges because I live by a calendar and a clock.

Fill in this blank: I can trust Elohim today because He is a God who

CREATOR

Isaiah 45:9 referenced God as *Maker* or *Creator*. The Hebrew word is *Yatsar*, which means “to form, fashion, frame.”¹³ Isaiah used the illustration of the potter and his clay to help the people understand God's authority to shape us according to His design. Over the course of our study, we will also find three mentions of God as the Potter and His people as clay (29:16; 41:25; 64:8).

Isaiah's original audience argued against God's instructions, but Isaiah reminded them of God's position. When we see God as our Maker, we learn to trust Him even through painful processes of shaping, cutting away, and then firing to solidify us according His design. As we consider God as former, fashioner, and framer in our lives, we can loosen our grip on our illusion of control and concentrate on being clay that is moldable in His hands.

Fill in this blank: Creator God, soften and mold me when it comes to

SAVIOR

While God is *Yahweh* (self-existent), *Elohim* (our God), *Creator* (with complete authority to mold and shape us), may we never lose sight that He is also *Savior*, the One who longs to save us. In Isaiah 45, both verses 15 and 21 used *Savior* to describe our God. Jesus reminded us of God's desire to save us. Just after He declared that God loved the world and gave His Son so that those who believe in Him “will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16), Jesus said this: “God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).

Both Isaiah's name in Hebrew and Jesus's name in Greek mean “Yahweh is salvation.” We never want to forget God's power and authority, but we also don't want to lose sight of His goodness to deliver us from sin.



PRAYER

Yahweh, You are the great I AM! Elohim, Your power and might is beyond all I can think or imagine. Creator, You have the authority to shape and fashion my life according to Your design even when it doesn't make sense to me. Soften me under Your gentle hands. Savior, I'm so grateful You believe I'm worth rescuing. God, continue to reveal Yourself to me as I study Your words of truth. In Jesus's name, amen.

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Write down Isaiah 1:18. Also record one thought you have as you read over this verse.

Fill in these blanks for our final name today:

I can trust God to rescue me from _____
_____ because His name means _____.

We just scratched the surface with four names found in Isaiah today. Which one of the names we focused on most resonated with your current thoughts and circumstances? Why?

I'm so thankful that we serve a God who invites us to draw near (Jas. 4:8). Just as it takes time to develop trust in human relationships, our trust in the Lord grows as we pursue a deeper walk with Him.

DAILY WRAP-UP

Today we focused on this truth: *We can trust God because He makes Himself known.* How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today's study?

Day Four

THE PATHWAY TO PEACE

I woke up frustrated and discouraged after a battle with worry in the middle of the night. Don't laugh when I tell you what I was obsessing over because it seems so ridiculous in hindsight. My highly allergic daughters had just convinced my husband and me to allow them to buy pet birds since cats and dogs made them sick. I laid awake fretting about the smell in our house, the annoying sounds the birds made, and then imagined ways to get rid of them without breaking my daughters' hearts.

Looking back, I can't believe how over-focused I became on something that wasn't that important in the grand scheme of life. This worry, fear, and fixating on small problems that I blow out of proportion has been a perennial problem for me. Whether our fears are overblown or completely appropriate because life has thrown us some curveballs, most of us struggle to find peace in the midst of our problems. Isaiah's message gives us hope that we can make internal choices that lead to peace when we face external forces that tempt us to worry.

EXTERNAL FORCES

READ ISAIAH 7:1-2. Describe how the king of Judah and his people responded to the external forces coming against them.

King Ahaz faced threats from two countries. One of these was Judah's own family. Israel was the Northern Kingdom made of ten tribes that separated from Judah after Solomon's reign. As we saw at the start of Isaiah 7, Israel teamed up with the pagan nation of Syria to come against Judah. Sometimes when our pain comes from unexpected places—like family, friends, or a church or job we thought was safe—our fears can feel magnified.



SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Isaiah 7:1-9; 8

BIG IDEA

We can trust God because in Him is perfect peace.

What would you identify as a current challenge coming from external forces? What stressors are threatening your peace right now?

Thankfully now that my twins are in college, I'm no longer stressing over their pets' noises and smells. However, I find that the problems my adult children face often keep me up at night. Moving from authority to advisor hasn't been an effortless transition for me. We all have challenges from external forces whether they're happening directly to us or impacting us through the people we love. Maybe your situation has nothing to do with children, but perhaps a medical diagnosis, financial crisis, or relational conflict has left you feeling like the people of Judah—"shaking in a storm" (v. 2). So, what do we do when we feel the impact of outside forces tossing us about in life? Let's keep reading in Isaiah 7 for some practical wisdom that will help in those moments.

