

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOK OF
ISAIAH

21 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

DAY 1**INTRODUCTION**

Isaiah is one of the most attested books in the Old Testament. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1948, the prophetic book of Isaiah was included in the documents, dated from 100 BC. This gave an additional thousand years to the next oldest copy, which had been dated at 900 AD. At the time of the discovery, they were working on the translation work for the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, but stopped the work on that to make sure that what they were translating matched up to the newfound documents: the Dead Sea Scrolls. Very little needed to be changed upon the new discovery, and this should be of great comfort to us as believers because we are living in a time where the authority of the Bible is being challenged. More and more the Bible is being called a work of fiction, a book that was simply written by humans with no divine counselling.

Skeptics believe that because the details and events that are listed within the book of Isaiah are recorded so precisely, that someone other than Isaiah himself must have written the book. They say that Isaiah had no way of knowing that Babylon would be defeated by a man named Cyrus, because that event took place 100 years after Isaiah died. They would be correct in saying that Isaiah himself wouldn't know this detail, unless of course he truly was a man who heard from a God who was all knowing. Reading through the book of Isaiah, one sees that Isaiah never claims to be speaking on his own behalf; he has been sent from the "Holy One of Israel"—Yahweh Himself.

The response that we see from skeptics today is really no different than the response that Isaiah received at the time of delivering his messages. In fact, Isaiah was warned by God that He would be preaching to a people who would *"keep on hearing, but [would] not understand; keep on seeing, but [would] not perceive."* (Isa 6:9 ESV). There is a misunderstanding within the church; we think that if the Word of God is preached, hearts will become soft and therefore people will repent. But the book of Isaiah tells us that there is another response, and that upon hearing the Word, people can actually choose to harden their hearts even more. When people don't want to hear the truth, they don't want to hear the truth! Imagine how hard that must have been for Isaiah. His entire life assignment from God was to preach to a hard hearted people! No wonder Isaiah cried out and asked "How long, O Lord?" How long would he need to preach to a hard hearted people who would despise and reject him? Read how the Lord responds to that question: *"...Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste,¹² and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled."* (Isa 6:11-13 ESV). Read that again carefully. Isaiah was called to preach until the land was desolate. That isn't exactly a comforting response from God. Not only was he going to preach to people who wouldn't listen, but he would be prophesying for a long time – 40 years in total.

During his 40 year prophetic reign (as we will label it), Isaiah covered many different prophetic topics and messages that varied in form. Since his topics and writing style vary so much, scholars have divided the book of Isaiah into two very distinct parts.

While we know that the entire Bible is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16), the division of the chapters and verses within the Bible are not. Somewhere along the time line, chapters and verses were added to the Bible for our benefit, to make finding sections of the Bible easier

for the readers. However, even though the division of chapters were not inspired by God, whomever split up the book of Isaiah did so in a very unique way, dividing Isaiah into two distinct parts.

There are 66 chapters in Isaiah, 39 chapters in the first part and 27 chapters in the second. Do these numbers sound familiar to you at all? If they do that's because there are 66 books in total in the Bible: 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. To make matters even more interesting the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are a summary of the Old Testament, and the last 27 chapters are a summary of the New Testament. The book of Isaiah is literally all 66 books of the Bible summarized into one! Since there are so many chapters in Isaiah, this edition of Foundations will focus on Part 1 of Isaiah—the first 39 chapters.

As you go through this booklet, be mindful about keeping an open heart to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Prayerfully ask Him to teach you things that may not be highlighted. Devotional booklets are a great tool, but remember that they are only to assist you to grow closer to Jesus. Those of us who write Foundations are merely His servants who write on His behalf, but He is the eternal Teacher and if He wants to take you on a different direction than the one laid out for you, let Him! Even though there may be highlighted themes and verses, be ready and willing for God to speak to your heart about something else not mentioned. Perhaps He chooses to highlight a different verse or theme in your spirit. He alone knows the condition of your heart and what you need at this exact moment of time.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Spend some time in prayer asking for God's leading in this book. Ask Him to lead and guide you in a new way. Our God is Creator, Author and He makes all things new. Remember that God is not the one in the box, we are. If you are finding your devotional time with God repetitive and dull, ask Jesus to breathe life into your heart and spirit again. Dedicate this devotional time to Him, asking Him to bring you closer to Him as you are reading through Isaiah.
2. Isaiah can be seen as a book that is full of God's judgement, wrath and anger. Before you begin to read through this book, ask the Spirit for His heart and tone behind this book. Perhaps you have already read through Isaiah and you found the book a hard read. Tell the Lord if you have any reservations about this book.
3. Are you at all familiar with any of the verses or stories within Isaiah? If so, which ones are they, and do they carry any special meaning for you?
4. Read and meditate on the theme verse for this edition of Foundations. The verse is Isaiah 1:18, and this verse speaks powerfully into the Fathers heart for His rebellious children the Israelites, and today, us.

DAY 2**READ:** Isaiah 1

After reading this chapter, what do you think is the heart behind these first 31 verses? Anger? Grief? Are you overcome with sorrow as you read the Father's words to the people He calls His children; the very ones He carried out of Egypt. He raised and established them yet they had forsaken Him and turned to their own ways, completely forgetting that they wouldn't even be a people group if not for Him! While they no longer adhere to any of His moral laws, they still seem both intent and content with following the sacrificial and ceremonial laws (Isa. 1:12-15). Basically they have tried to turn God into a god like any other and have made following Him just like another religion; all about rules and sacrifice without any personal relationship.

