THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

The King Isaiah Saw

Isaiah, Unfiltered

For teens who think they've heard it all

BILL McLEOD

Papa Bill Books

THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR TEENS

The King Isaiah Saw: The Book of Isaiah, Unfiltered

Part of The Old Testament for Teens series.

Copyright © 2026 Bill McLeod. All rights reserved.

Published by Papa Bill Books.

Scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, which is in the public domain.

All Scripture quotations in this book are from the WEB. Some are abridged, with omissions marked by ellipses; paraphrases are not placed in quotation marks.

In the author's own text, pronouns referring to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are capitalized for reverence. Scripture quotations follow the WEB Protestant Edition exactly, including its capitalization.

AI Disclosure. This book was written by Bill McLeod with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting, research, and editing. All content was reviewed and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for it. Readers are encouraged to open the Scriptures and study them for themselves.

A WORD TO THE READER

Before You Start

If you've ever been to a Christmas service, you've heard Isaiah. A child is born. Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace. If you've been to an Easter service, you've probably heard him too. He was pierced for our transgressions. And if you've ever seen a poster with an eagle soaring over a mountain, you've seen Isaiah's words on a wall.

But most people have never actually read Isaiah. It's long, sixty-six chapters, and it's full of strange names, ancient empires, and poetry that jumps from judgment to joy and back again. It can feel like walking into the middle of a conversation.

This book is your guide. Isaiah was a prophet who lived about seven hundred years before Jesus, in a time of fake religion, corrupt leaders, terrifying superpowers, and people who had stopped listening to God. Sound familiar? He saw God on His throne, and it changed his life. Then he spent decades telling people the truth, warning them, comforting them, and pointing them to a coming King who would set everything right.

Let's go.

How This Book Works

This book walks through Isaiah in eight chapters: fake religion and the throne room (Isaiah 1–6), a child is born (7–12), empires, pride, and the highway (13–35), Hezekiah under siege (36–39), comfort and eagles' wings (40–48), the Suffering Servant (49–53), free grace and true fasting (54–59), and good news and new creation (60–66).

Before chapter 1, a section called Setting the Scene explains what a prophet actually is, how Isaiah is organized, and why an ancient scroll found in a cave matters so much. Read it first.

Each chapter ends with a Key Verse quoted word for word from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain modern translation used for every Scripture quotation in this book (Scripture is quoted exactly as the WEB prints it; in the rest of the book, pronouns for God are capitalized out of reverence); Real Talk questions to think through alone or argue about with friends; and a Try This challenge.

On questions where sincere Christians disagree, such as who wrote the later parts of Isaiah or how to read certain prophecies, I'll lay out the main views fairly and leave the decision to you, your family, and your church. This book quotes Isaiah often and explains it mostly in my own words, so keep a Bible open next to it. Don't take my word for it. Take His.

FOR THE ADULTS

A Note for Parents and Youth Leaders

Thank you for putting this book in a teenager's hands. It's the twenty-third book in The Old Testament for Teens, a companion to the New Testament for Teens series, written for readers who can smell a sermon coming a mile away. I've tried to write honestly, directly, with some humor, and with real respect for what these readers can handle.

Isaiah is the first of the Major Prophets, and one of the most quoted Old Testament books in the New Testament. This book explains what a biblical prophet actually was, a covenant truth-teller rather than a fortune-teller, and walks through Isaiah's three main sections, the Great Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the major messianic passages, including Immanuel, the child of Isaiah 9, the shoot of Jesse, and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

Where sincere believers differ, the book presents views fairly. That includes authorship (one Isaiah, or Isaiah plus later disciples writing in his tradition), the meaning of the Hebrew word almah in Isaiah 7:14, the identity of the Servant (Jewish readers often see Israel; Christians see Jesus, and many see both), and whether Isaiah 14 describes Satan or the king of Babylon. Real Talk boxes address fake religion, anxiety, fear, idols, injustice, and a brief, healthy note on fasting that encourages teens with any history of disordered eating to skip food fasts and talk with a parent or doctor.

The closing section, Where This Points, shows why Isaiah is sometimes called the Fifth Gospel and how its hopes converge on Jesus, while respecting that Jewish readers treasure Isaiah in their own rich ways. Wherever Scripture is quoted directly, the wording is from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain translation.