READ ISAIAH 7:3-9. What did Isaiah tell the king to stop doing in verse 4?

According to verse 9, what needed to happen in order for the Lord to make him stand firm?

The Lord told Ahaz to stop worrying. "Do not fear" is a command issued often throughout Scripture. Philippians 4:6 tells us "don't worry about anything." That sounds so good, but how do we do that? Like when we can't sleep, can't stop recycling our thoughts and emotions, and feel like peace is a luxury we aren't afforded in *our* marriages, *our* jobs, *our* finances, *our* health situations, and so on? One commentator summarized God's instruction to stand firm in faith as "trust or bust!"¹⁴

As you reflect on the challenge you identified above, what are the alternatives to trusting God?



When I choose not to trust, I often revert to worry, excessive planning, or complaining about the problem to others. I could definitely put all those in the “bust” category! The Lord doesn’t leave us without help in these moments. He wants to help us stand firm in our faith as He instructed Ahaz to do when facing his fears.

READ ISAIAH 8. Record in the chart below what you learn about God’s offer to care for His people and His instructions to help them grow in trust. (I did the first ones for you. Answers will vary by translation.)

GOD’S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE	GOD’S INSTRUCTIONS
Verse 6: Provided gently flowing waters	Verse 11: Don’t think like everyone else (NLT). Don’t follow the way of this people (NIV). Don’t walk in the way of this people (ESV).
Verse 10:	Verse 12:
Verse 14:	Verse 13: Verse 16: Verse 17: Verse 19: Verse 20:

God longed to care for His people like gently flowing waters. He was with them and was a place of safety for them. He alone could be their pathway to peace, yet so many times they rejected Him. They didn’t trust Him to care for them and instead looked to human strength, false gods, and mediums for guidance.

INTERNAL CHOICES

PRAYER

Lord, You are the only pathway to peace. Forgive me for looking for peace in other places. My illusions of safety don't begin to compare with You. I desire a firmer faith that knows how to stop worrying when I feel shaken by the storms of life. Remind me of who You are again and again as I fix my thoughts on You. In Jesus's name, amen.

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY

Attempt to write out Isaiah 1:18 from memory, then check to see how you did.

READ ISAIAH 26:3. What are some practical ways to fix your thoughts on the Lord when you find yourself shaken by external forces?

Here are a few ideas I've implemented when I find myself struggling to embrace God's peace in the midst of a storm: Write a list of God's attributes or names in my journal. Go for a walk or change my physical posture to redirect my body and mind. Call or text a friend and ask her to pray for my mental focus to shift.

Ahaz had decisions to make and so do we. We may not have a prophet who can tell us exactly what the future holds, but we can think differently than others with reasoned responses rather than knee-jerk reactions. We can decide to stop striving and trust God. When we do, we'll find the power to obey commands like "stop worrying," "don't fear," and "have faith," even when life is scary. We can find perfect peace when we fix our thoughts on Him. I hope that no matter what type of challenge you are facing today, you can find peace in knowing that God loves you and longs to be your Defender!

DAILY WRAP-UP

Today we focused on this truth: We can trust God because in Him is perfect peace. How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today's study?

Day Five

IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US

After spending large amounts of time with people—even people I dearly love—I need a break. I want to shut myself in my room with a “keep out” sign on the door. Being an introvert was challenging when my four kids were small, but as they have all left the nest, I’ve experienced the flip side of time alone. When my husband works long hours and the kids are all busy with their own schedules, occasionally feelings of loneliness emerge. I guess too much of a good thing is true even for introverts! Following God doesn’t immunize us against feelings of loneliness, either. They can even creep into our relationship with the Lord.

When God seems a million miles away or when our prayers feel like they are hitting the ceiling, we can encounter spiritual loneliness. During these seasons, we might entertain questions like:

- *Is the Lord still with me?*
- *How can I trust that He is still here even when I’ve messed up again, disappointed people I love, or questioned my beliefs?*
- *What should I do in moments when I can’t sense God’s nearness?*

If someone came to you with these types of questions, how would you advise them? Write a sentence or two that you might say in response.

As we read Isaiah’s words today, we will draw out facts that will help us trust God when our feelings aren’t on board. Even when we don’t sense God at work, He is. He is Immanuel, God with us. We just need to rediscover what we already have: a God who went to great lengths to redeem His relationship with His people.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Isaiah 7:10-25; 9:1-7

BIG IDEA

We can trust
God because
He is with us.