Imagine the hurt and betrayal that the Lord must feel in His heart. Are you a parent? Could you imagine if your child treated you this way? Yet look at how the Lord reaches out to them:

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson; they shall become like wool." - Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)

That is a picture of a grieved and loving Father. He is willing to forgive them completely if only they will reason with Him! If not, He will discipline them until they return to Him. The discipline that they will be subjected to is harsh, but consider the fact that scripture tells us repeatedly:

*"The LORD passed before him [Moses] and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" – Exodus 34:6 (ESV)*

*"The LORD **is slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression..." – Numbers 14:18 (ESV)*

*"The LORD is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love." – Psalm 108:3 (ESV)*

*"The LORD is gracious and merciful, **slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love." – Psalm 148:8 (ESV)*

*"But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." – Psalm 86:15 (ESV)*

*"...Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, **slow to anger**, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster." – Joel 2:13 (ESV)*

Our God does not lose his temper. Ever. He is not hot headed, nor does He become upset over every little detail, and He takes no pleasure in disciplining or punishing (eternally) humans (cf. Eze. 18:23, 33:11). He is patient, He is kind, He is love. But when He is not heeded time and time again, He **will** use divine intervention and severe discipline and/or punishment to get those He loves to return to Him (cf. Heb. 12:6). He knows that suffering in this life - no matter how painful that suffering may be, is far better than spending an eternity in hell. God truly does have our best interests at heart –and that is to spend eternity *with* Him, not apart from Him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the first chapter? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gather from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Looking over the verses that give us a deeper insight into God's character (merciful, gracious and slow to anger) does this impact your view at all on His judgements towards His people and various nations around the globe? How so?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind someone you can intercede for. Perhaps there is someone God wants to reason with, and you can stand in the gap on their behalf.
4. Ask the Lord to show you if there is anywhere in your life that you are performing simply out of religious duty, and not out of intimate relationship with Him. Confess as needed, and take the necessary steps to either quit, or get your heart right with Him.

DAY 3



READ: Isaiah 2 - 4

As you progress through this book you will notice that there really isn't a smooth flow throughout Isaiah, and that the topics seem to vary from chapter to chapter, perhaps even within the chapter itself. That's because the book of Isaiah is not recorded in chronological order. Sometimes the prophecies are recorded in topical order and sometimes there is no order at all. Prophetic books, like Isaiah, tend to vary from other writing styles found in different books of the Bible—which tend to be written more in a narrative style of storytelling (think Genesis, Exodus, Ruth, Esther, Daniel, and Jonah, just to name a few). When the daily reading tends to jump around various subject matters (like today's) typically there will be a highlighted theme or verse for you focus on. However, remember what was stated in the introduction! Just because there is a focus verse, doesn't necessarily mean that that is the only verse you can focus on. If you have ever struggled with legalism, you know how easily we can find ourselves doing only what we are told, not varying from the outlined path at all. That, is religion. Under the prayer and journaling section, question one remains similar each day so that if God chooses to highlight something else to you while you are reading, you can pause and meditate on what He is showing you. That being said, here is today's focus:

¹⁰ Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendour of his majesty. ¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. ¹² For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; ¹³ against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; ¹⁴ against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills; ¹⁵ against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; ¹⁶ against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. ¹⁷ And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. ¹⁸ And the idols shall utterly pass away. ¹⁹ And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from

the splendour of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. ²⁰ *In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats,* ²¹ *to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendour of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.* ²² *Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?”* – Isaiah 2:10-22 (ESV)

Praise God that He has an appointed day to bring down all that opposes Him – people, idols and all things alike. At the end of everything, the only One whom will be exalted will be Yahweh Himself, and whomever He Himself chooses to exalt. You can guarantee that those who oppose Him will *not* receive any honour from Him. Jesus despises pride, and scripture tells us that He goes as far as to ‘oppose the proud’ (cf. Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while going through the assigned reading? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gather from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Pride is the root of all sin and since every human has sinned; every human has some form of pride in their hearts. However, there is overt rebellious pride, (e.g.: speeding and not caring), inner rebellious pride (e.g.: thinking and believing that you truly know and are better than others), and then there is pride that we are blind to, and I believe God is gracious to us when we are ignorant of this sin. For example, say that you are totally oblivious to the fact that self-hatred can be a huge issue of pride. That sounds harsh because if you are struggling with self-hate, chances are that started with deep wounds at the hands of another. However there comes a point (and that may even be after years of inner healing) when we need to decide if we are going to choose to believe what God says about us, over what the world or others say about us. If we continue in the sin of self-hate even on a sub conscious level, we actually believe that the way God chose to make us isn’t good enough and are accusing him of lying in verses like Gen 1:27 and Ps 139:13-18. Ask Jesus to reveal any hidden pride in your heart that you may not be aware of. Confess and repent as necessary.
3. The daily focus of scripture ends with a verse that should be a great warning for us. *“Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?”* (Isa 2:22 ESV) We are not to put our trust in man. Not in government, not in our bosses, not in a good report, not in anyone! (Note that there is a big difference between trusting someone, and putting your trust *in* someone). We are told only to put our trust in One Being –God. Read and meditate on the following verses:
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart...” – Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)
“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans.” - Psalm 118:8 (NIV)
“Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save.” – Psalm 146:3 (NIV)
“Do not trust in a friend; Do not put your confidence in a companion.” – Micah 7:5 (NKJV)
4. Ask Jesus to show you if there is anyone (or a group of people, like government parties) that you are placing your trust *in*. Confess as necessary and ask God to help you to put your trust in Him and in Him alone.

DAY 4**READ:** Isaiah 5

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.” – Isaiah 5:20-21 (NIV)

Since the fall, sin has been steadily increasing in the hearts of mankind and until Jesus returns and deals with sin once and for all, Christians have a big battle to fight. Throughout history we are familiar with events that were done in the name of ‘serving the greater good.’ But when that so-called ‘good’ goes against everything the Bible preaches as truth (do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie), Isaiah warns that the anger of the Lord will be kindled and He will stretch out His hand and strike His people (Isa 5:25).

His people. Often we read this verse and we look at the world (unbelievers) and shake our head at them. We think that they are the ones that are being rebuked in this passage, but that is not so. This verse is for the people who are *His* people: the Israelites, and today—us. Isaiah states that they—the Israelites—have rejected the Law of the Lord, and despised the Holy One of Israel (Isa 5: 24).

Let’s take a good look at the body of Christ today. Too often we point our fingers at the North American Church without realizing that we *are* the church. A Continent has no power over the condition of the church, people do. We are all in charge of our own hearts and making sure that what we believe and what we pursue matches up to the Truth found in scripture. No one will be able to stand in front of Jesus and blame their apathy, greed, adultery, or any other sin on their church if they had the Word of God available to them. An abundance of wealth, entertainment and possessions have been available to people from the start. Abraham, David, and Solomon are some examples of very wealthy men, and we know that two of them were able to still be 100% sold out to God in the midst of their abundance. There are many wealthy believers today who are completely devoted to God, and then there are some less financially fortunate believers who are completely apathetic towards God.

