

STRIVING LESS
AND TRUSTING
GOD MORE

Isaiah

FOR TEEN GIRLS

MELISSA
SPOELSTRA

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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 my three daughters:

Abby
Sarah
Rachel

I'm so grateful to have walked alongside you during your teen years. Through the joys and struggles, I watched you rumble with your faith, and it brings my heart great joy to watch each of you striving less and trusting God more as young women. Keep your eyes on our faithful God who longs to renew your strength and uphold you with His righteous right hand.

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SESSION ONE



INTRODUCING Isaiah

Wonder if you've ever left a church service, girl's conference, or Bible study determined to do better. Maybe you promised yourself you'd pray regularly, show more kindness to others, or be a better person in general. This determination usually comes from a desire to grow spiritually and know God better. But where has this intense pursuit of changing our behaviors 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 forward 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.

Wanting 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 set out together to study 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. And 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! But I know by now that there are times when I say, “I trust God,” but my stress, worry, and lack of peace don’t point to that kind of faith. Trust can be complicated, especially when people in our lives have broken it. Maybe someone you counted on for protection and provision let you down. Maybe you invested your time and energy into a group at church but felt betrayed or overlooked. It can be easy to transfer our trust issues from relationships with people onto our relationship with God.

Then there are other times when we thought we put our trust in God, but what we expected Him to do didn’t happen. 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 (relying on ourselves) 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? 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.

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 complete dependence.

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





HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

In our time together, we'll be looking at Scripture through a dual lens of history and modern day. Simply put, we'll seek to understand what Isaiah's prophetic words would've meant to his original audience, the Israelites, as well as how they apply to our lives today. Through poetry, narrative, and prophecy, we'll see themes of judgment and hope displayed—leading to our ultimate hope, Jesus. As Isaiah varied the presentation of His message, we'll vary our study too. Here's what that'll look like:

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY	GROUP TIME	WATCH

The “Personal Bible Study” is for you to work through the Scripture on your own. Feel free to complete each between our weekly group times as you see fit throughout the week. The “Group Time” and “Watch” sections are meant to be completed with your small group.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

You'll kick off each week with five days of personal Bible study—written to help structure your personal time with the Lord, deepen your understanding of a Big Idea, and move you to trust God more.

Each day includes:

- Scripture passage(s) to study, consider, and memorize
- Questions to help you examine the Scripture and apply it

And 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.

It's okay if you're still struggling with the Big Idea when you finish your personal study. The goal isn't to understand God completely; it's to trust Him fully, even when we don't understand.

GROUP TIME

I hope you have an awesome group of girls who are doing this study alongside you. It makes Bible study way more fun and a little less intimidating when you're not doing it alone. Session 1 will be your first group time together and will give you all the opportunity to see what this study is all about. After each week of personal study, you will have a chance to reflect and discuss as a group. However, for the first week, there's no personal study so you'll view the intro video and discuss the overview of Isaiah.

As you watch each video, I encourage you to take notes using the fill-in-the-blanks and notes box to keep track of anything you don't want to forget!

If you're a leader, make sure you check out the leader guide in the back of the book on page 166 for more tips on how to make the most of the time with your group.

RESOURCES

We've also added some awesome resources in the back of this book to help you deepen your study of the book of Isaiah:

- **USE THE MOM & DAUGHTER GUIDE** on pages 168-169 if you want to walk through what you're learning with your mom or a godly woman in your life.
- **USE THE CHECKLIST** on page 170 to read the entire book of Isaiah during or after your study.
- **IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT BECOMING A CHRISTIAN** or sharing the gospel with a friend, check out How to Become a Christian on page 171.



Session One

GROUP TIME

DISCUSS

Discuss the following questions as you kick off this Bible study with your group.

Recall some things you already knew about the book of Isaiah.

Share about a time when you left a church service, Bible study, girls conference, or youth camp determined to “do better.” How were you striving to do better?

How can we help one another guard against relying on our own effort for spiritual change?

Name the six ways Isaiah said we can trust the Lord. (See page 6 for help.)

What things in our lives might point to a lack of faith even when we say, “I trust God”?

List some ways people in our lives might break our trust. How could these affect our willingness to trust God?

Describe some feelings people tend to have about the word *judgment*. What are some ways we can help others see how hope and judgment work together?

MEMORIZE

Go ahead and read next week’s memory verse, Isaiah 1:18, aloud together.



WATCH

Use the fill-in-the-blanks and note-taking space as you watch the Session 1 teaching video together as a group.

Hope and judgment are not a _____ to be solved, but a _____ to be embraced.

_____ truth is what will help us navigate _____ times.

We need to let God be _____ so that we can be _____.

We need to realign to God's _____ so that we can trust His _____.

Where we look for _____ will either weaken or strengthen us spiritually.

What's in our _____ will end up in our _____.

He loves us too much to leave us on the path to _____.

We're going to see how we can live in the light of _____.

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

NOTES

PRAY

Father, please guide us as we begin the journey of learning how to strive less and trust You more.