A SIGN OF HOPE

READ ISAIAH 7:10-25. Draw a line from the person to the action.

Lord (vv. 10-11)	Will conceive a child and call Him Immanuel
Ahaz (v. 12)	Will feel fortunate to have a cow and two sheep or goats left
Isaiah (v. 13)	Sent a message through the prophet Isaiah to Ahaz to ask for a sign
Virgin (v. 14)	Refused to ask for a sign as the Lord instructed
Farmer (v. 21)	Asked Ahaz why he was exhausting the Lord's patience

What stuck out to you in these verses?

At the time Isaiah was written, curds (or butter or cream) and honey were good foods even considered self-indulgent in their culture.¹⁵

The apostle Paul described people like Ahaz when he wrote, "They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!" (2 Tim. 3:5).

God invited Ahaz to reach out in faith, but Ahaz hid behind rules he didn't even follow to deny the Lord. Testing God was forbidden in the law (Deut. 6:16), but Ahaz twisted the command rather than heed God's invitation. It isn't testing God to do as He says! This exasperated Isaiah. Even though Ahaz didn't specify a sign, the Lord gave him one anyway.

This prophecy regarding a virgin has sparked much theological debate. I always thought this verse was just about Jesus the Messiah, but it also had significance in Isaiah's day. It was fulfilled for the original readers of Isaiah's message because we know that only a year or two after the prophecy was given the nations of Syria and Israel (the ones who threatened Judah) were destroyed by Assyria (Isa. 7:16). Although we don't know the identity of the mother or the child, the time frame of Isaiah's sign fit with historical events.

We also know that this sign had future implications. One commentator described his opinion this way, "I believe that the sign as originally given had a single meaning but a double significance. Its meaning is that God is with us and we need not fear what other human beings may do to us."¹⁶



While the verse has only one meaning, it had a double fulfillment that would come seven hundred years apart. First, it was significant to Ahaz as a challenge not to seek alliances with foreign nations like Assyria for help since God was with him.

Second, the Gospel of Matthew helps us see its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus. In Matthew 1, we learn that an angel appeared to Joseph giving greater insight into Isaiah's words:

“And she will have a son, and you are to name him
Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's
message through his prophet:

“Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”

MATTHEW 1:21-23

Signs like the one given in Isaiah 7:14 confirm God's long-term plan and commitment to His people. One scholar described the fullness of meaning in Matthew's words as “inspired reapplications of the inspired words.”¹⁷ The meaning is clear for Isaiah's day, Matthew's day, and ours: God is with us.

Take a moment to consider what the Messiah's name—Immanuel—means for you. What responses come to the surface as you consider that God is with you today in whatever circumstances you're facing?

No matter what's going on in our lives, we can trust that Immanuel is with us. This takes active faith because our human defaults lead us toward distraction, self-pity, and lies when we feel alone. Isaiah's prophetic words remind us to lean into the truth of Immanuel with intentionality, and his message about this future child didn't end in chapter 7. Knowing that someone is with us is one thing, but when we discover that the person alongside us is “Wonderful,” “Mighty,” “Everlasting,” and a “Prince,” well that adds a whole new layer to what it means to have God with us.

LIGHT FOR OUR DARKNESS

Isaiah 9:1-7 uses past tense verbs in the Hebrew because Isaiah's hope was so certain, he wrote as though it had already happened.¹⁸

READ ISAIAH 9:1-7. What was the name of the region that would be filled with glory in the future?

What would the people see (vv. 1-2)?

What would be broken (v. 4)?

What names were given for the child (v. 6)?

What would His government be like? What would make this happen (v. 7)?

Let's look closer at the names for the Promised One found in verse 6 and what they reveal to us about His character:

- **Wonderful Counselor** literally means "wonder-planner" or "wonder-working planner."¹⁹
- **Mighty God** emphasizes power like that of a champion in battle.
- **Everlasting Father** may seem an odd title for the Son of God, but it highlights the Messiah's timeless concern, care, and discipline of His people.²⁰
- **Prince of Peace** suggests an army commander, but unlike most princes, this commander's ultimate goal is peace.

Put a star next to the name you needed to hear today. Why did you choose that name?

How did the passages we read today land in your soul? Record any thoughts, questions, or insights you gained from Isaiah 9:1-7.