The trouble, however, starts when we follow the ways of the world, and apply that to our faith. An example of this is when the prosperity gospel is preached, and believers then turn to pursuing riches and blessings more than Jesus Himself. Over time, when Christians pursue the wrong things, our hearts become dull and what once was evil is now good (greed disguised as “God’s love through financial blessing”) and good is now evil (the pursuit of righteous living and holiness). This is how we hear of stories within the church of embezzlement, adultery, homosexuality, fornication, and a list of other horrendous sins. Would it be surprising if a lot of the natural and economic disasters that have been unleashed as of late are just as much for the church as for the wickedness of the world?

Jesus is coming back for a pure bride. A bride that stands for truth and refuses to become stained with the ways and practices of the world. Let us return to the foundation of Truth!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the assigned reading? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gather from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.

2. Spend time in prayer and confession. Pray that you and your loved ones would guard your heart(s) and live according to the Way that God has outlined for His children in scripture. Pray that the body of Christ would no longer twist good and evil around but would stand for the Truth found within the Bible.
3. Here at Southland, God has placed a call on us to reach out to help renew various churches around the globe. You may not be able to go on the mission trips to these places, but you can certainly join in prayer for everyone and for this assignment! Some prayer points would be:
 - For the pastors: that they would be humble, teachable, hungry for God and His truth, and boldness to carry out any assignments God may have for them.
 - For the congregation: that they would have hearts ready to receive whatever God has for them
 - For the teams who are involved with traveling to the various churches: for strength, health, wisdom, rest, protection and provision.
 - For all believers: that they would place the truths taught in scripture over the things that the world teaches, that they would stand up for truth
 - Anything else that the Lord places on your heart.
4. Spend some time in thanksgiving that the Lord has given us advanced warnings through books like Isaiah, to get our hearts right with Him!

DAY 5



READ: Isaiah 6

Isaiah was chosen but not forced into his divine assignment. We read that God asked the question in Isaiah 6:8 *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* (ESV) Isaiah chose to respond to the call, telling the Lord *“Here am I! Send me.”* How many of us would respond like this? Is there any doubt that many would? Would that number would most likely decrease significantly if they could only hear what the assignment was after they volunteered. Well, Isaiah’s encounter with the Lord and the vision that he saw was so powerful, that that he was willing to go wherever, say whatever and do whatever the Lord needed done. The assignment that the Lord gave Isaiah was, well—difficult.

“Go, and say to this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.” – Isaiah 6:9-10 (ESV)

Not only was this a difficult task, the duration that Isaiah would need to be prophesying to these hard hearted people was going to be a long one:

“Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said: “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.” – Isaiah 6:11-13 (ESV)

Right about now, some would be packing their bags and saying “Sayonara God!” In fact, there was a man who did just this, but he came to his senses after being thrown overboard a ship into the sea, and swallowed by a big fish. There was also another man who was quite reluctant at first to obey an assignment from God and confront a wicked ruler, but

after God rebuked him he finally went on his mission with the aid of his brother, Aaron. We see that Isaiah however, went forth after receiving his assignment, knowing full well that fulfilling this task was most likely going to end up in his death.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while going through the assigned reading? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gather from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Ask the Lord to show you how you would respond if He presented you with an opportunity to fulfill a task *without* telling you beforehand what that task was going to be. He may show you right away, or He may choose to reveal the condition of your heart at a later time and date.
3. If He has shown you that you would be resistant to an opportunity from Him, ask Him to show you why. Confess anything if necessary, and allow Him to minister to your heart. Pray and ask Him to make you someone who trusts Him, and is willing to do works on His behalf.
4. If He has shown you that you are willing to make yourself available to Him, rejoice! The Lord needs people in all areas and walks of life who are willing to serve Him! If you would like to, ask Jesus if there is something He would like you to do on His behalf. Perhaps He wants you to intercede for someone or for our nation, maybe He wants you to allow Him to speak more of His love into your heart, or maybe He wants you to go and make things right with someone. Whatever the task is, make sure you are ready to obey before you ask Him!

DAY 6



READ: Isaiah 7 & 8

Like all books of the Bible, Isaiah is a book full of rich truths. One could study the book of Isaiah from many different perspectives like: prophetic, government, historical proof of the Bible, leadership, warnings, humility, love, judgements, or discipline. Within the two chapters: seven and eight, there are many different topics covered that today's devotional could go in: prophetic (7:14-15), personal encouragement (7:9), or warnings (8:11-14). The list could go on, but hopefully you get the point. For the focal point of today's devotional, we will focus on Isaiah 8:11-14 and study that passage purely as encouragement for our lives today.

"For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honour as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." – Isaiah 8:11-13 (ESV)

You have probably heard the saying "believers are not to follow the ways of the world" time and time again; possibly so often that the phrase goes in one ear and out the other. We tend to think that as long as we aren't doing the bad things (swearing, gossiping, stealing, lying, partaking in sexual sins, etc.) we are obeying this command. But this truth

goes *far* beyond that. We are to trust God and His words 100% over anything that the world teaches as truth. The problem is, is that we have become really good at spiritualizing things so that we can still have one foot in the world, and one foot in the kingdom. The problem is then that we don't experience true freedom, and we're constantly battling with issues like low self-esteem, self-hate, gluttony, fear, stress, anxiety and numerous other inner issues of the heart. To further explain I provide an example below.

A healthy, beautiful body: You already probably have an image come to mind about what the ideal healthy and beautiful body should look like, and that's because our world has completely taken over the standards of beauty from pretty much every perspective (medical, aesthetics, and health). As Christians we know that ultimately God's standard of health and beauty is truth, *but* there's still the fact that we need to take care of our bodies because after all, it's been said that our bodies are our temple, right? So we start to study nutrition and exercise, and see terms like 'healthy BMI' 'resting heart-rate' 'kilocalorie' and suddenly you're constantly dieting, weighing yourself and eating nothing but what is allowed on the 'clean-eating' or 'paleo' diet list.

You're reading all the latest and greatest articles written by specialists, nutritionists, and doctors that tell you certain facts like: "extra weight in the abdomen increases heart disease," or "extra weight in the abdomen makes people unattractive." Then we start to fear, because these are professional opinions and we certainly don't want heart disease, and we definitely don't want to be unattractive.