The Real Talk questions are designed for discussion. They work well for a youth group, a small group, a family dinner table, or a car ride. Don't rush to the right answer. Let them wrestle. Faith that has been thought through tends to last.

My prayer is that every reader will see the King Isaiah saw, high and lifted up, and also pierced for them, and will answer as Isaiah did: Here I am.

Grace and peace,

Bill McLeod

Papa Bill Books

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK

Setting the Scene

What Is a Prophet?

When people hear the word prophet, they often think of a fortune-teller, someone who predicts the future. Biblical prophets sometimes did speak about the future, but that wasn't their main job. A prophet was a messenger who spoke God's word to God's people. Think of them as covenant truth-tellers. God had made a covenant, a binding relationship, with Israel, with promises and responsibilities on both sides. When the people broke the covenant by worshiping idols, oppressing the poor, or trusting in armies instead of God, the prophets called them back. They said the hard truth: Here's what you're doing, here's where it leads, and here's how to turn around. And they also gave hope: God hasn't given up on you. Most of what prophets said was about the present. The predictions were there to show that God was in control of history and would keep His promises.

Who Was Isaiah?

Isaiah son of Amoz lived in Jerusalem in the 700s BC. His name means the LORD saves, which is a summary of his whole message. He prophesied during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, over a span of about forty years or more. He seems to have had access to the royal court, and he was married to a woman he called the prophetess, and they had at least two sons with symbolic names. Jewish tradition says he was killed

under the evil king Manasseh, and some think Hebrews 11 alludes to that when it mentions people who were sawn in two.

The World of Isaiah

Isaiah lived in a dangerous neighborhood. To the northeast, the brutal Assyrian Empire was swallowing nation after nation. In 722 BC, Assyria destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. A few decades later, it nearly destroyed Judah too. Further off, Babylon was rising. Little Judah was caught between superpowers, and its kings were tempted to make alliances with Egypt or Assyria instead of trusting God. Meanwhile, at home, the rich were getting richer by crushing the poor, and the temple was busy with religious ceremonies that had no heart behind them.

A Book in Three Parts

Isaiah has sixty-six chapters, and readers often notice that it falls into three main parts. Chapters 1–39 focus mostly on Isaiah's own time, with warnings of judgment against Judah and the nations, and flashes of hope about a coming King. Chapters 40–55 shift to comfort, speaking to God's people as if they were exiles in Babylon, about 150 years later, promising that God will bring them home and introducing a mysterious Servant. Chapters 56–66 speak to people who have returned but are still struggling, and end with a vision of new heavens and a new earth. Some people have noticed that the Bible has sixty-six books, thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New, and Isaiah's second part begins at chapter 40 with a voice in the wilderness, just as the New Testament begins with John the Baptist. That's a fun coincidence, since chapter divisions were added much later, but it's a memorable way to see the book's shape.

Who Wrote It?

Christians and Jews have traditionally held that Isaiah wrote the whole book, with God revealing to him events far in the future, including the name of Cyrus, the Persian king who would free the exiles. The New Testament quotes passages from all three parts and names Isaiah as the speaker. Many scholars today think that chapters 40–66 were written later by disciples of Isaiah who carried on his message and wrote in his name and tradition, during and after the exile, pointing to changes in setting and style. Others answer that a prophet's style can change over a long ministry and that God can reveal the future. Christians hold different views on this, but all agree on what matters most: the whole book is God's word, and it holds together around one great theme, the Holy One of Israel, a phrase that appears throughout all three parts.

The Great Isaiah Scroll

In 1947, a young shepherd looking for a lost goat near the Dead Sea threw a rock into a cave and heard something shatter. Inside were clay jars holding ancient scrolls, the first of what became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of them was a complete copy of Isaiah, about twenty-four feet long, copied around 125 BC. It was about a thousand years older than the oldest Hebrew copies of Isaiah known before then. When scholars compared it with later manuscripts, they found that, apart from small differences in spelling and some minor variations, the text had been preserved remarkably well. You can see the Great Isaiah Scroll today in the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem, and it's online too. It's a powerful reminder that the words you're about to read have been carefully copied and treasured for thousands of years.

The Map

Chapter 1 (Isaiah 1–6): Fake religion and the throne room.

Chapter 2 (Isaiah 7–12): A child is born.