I don't know what you're walking through right now, but I'm sure there have been times when you could relate to living in a land that feels dark (Isa. 9:2). The news is full of stories of tragedy, injustice, and difficulty. The darkness isn't only "out there" in the world. We often personally trudge through grief, complicated relationships, health problems, job losses, or other trials that can leave us in a dark place. When we focus our eyes on Jesus, we make our fundamental reality one that's focused on hope.

Can you see why Isaiah is referred to as the fifth Gospel? God is always with us, and His plans are much bigger than we can imagine. At the heart of Isaiah's message is the hope of the gospel: God sent His only Son, Jesus, to earth, and He offered the perfect sacrifice—Jesus's very life—to cleanse us from our sins: And because Jesus went into death with us, He can bring us out with Him.²¹ We end our week of study with great hope knowing that God is not only with us in this life, but because He is Immanuel, we can be with Him in the next! Darkness and despair don't get the final say in our lives.

DAILY WRAP-UP

Today we focused on this truth: We can trust God because He is with us. How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today's study?

PRAYER

Immanuel, I know You are here. I am not alone. You were born of a virgin. You are my Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Help me trust You more and more. Grow my faith so that I might love and serve You today. In Jesus's name, amen.

MEMORY VERSE

Write down or say aloud Isaiah 1:18 from memory.





Session Two

VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE



To access the video teaching sessions, use the instructions in the back of your Bible study book.

We have to let God be _____ if we're going to be _____ to Him.

We want to get some _____ about God's _____ to remind ourselves why we can trust Him.

God is the _____ and _____ (Isa. 29:16; 45:9; 64:8).

We can trust God and trust His character because He is _____ and _____ (Isa. 6:1-8; 55:9).

Once we get some clarity about His _____, then we'll get some clarity about our _____.

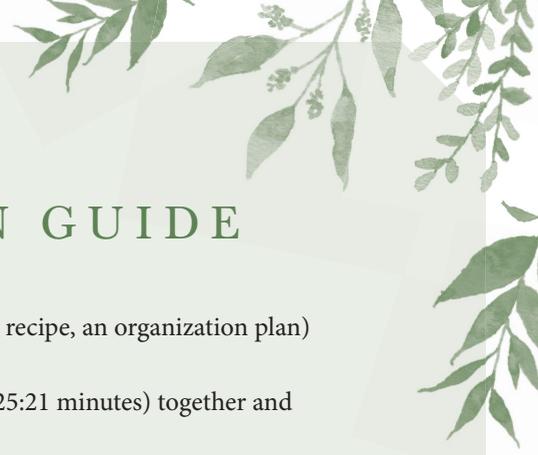
God _____ the rebellious (Isa. 1:18).

WOW: _____

WOE: _____

ACTION STEP: Fix your thoughts on God. Pick one of these things to focus on:

1. List the attributes of God using the ABCs method.
2. Remind yourself of the names of God from Day Three of your study.
3. Learn your memory verse for this week—Isaiah 1:18—and focus on that truth.



Session Two

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SHARE: What is something you have created? (Think: art, recipe, an organization plan)

WATCH the video “Session Two: Trust God’s Character” (25:21 minutes) together and follow along with the viewer guide on the previous page.

MEMORY VERSE

Review Isaiah 1:18 and give the group an opportunity to recite it aloud.

VIDEO DISCUSSION

1. *Ask:* Which character quality of God resonated with you from the video teaching?
2. *Discuss:* How does knowing God’s character help you to trust Him more in your everyday life? Share practical examples.

STUDY DISCUSSION

1. Call on a volunteer to read aloud Isaiah 1:16-20. Ask women to share how they answered the Day One Daily Wrap-Up question (p. 18): *How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today’s study?*
2. Discuss some of the attributes of God that stood out to you from the throne-room scene in Isaiah 6, which you studied in Day Two.
3. Remind your group of the four names for God we studied in Day Three: *Yahweh, Elohim, Creator, and Savior*. Guide women to share how they filled in the blank to this statement found on page 28: *I can trust God to rescue me from _____ because His name means _____.*
4. Call on someone to read Isaiah 26:3 out loud. Discuss practical ways to fix your thoughts on God in everyday life.
5. Read Isaiah 9:6-7. Ask for responses to the Day Five Daily Wrap-Up question (p. 37), *How would you summarize your personal takeaway from today’s study?*

REVIEW

Review the Big Idea for each of the five days of study. Ask for final thoughts or questions regarding the study of God’s character from Isaiah this week.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Lead women to write prayer requests on a provided note card, and pass the card to the woman on the right so each woman is being prayed for during the week.