So because these are "facts" from professionals and there is some truth behind what they are saying, we believe these truths and forget to include God in this whole process. God has a different truth than the world, that being that He created different people with different body types and for them they will *never* achieve the 'perfect' BMI simply because of how God created them. There are a variety of shapes of body types out there, and because of our fallen nature, certain body types are labelled as more desirable than others and this is NOT of God. We have no idea what Esther or Bathsheba actually looked like, but due to society's standard of beauty today, we automatically assume they look like the airbrushed models on the cover of magazines.

When believers start to live according to everything the medical and nutritional field puts out *above* the truth of God, we are turning to idolatry and will end up worshipping ourselves, nutrition, and the world's standard of what a healthy ideal body is supposed to look like.

This area of health and beauty is just one particular example, but take a look at some other short examples that we may have allowed worldly views to affect our views and beliefs: government parties (as long as the 'right' party is in power our Country is safe), newspapers and news stations (to deliver us non-biased and accurate information), proper education (proper education guarantees a well-paying job), professional opinions or expert advice (they're educated so they automatically know what's best) and the list could go on and on.

We must always make sure that everything we believe is first and foremost submitted to Jesus and the Truth found within His Word.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the assigned reading? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is any area of your life where you are following and believing the customs of the world, without realizing your error. After He brings something to mind, thank Him and ask Him for freedom in this area. Perhaps you will need to confess believing a lie, pursuing the wrong things, or meditate on God's truth in this area.

DAY 7



READ: Isaiah 9 & 10

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. ³You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. ⁴For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. – Isaiah 9:2-7 ESV

Chapter Nine contains the verses quoted most often at Christmas time, as they should be! Isaiah prophesied the first coming of Christ with these words, and the joy He would eventually bring with Him. How sad the fact is that people want to remove Christ from Christmas when He is literally the ENTIRE reason for the season! If you remove Christ, all you are left with is gift giving, food, and family and friends. And if you don't even have that, well no wonder people struggle with depression during the holidays. The moment Jesus no longer is the focal point of the Holidays you are left with people and things. Doesn't it seem like the Devil wreaks havoc during the Christmas Season, and human nature seems to become ugly, selfish, and greedy.

Several years ago when I needed to get some last minute items for Christmas so I headed to the mall with a friend. Upon entering the parking lot I said aloud "we are going to be patient, and if someone steals a parking spot from us we will let ourselves be wronged." We prayed and asked Jesus to help us be kind and patient to the sales clerks and have a good time in the midst of the hassle we were sure to come up against. Sure enough the parking lot was full, but we saw someone walking toward their vehicle and followed them. We waited with the blinker on for roughly two minutes while they loaded up their vehicle and exited the spot. As they were backing out of spot, another car turned the corner and was able to maneuver their way into the spot because we were still blocked off by the exiting vehicle. As this new car took the spot we were waiting for, the driver waved to us

apologetically and mouthed ‘sorry.’ We were both flabbergasted at the fact that she knew she was being rude, apologized for her rudeness, then proceeded to be rude by parking in the spot. I had to laugh at the situation considering what we had just prayed and decided five minutes earlier, and truthfully, we weren’t entitled to that spot anyway. What’s even funnier is that we actually ran into that person inside the mall and they looked completely ashamed of their actions by avoiding eye contact with us, yet we were at peace with ourselves because we allowed ourselves to be wronged and let the matter go. That day we witnessed customers fighting with store clerks, customers tearing apart stores looking for certain items, and people cutting other people off in line-ups. Sadly, I wouldn’t be surprised if some of those people were Christians. I too am easily upset and give in to the seasonal frustrations and I don’t doubt that had we not prayed in the parking lot, we too would have given into the chaos that was taking place in that mall.

As we draw nearer to the Christmas season, let us be on guard against the spirit of the age. Christmas is *not* about things and people. Christmas is to be centered on Jesus, the greatest gift that was ever given to humans. The other stuff (gifts, great food, and people) are an added bonus and are enjoyed with much more joy and satisfaction when they are done in and for His Name.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through these chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to learn from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. With the approaching Christmas season, ask God to give you a fresh perspective this season. Perhaps Christmas is a time of great stress and anxiety. Maybe the finances are tight, or you’re stressed about all the food you need to cook. Ask Jesus to show you any wrong pursuits that you put above Him during the Christmas season.
3. Pray for yourself and your family for the upcoming season. Pray that they would understand *more* of the reason behind the season, and that they would encounter more of Jesus during Christmas.

DAY 8



READ: Isaiah 11 & 12

What an amazing two chapters! Chapter 11 is referring to Jesus and the millennial kingdom, and chapter 12 is a psalm. Today’s reading will include very little on the two chapters. Instead, the prayer and journaling section will guide you more with these two chapters.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through Chapter 11? These verses are talking about when Jesus comes to reign and rule on this earth. Which verses excited you and why? Were the verses insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.

2. Using Chapter 11 as a loose guide, ask the Holy Spirit to stir up in you more of a longing for the next life—the one in which Jesus gets to be on earth *with* you and will reign and rule in complete righteousness.
3. Think of some of the governments that have been in power over the past thousands of years (Pharaohs, Kings, Communist leaders, Hitler, Stalin, etc.) and how life was under their reign. Compare that to what life will be like with a perfect Ruler –Jesus.
4. Pray Chapter 12 over yourself: use that psalm as a prayer of dedication and declaration to God.

DAY 9

 **READ:** Isaiah 13 & 14

"I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless." - Isaiah 13:11 (ESV)

Do you ever find yourself becoming frustrated with the evil around you? Ever to the point of hopelessness or despair? I know I have felt like this before, especially over issues like abortion and child sex slavery. I would try to go to prayer for these issues, and would find myself overwhelmed with the evil and ended up feeling more discouraged than when I began. In order to cope with my overwhelmed state, I just started to ignore what was going on in the world around me because I didn't know how to process and deal with all those emotions I was experiencing. Eventually over time I learned the principle of releasing burdens to God, trusting in Him to care for these children and deliver justice for the innocent. I am able once again to partner with Jesus through prayer, and then release the issue without the rest of my day being emotionally bankrupt.