Chapter 3 (Isaiah 13–35): Empires, pride, and the highway.

Chapter 4 (Isaiah 36–39): Hezekiah under siege.

Chapter 5 (Isaiah 40–48): Comfort and eagles' wings.

Chapter 6 (Isaiah 49–53): The Suffering Servant.

Chapter 7 (Isaiah 54–59): Free grace and true fasting.

Chapter 8 (Isaiah 60–66): Good news and new creation.

Contents

Setting the Scene .....

1 Fake Religion and the Throne Room *1–6* .....

2 A Child Is Born *7–12* .....

3 Empires, Pride, and the Highway *13–35* .....

4 Hezekiah Under Siege *36–39* .....

5 Comfort and Eagles' Wings *40–48* .....

6 The Suffering Servant *49–53* .....

7 Free Grace and True Fasting *54–59* .....

8 Good News and New Creation *60–66* .....

Where This Points .....

CHAPTER 1

Fake Religion and the Throne Room

Isaiah 1–6

Isaiah opens like a courtroom drama. God calls the whole universe as His witness. “Hear, heavens, and listen, earth; for the LORD has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me.”

God speaks like a heartbroken parent. He raised these kids, and they turned their backs on Him. Then He says something almost insulting, to make a point. “The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master’s crib; but Israel doesn’t know.” Even farm animals know who feeds them. God’s people had forgotten.

But here’s the surprising thing. The people Isaiah was talking to weren’t atheists. They were very religious. The temple was packed. Sacrifices were offered constantly. The festivals were on the calendar. And God says He’s sick of it. “What are the multitude of your sacrifices to me?” He asks. “Bring no more vain offerings.” He says He can’t stand their gatherings, and when they lift their hands in prayer, He won’t listen, because their hands are full of blood.

REAL TALK **Fake Religion**

It's possible to go to church every week, know all the songs, post Bible verses, and still have a heart that's far from God. Isaiah would later quote God saying that His people honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far away. Fake religion is when faith becomes a performance, something you do to look good or feel good, without letting it change how you treat people. The cure isn't to stop going to church. It's to let God into the parts of your life that no one sees: your thoughts, your phone, how you treat your siblings, and how you talk about people behind their backs. God isn't impressed by religious activity. He wants your heart.

So what does God want instead? He tells them plainly. "Wash yourselves. Make yourself clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek justice. Relieve the oppressed. Defend the fatherless. Plead for the widow."

Orphans and widows were the most vulnerable people in the ancient world. They had no one to protect them. God says that real worship shows up in how you treat people who can't do anything for you.

Then comes one of the most famous invitations in the Bible. God says, Come now, let's reason together. And He makes an incredible offer: "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Scarlet and Crimson**

Scarlet and crimson dyes in the ancient world were made from insects and were famous for being permanent. Once cloth was dyed red, it stayed red. You couldn't wash it out. That's the picture of sin Isaiah uses: a stain you can't remove yourself. But God promises to do what's impossible, to make the stain disappear completely, leaving the fabric as white as fresh snow or clean wool. In a land where snow was rare, a snowfall on the hills around Jerusalem would have been a breathtaking sight.

REAL TALK **Let's Reason Together**

God's invitation in Isaiah 1:18 starts with Come now, and let's reason together. God isn't afraid of your questions or your thinking. Faith doesn't mean turning off your brain. Christianity has a long history of people who loved God with their minds: scientists, writers, philosophers, and students. If you have doubts or questions about God, the Bible, or Christianity, bring them into the open. Talk to a pastor, a youth leader, or a parent, read thoughtful books, and keep asking. God invites honest reasoning, and He has nothing to hide.

Chapter 2 gives a glimpse of a beautiful future, when people from every nation will stream to God's mountain to learn His ways. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." A plowshare is the blade of a plow. Weapons will be turned into farm tools. War will end. A sculpture inspired by this verse stands outside the United Nations building in New York.

Right after that vision, Isaiah adds an invitation: come, let's walk in the light of the LORD. That's how the future breaks into the present. You can't end every war in the world, but you can start walking in God's light today, at your school, in your family, and online. Every time you choose peace over revenge, or kindness over cruelty, you're beating a tiny sword into a plowshare.