The fact is, injustices *should* move us internally and spur us to prayer. The Bible tells us that we are to 'weep with those who weep' (Rom 12:15) and to 'remember [pray for] those who are in prison as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated since [we] are also are in the body' (Heb. 13:3). While we pray for those suffering injustices, we need to remember who God says He is, and what the Bible tells us He will do to those who participate in evil. God is just, and no evil will go unpunished! Some judgements have already been carried out (think Sodom and Gomorrah, the Flood), some are in the process of being delivered, and some are yet to come.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through chapters 13 and 14? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gain from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Do you have a burden about a particular injustice? Some examples are: prostitution, sex-slavery, abortion, the persecution of believers, the marginalization of certain social classes, child abuse, child abandonment, poor justice systems, corrupt government parties and officials, corrupt legal and justice systems, extreme poverty, or the current refugee crisis. Or how about the expanding agenda to diminish the Christian lifestyle, thus resulting in a more 'tolerant' society? These are all examples of evil and make no mistake, the parties responsible for these injustices will not go unpunished. However, in the meantime, we the church have much prayer and fasting ahead of us! Spend

as much time as allowed today in intercession for some of the issues stated above. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you intercede on behalf of the innocent. Ask Him to bring words, prayer points or verses of scripture that you can pray today.

3. If Intercessory prayer isn't really a strength you feel you have, here is a great tip to help you grow in this area. Either buy or find some index cards and assign each card a topic (abortion, the homeless, refugee crisis, persecution of believers, church staff, family members, employer/co-workers, yourself, etc.). Then on the reverse side write out different prayer points for that specific topic. Then when you ever hit a wall during your prayer times, you can use these cards as guides to help you out.

DAY 10



READ: Isaiah 15 & 16

“³“Help us,” they cry. “Defend us against our enemies. Protect us from their relentless attack. Do not betray us now that we have escaped. ⁴Let our refugees stay among you. Hide them from our enemies until the terror is past...” ⁵then God will establish one of David’s descendants as king. He will rule with mercy and truth. He will always do what is just and be eager to do what is right.” Isaiah 16:3-5 NLT

The first two verses (3 & 4) are the cries of the refugees who have escaped the destruction of Moab. They are begging permission to hide in Judah until the plundering of the enemy has stopped. Then in verse five, 'Isaiah takes an opportunity to speak about the ultimate trust not only for the Moabites, but for the whole world. This short statement is reminiscent not only of 11:1-16 but also of 9:1-7. Although his appearing will come long after this time when the Moabites are fleeing the Assyrians a “man” will come out of “the house of David” and bring an end to oppression, destruction, and aggression. His throne will not be established on those rotten foundations but on the sure foundations of “love” and “faithfulness,” the two chief characteristics of the Holy One of Israel. As a result, his government will be characterized by “justice” and “righteousness.” Neither the Judeans nor the Moabites will survive to see them. Nevertheless, persons in both groups can put their trust in the God who made such a promise in their own day.’¹

While the original cries of the Moabites are now silenced, the same cries have been repeated throughout history by millions. Even today there are some who are crying out the passage Isaiah 16:3-4. You would think that we would take the phrase “history repeats itself” and then try to make it not so. But alas, here we are again watching another mass refugee crisis unfolding before our eyes at the hands of ISIS, and some people are more concerned about themselves than extending help to others. In all the chaos of the world there are two things we can be certain of: hearts need to change, and the return of King Jesus is the only solution for this world.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the assigned chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.

¹ Oswalt, John N. *THE NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY: ISAIAH From biblical text...to contemporary life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. Print.

2. Pray for our government leaders. Pray for wisdom and discernment that they would be able to allow to most amount of refugees in with the least amount of risk to Canada.
3. Pray for people's hearts to change. Pray that both parties (refugees and the countries offering refuge) would be open to the gospel and everything it includes.

DAY 11

 **READ:** Isaiah 17 & 18

"⁴In that day Israel's glory will grow dim; its robust body will waste away. ⁵The whole land will look like a grainfield after the harvesters have gathered the grain. It will be desolate, like the fields in the valley of Rephaim after the harvest. ⁶Only a few of its people will be left, like stray olives left on a tree after the harvest..." declares the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁷Then at last the people will look to their Creator and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. ⁸They will no longer look to their idols for help or worship what their own hands have made... ⁹Their largest cities will be like a deserted forest... It will be utterly desolate. ¹⁰Why? Because you have turned from the God who can save you. You have forgotten the Rock who can hide you. So you may plant the finest grapevines and import the most expensive seedlings. ¹¹They may sprout on the day you set them out; yes, they may blossom on the very morning you plant them, but you will never pick any grapes from them. Your only harvest will be a load of grief and unrelieved pain. ¹²Listen! The armies of many nations roar like the roaring of the sea. Hear the thunder of the mighty forces as they rush forward like thundering waves. ¹³But though they thunder like breakers on a beach, God will silence them, and they will run away. They will flee like chaff scattered by the wind, like a tumbleweed whirling before a storm. ¹⁴In the evening Israel waits in terror, but by dawn its enemies are dead. This is the just reward of those who plunder us, a fitting end for those who destroy us." Isaiah 17:4-14 NLT

Here's a quick summary of what is all happening in the above verses. Essentially, Israel has lost her beauty as well as most of her inhabitants and as a result of this devastation, people will finally return to Yahweh; no longer trusting in man-made idols. The reason that this devastation happened in the first place was because Israel forsook God to begin with. They turned from their real refuge and began to put their trust in their own human effort by turning to the best they could buy (Isa 17:10-11) but even that won't do them any good. Isaiah then says that even though the nations are raging again Israel it is ultimately God who will destroy them (the enemies). Such is the fate of those who try to destroy Israel.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through these chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to learn from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Judah had turned to the nations of the world for her help instead of God, and that's why the whole issue of judgement is being discussed in this chapter. She also has purchased some of the best of the best (this could be a picture of her trusting in the 'richer' nations) but even that can't seem to save her from the coming judgement God is sending her way. The exact same principle holds true today. Countries can invest millions into the strongest fortresses, buildings, agriculture, education, military,

economy but all of that is still in the hands of God. There is *nothing* that can protect us from His judgement if He chooses to send it our way. Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord if there is any false security in your life. Confess and repent of what He shows you. Remember that repentance is a process, so don't beat yourself up if you don't overcome this in a day! Jesus is the Saviour! You cannot save yourself. All you can do is choose to repent and then obey whatever He shows you. If you know that this particular false security in your life has a big strong hold (an example could be money) perhaps set aside some time to fast and pray for freedom in this area.

3. Spend some time in prayer for the nation of Israel. Pray for protection for her, and that she would again return to Yahweh and call upon His name.

DAY 12



READ: Isaiah 19 & 20

“Then the LORD said, “My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the last three years. This is a sign—a symbol of the terrible troubles I will bring upon Egypt and Ethiopia. ⁴For the king of Assyria will take away the Egyptians and Ethiopians as prisoners. He will make them walk naked and barefoot, both young and old, their buttocks bared, to the shame of Egypt. ⁵Then the Philistines will be thrown into panic, for they counted on the power of Ethiopia and boasted of their allies in Egypt! ⁶They will say, ‘If this can happen to Egypt, what chance do we have? We were counting on Egypt to protect us from the king of Assyria.’” - Isaiah 20:3-6 (NLT)

False security seems to be one of the key themes in the book of Isaiah. Time and time again, we read of nations and particular people groups that choose to put their trust in people, princes, kings, pagan gods and man-made idols. And time and time again we read of how their poor choices lead to their destruction. The way God chooses to get His message across isn't always the same, and in this case, He uses a naked man as an image one is likely not to forget (which is why he probably used it in the first place). Whether or not Isaiah was literally naked—there is some debate as to whether or not he was fully exposed, or simply wearing a loincloth in which case only his buttocks bared—he was acting out what was going to happen when the Assyrians would strip the captured Egyptians and march them off into captivity. Not only will Egypt fail to save those who trust in her, she will not even be able to save herself.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the assigned reading? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gather from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Just because a mighty country may fall, (like Egypt in this case) doesn't mean that there is no hope for them, especially because we know that 'hope... never ends' (1 Cor 13:13). Isaiah prophesies that Egypt will eventually turn to Yahweh and call upon Him. Spend some time in thanksgiving for the goodness of God, and that He allows us to repent and forgives us when we do.

DAY 13**READ:** Isaiah 21 & 22

"¹²At that time the Lord, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, called you to weep and mourn. He told you to shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of burlap to show your remorse. ¹³But instead, you dance and play; you slaughter cattle and kill sheep. You feast on meat and drink wine. You say, "Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!" – Isaiah 22:12-13 NLT

The wonderful thing about the Word of God is that it is Alive. He can take one piece of scripture and use it to convict one person and encourage another. You can take a warning against a group of people thousands of years ago, and still heed that same warning today. As I was reading through these two chapters, I saw these two verses and I thought of what took place on June 26, 2015. That was the day when the President of the United States declared that gay marriage was now legal in all 50 states. When I started seeing the uproar among Canadian Christians, I couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. Here again Christians were saying that God was going to judge America for a sin that has been legal in our own Country for years! But that's when I started to listen to Pastors across the States explaining how grave this situation was, and *why* gay marriage was such a horrendous sin.

There is something incredibly important to understand about marriage that I had NEVER heard about until after June 26, 2015. Before the fall took place in the Garden of Eden, everything that God had made and established was perfect, and the *only* covenant that had been established *prior* to the fall was the covenant of marriage, between a man and a woman. This is serious. This means that marriage is something God takes so seriously that He defined it in a perfect world that was untainted by sin.

So are you starting to see why making gay marriage legal is such a big deal? The Covenant of marriage that was defined by a Holy uncreated God in a sinless world has now been redefined by sinful, *created* beings in a now fallen world.

Now how does this all relate to today's theme verse? I think these two verses are literally a play by play of what happened on that day – the day when people should have been repenting, weeping, and crying out to God for mercy, there was celebration. MASS celebration. The White House was even decorated with rainbow lights, and the slogan "Love Wins" was proclaimed everywhere (which I think is ironic and a prophecy in-and-of itself because in the end, Jesus does win, and He is the literal definition of love).

I don't think people realize the depth of evil we have reached when sin can be celebrated so lavishly. Even among Christians, we are numb to the evil around us because it's *everywhere*. But Praise Jesus we have hope, and that we can intercede on behalf of our nation and the nation around us. Do not be so quick to assume that the judgements we are seeing being unleashed (i.e. natural disasters) are for the wicked alone. The church has been asleep for a long time and God is calling His bride to *wake-up* and *act*. Pray. Fast. Repent. Praise. Repeat.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.

2. Ask the Lord to show you anywhere in your life where you may be asleep. Confess and repent as necessary.
3. Pray for the bride of Christ as a whole. That she would wake up and begin interceding and repenting on behalf of the nations, and for the return of Christ!

DAY 14



READ: Isaiah 23 & 24

Tired of all the judgements yet? Imagine how tired Isaiah was of giving them. And even more, imagine how sick and tired God was of having to judge people time and time again. How much easier would everything have been if people would have just heeded what He said in the first place?

God is love. It is impossible to separate that trait from Him which means that everything He does (including sending people to hell) is always done in love. However, God is also just and that too is impossible to separate from Him because again, it is His nature.

In his book *Peter Pan*, J.M. Barrie wrote “Fairies have to be one thing or the other, because being so small they unfortunately have room for one feeling only at a time.” This is kind of how humans are like as well. When we are overcome with an emotion, it’s like there is no room for us to feel anything else. This is never the case with God. He is always in control of His emotions, and He can experience a variety of emotions and act accordingly out of every single character trait that He is because He never ceases to be what He is – perfectly whole.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Pick one of the following attributes of God, and then do a word study using the concordance at the back of your Bible to look up some verses on that specific attribute. Ask God to grow you in understanding and awe of that attribute of Him. Here are some attributes to choose from: Love, Holiness, Just, Merciful, Good, Joy or any other attribute that you want to study.
3. After doing a word study of this attribute, pray that you would keep that in mind when you continue reading through the book of Isaiah and come across any other chapters or verses surrounding the topic of judgement.

DAY 15



READ: Isaiah 25 & 26

*“There he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth.
⁸He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign LORD will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The LORD has spoken!
⁹In that day the people will proclaim, “This is our God! We trusted in him, and he saved us! This is the LORD, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!” – Isaiah 25:7-9 NLT*

Death was never God's intention for His creation. Yes, He allowed for the possibility of death (cf. Gen 2:17) but He didn't want it. Miscarriages, still births, sudden infant death syndrome, accidental deaths, heart attacks, death by disease, suicides, murders – death in any form was *not* in the will of God when He created the world. But Praise the Lord, when things got messed up in the garden, God stepped in and took over. He removed the possibility of us living forever in our fallen state (which would have been *awful*) by setting cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the tree of life (Gen 3:24) and allowed us to reap the consequences of sin, and death entered into the picture.

However, we know that God works all things for the good of those who He has called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28) and He sent His Son into the world to die so that we again could *live*. He bridged the gap that separated us from God and now, if we so choose, we can spend this lifetime and the next with Him.

While there is much heartache, sorrow, pain and suffering that is still attached to death in this life, there is a day coming where God will 'swallow up death forever.' He will wipe away every tear and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever! Praise the Lord!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through these chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gain from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. We all know that we are going to die because it's a part of life. Everyone dies (except for those two blessed men in the bible Enoch and Elijah) but not everyone thinks about life after death. There are some who choose to believe that there is no life after death; that we sort of just disappear. Then there are some who believe in reincarnation, some who think everyone goes to heaven, and some who believe what Jesus says: there is a heaven and a hell. Do you live with your eyes fixed firmly on this life or the next life? Living with your eyes fixed firmly on the next life actually brings the most joy to living in this lifetime. When you know that everything you do in this life adds to your blessings in the life to come you know that nothing you do here is a waste! Ask God to show you how you are living your life in preparation for the next life. Let Him speak His praises into your heart and receive anything He has to show you!
3. Ask God to increase your yearning and longing for the next life to come.

DAY 16

 **READ:** Isaiah 27 & 28

"⁶In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit. ⁷Has the LORD struck her as he struck down those who struck her? Has she been killed as those were killed who killed her? ⁸By warfare and exile you contend with her—with his fierce blast he drives her out, as on a day the east wind blows. ⁹By this, then, will Jacob's guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones to be like limestone crushed to pieces, no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing." – Isaiah 27:6-9 NIV

Idolatry: The complete opposite of living out the first and most important commandment. Jesus has instructed us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind (Deut. 6:5, Mark 12:29-30). Israel had failed horribly on obeying this commandment, and that is the main reason that the Lord was disciplining her. She had forsaken Him and had turned to idol worship instead. Yet Isaiah prophesies that after God atones for her guilt, Israel will remove the altars and Asherah poles and incense altars. They will return back to God, and leave their idol worship behind them.

This is why God purifies us as well. When we turn to other sources instead of Him for any sort of fulfillment, it is idolatry, and God is a jealous God. He does not want to share your heart with anything or anyone else. He is always to be first in our hearts and our lives.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to learn from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Read Deuteronomy 6. After you have read this chapter think about what you have read in Isaiah so far. Can you see any correlation between Israel's direct disobedience to the Lord and what had all happened to her? What are some of the direct commandments laid out for Israel in Deut. 6 that they have disobeyed, and what have the results been?
3. We humans, well we love our idols. And the thing about idols is that there are so many different options and directions to choose from! Whether it's your passions, hobbies, work, family, relationships, money, personal possessions, sports teams, personal achievements, body image or cars –just to name a few—the fact is that these can all replace God in our lives. Not good! Spend some time asking God to show you if there is anything or anywhere in your life that you have an idol, or some form of idolatry. Confess and repent of what He shows you.
4. Spend some time receiving God's love into your heart. When you confess something and that sin is removed allow the love of God to replace whatever it is you just dealt with, so that the "hole" that was left is filled with true life.

DAY 17



READ: Isaiah 29 & 30

"¹³ And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, ¹⁴ therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden."" – Isaiah 29:13-14

We're probably all pretty familiar with these two passages of scripture. These are the two verses that Jesus uses when he rebukes the Pharisees for their false worship of God.

"Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, ² "Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat." ³ Jesus replied, "And why do you, by

your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? ⁴ For instance, God says, ‘Honour your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ ⁶ In this way, you say they don’t need to honour their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote,

⁸ ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

⁹ Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.’”

¹⁰ Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. ¹¹ It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.” ... ¹⁷ “Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. ¹⁸ But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. ¹⁹ For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. ²⁰ These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”” – Matthew 15:1-20 NLT

God desires pure worship when we draw near to Him. He takes no pleasure in worship or sacrifice from people who come to Him with empty words or phrases. Under the prayer and journaling section there will be a few verses for you to look up and meditate on if you so choose. Look at God’s heart towards people who bring Him empty worship, and then compare that to the verses on what true worship and sacrifice looks like.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Look up the following verses and jot down anything that you notice while reading through them. I arranged the verses in order from the beginning of the Old Testament into the New Testament, combing all the verses about true and false worship. Here are the verses: Numbers 3:3-4, Deuteronomy 6:5, 1 Samuel 13:8-14; 15:1-23, 2 Samuel 24:18-25, Isaiah 58, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 6:5; 12:1-8; 22:34-40, Mark 12:41-44, 18:9-14, John 4:19-24, Romans 12:1, Philipians 3:3, & Hebrews 12:28-13:17.

DAY 18

 **READ:** Isaiah 31 & 32

“⁹ You women who are so complacent, rise up and listen to me; you daughters who feel secure, hear what I have to say! ¹⁰ In little more than a year you who feel secure will tremble; the grape harvest will fail, and the harvest of fruit will not come. ¹¹ Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your fine clothes and wrap yourselves in rags. ¹² Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines ¹³ and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briars— yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. ¹⁴ The fortress will be abandoned, the

noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks,¹⁵ till the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest.¹⁶ The LORD's justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field.¹⁷ The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.¹⁸ My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.¹⁹ Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely,²⁰ how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free.”—Isaiah 32:9-20 NIV

Complacency is a pretty dangerous sin, even though while you're in the midst of it, you're actually quite content and comfortable. Take a look at the two definitions below:

Complacent: pleased, especially with oneself or one's merits, advantages, situation, etc., often without awareness of some potential danger or defect: self-satisfied.²

Complacency: a feeling of quiet pleasure or security, often while unaware of some potential danger, defect, or the like; self-satisfaction or smug satisfaction with an existing situation, condition, etc.³

Basically you can summarize up complacency like this: "I have all my effects in order, money in the bank, and insurance on the car and house, life is goooooood." We don't realize that within an instant everything can change.

We all know that the Bible promises us that some extremely challenging events are going to take place in the near future, events that the world has never seen before (Matt 24:21). How do we prepare ourselves and our families for events like that? Jesus tells us the answer in Matthew 24:42 ⁴² *Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* ⁴³ *But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.* ⁴⁴ *Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”* (ESV)



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through the chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to learn from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. After reading the two definitions provided, why do you think being complacent is a dangerous place for your heart to be in?
3. Spend some time in prayer asking the Lord if there is anywhere in your life where you are currently complacent. Confess and repent as necessary.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one practical step that you can take to make sure that you stay awake.

² As defined by www.dictionary.com

³ *Ibid.*

DAY 19



READ: Isaiah 33 – 35

¹⁴ *The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: “Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”* Isaiah 33:14 (ESV)

It’s interesting how people react when the heat is turned up, isn’t it? Can you remember sitting in that high school class when someone pulled a prank while the teacher was out of the room? Remember how it felt when they scanned the room with their icy gaze and exposed your soul?

There is an opposite effect in the hearts of those who are blameless, effects listed in the latter part of Isaiah 33 and 34. What a fascinating thought! Two groups of people coming into to contact with a Holy God and experiencing wholly opposite sensations.

Is that enough motivation for you to get things right with God? Wouldn’t it be an amazing feeling the next time your cell leader said that the group was doing confession to know that the really big sins, the dark shameful ones, had been dealt with and it was time for maintenance, not an overhaul?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through these chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Put yourself on the streets of Zion as the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, approaches. How does He look at you? What would you be tempted to hide in your life? Your tax return? Your charitable donations receipt? Your kids!? Or just your heart? Whatever evil God’s gaze reveals, whether big or small, write it out, confess it to the Lord and ask Him to be thorough with you so that you can approach Him with confidence when the day comes.

DAY 20



READ: Isaiah 36-37

It’s always good to have a prophet on your side; at least it was for Hezekiah. He was staring down the barrel of a loaded gun (metaphorically speaking) and his enemy was *powerful*. So Hezekiah did the right thing, he consulted the Lord by seeking Isaiah’s help. Of course this didn’t mean that the fear of war was immediately absolved, nor that the king didn’t have work to do, upon hearing the word of the Lord he left for the House of the Lord and spent time pleading to God for deliverance.

There is an interesting thought here, did a lack of faith Hezekiah drive him to the temple to pray or was it his faith in action that drove him there? It appears that the latter is the case. Hezekiah’s desperate prayer was intended to initiate the prophetic word that Isaiah proclaimed – he was contending in prayer for the promise!

It would be hard to say whether God’s word would have been rendered void had Hezekiah stayed in the palace giggling as he waited for the judgement to descend on Sennacherib, but it does reveal the king’s character and at this point it was good.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through these chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to glean from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. How we handle God's promises reveals our character. Is there a promise that God has given you that you have forgotten? Have you failed to pray in desperation over the challenges you face? Or have you failed to consult with the Holy Spirit about them in the first place? Ask the Lord to help you remember any prayer requests that have grown stale with time. Ask Him to reveal your character in light of what you remember.
3. Finally spend time asking Jesus for a new word, a fresh promise that you can take hold of and bring into the House of the Lord to offer in His presence.

DAY 21



READ: Isaiah 38-39

If chapter 36-37 revealed Hezekiah's good character then the final chapters in this section of Isaiah demonstrated a weakening of character. Some people would herald the king's faith in the face of sickness as a good thing, but was it? If you look carefully, you might notice that God granted Hezekiah an extra 15 years on his life, and that upon his death Manasseh took the throne. Manasseh was 13 years old when he began his rule and became infamous as one of Judah's most vile rulers. Simple math tells us that had Hezekiah died, this wicked child would never have been born.

God's sovereignty is a strange thing. Our finite brains have trouble ordering the events of our day let alone the grand story of history as God takes free creatures, with all their free choices and bends and shapes events to His purposes and end. Regardless of what this does to your head, the fact remains Hezekiah didn't like God's "Plan A" and when he complained about it, God gave him "Plan B" which is just a remarkable thing.

But then there is the complete leadership gaff in chapter 39 where Hezekiah allows an envoy from Babylon to see all the secrets of the kingdom, tipping his hand to those who would one day become the enemy of his descendants. Once again, God allows circumstances to reveal the king's character and it *wasn't* good.

⁵ *Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: ⁶ Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. ⁷ And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."* ⁸ *Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."* Isaiah 39:5-8 (ESV)

What utter selfishness and lack of compassion for those who would come after him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Were there any verses that really drew your attention while reading through these chapters? Which ones were they, and what were you able to gather from them? Was the verse insightful, encouraging or convicting? Spend time in thanksgiving, praise or confession as necessary.
2. Do you live with the future in mind? Regardless of how you feel about global warming and environmental issues, do you at least consider the impact your life will have on the very physical earth upon which your children will walk? It really doesn't matter if you have children or don't, there will come a time when you are but a memory and other's stand in the sunshine you once enjoyed.
3. What about their spiritual walk? Do you live in such a way as to prepare the spiritual ground for future generations? Ask the Lord what you can do, today, to help prepare those who will follow after you for whatever future Manassehs and Babylonian envoys await.

NOTES

The Book of Isaiah

The book of Isaiah has been called the gospel of the Old Testament, and the gospel does not minimize sin nor deny that sinful deeds go unpunished. The northern kingdom was already destroyed and according to Isaiah's predictions, Judah would be next. However, the gospel also has hope; God would come and deliver His people! Isaiah's prophecies point to the famous return from exile, the first coming of Jesus and His cleansing work that He would accomplish, and the second coming of Christ. Isaiah also foresees that God's coming kingdom will include Gentiles. Although King Manasseh tried to stop Isaiah's words from spreading, Isaiah's legacy of profound prophecies made it into our canon, which means that his words spoken thousands of years ago still hold rich truths for us today.

Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become as wool."