REAL TALK **Status Symbols**

Isaiah 3 describes the wealthy women of Jerusalem walking with their noses in the air, showing off jewelry, perfume, fancy clothes, and accessories, a long list of the luxury items of the day. Isaiah's point isn't that jewelry or nice clothes are evil. It's that the people were using status symbols to feel superior while the poor around them were being crushed. Today's status symbols might be designer brands, the newest phone, expensive shoes, or a certain

look online. It's fine to enjoy nice things. But if they become the way you measure your worth, or a way to look down on others, Isaiah's warning applies. God cares more about your heart than your labels.

But chapters 3 through 5 return to the present. Isaiah warns against pride, greed, and injustice. He describes wealthy people adding house to house and field to field until there's no room for anyone else. He warns, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness." In chapter 5, he sings a sad song about a vineyard. God planted it carefully and did everything for it, but it produced only wild, sour grapes. The vineyard is Israel. God looked for justice and found bloodshed. He looked for righteousness and heard cries of distress.

REAL TALK **Calling Evil Good**

Isaiah's warning about calling evil good is surprisingly relevant. It happens when cruelty is called being honest, when cheating is called being smart, when mocking someone is called just joking, or when greed is called success. It also happens the other way around, when kindness is called weakness, or honesty is called being judgmental. Part of growing in wisdom is learning to see things as God sees them, even when the culture around you has the labels mixed up.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Song of the Vineyard**

Isaiah 5 starts like a love song about a friend who planted a vineyard on a fertile hill. He cleared the stones, planted the best vines, built a watchtower, and dug a winepress. Then he waited for good grapes, but the vineyard produced only bad, sour ones. The audience would have been nodding along, thinking, What a terrible vineyard! Then Isaiah springs the trap: you are the vineyard. In Hebrew there's a clever wordplay at the end. God looked for mishpat, justice, and found mispach, bloodshed. He looked for tsedaqah, righteousness, and heard tseaqah, a cry of distress. Jesus told a parable

about a vineyard in the Gospels that echoes this song, and He later called Himself the true vine.

Then, in chapter 6, everything changes. Isaiah tells us about the moment that defined his life. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple."

King Uzziah had reigned for over fifty years. He was a strong king, and his death would have left people anxious about the future. Right when the earthly throne was empty, Isaiah saw the true throne, and it was not empty at all.

The robe of the King filled the whole temple. Above Him were seraphim, fiery angelic beings. Each had six wings. With two they covered their faces, because even angels can't look directly at God's glory. With two they covered their feet. With two they flew. And they called out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Armies! The whole earth is full of his glory!"

BACKGROUND CHECK **Holy, Holy, Holy**

In Hebrew, repeating a word is a way of emphasizing it. Saying something twice makes it strong. Saying it three times makes it the ultimate. This is the only quality of God that the Bible repeats three times like this. Holy means set apart, completely other, pure, and perfect. God isn't just a bigger, better version of us. He's in a category all by Himself. The phrase LORD of Armies, sometimes translated LORD of hosts, means God is the commander of all the armies of heaven. Many Christians also see in the three-fold holy a hint of the Trinity, though the main point is God's overwhelming holiness. The seraphim's song is still sung in churches all over the world.

The doorposts shook. Smoke filled the temple. And Isaiah fell apart. "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips

and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Armies!"

Notice that Isaiah didn't say, Wow, cool. He said, I'm ruined. When you see how holy God really is, you suddenly see how unholy you are. Isaiah had spent five chapters pronouncing woes on other people. Now he pronounces one on himself. And he focuses on his lips, his words, maybe because a prophet's job was to speak, and he realized his own mouth wasn't clean.

Then something amazing happens. One of the seraphim flies to him with a burning coal taken from the altar and touches his lips with it. "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin forgiven."

The altar was where sacrifices were offered. The coal came from the place of sacrifice. Isaiah didn't clean himself up. God cleaned him, through a sacrifice.

Then Isaiah heard God's voice. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah, who moments before thought he was ruined, answered, "Here I am. Send me!"

> **REAL TALK** **Here I Am**
>
> Notice the order in Isaiah 6. First, Isaiah sees God's holiness. Second, he sees his own sin. Third, he receives forgiveness. Fourth, he answers God's call. You can't skip to step four. Serving God doesn't start with being impressive. It starts with being forgiven. And once you've been forgiven, saying Here I am becomes a joyful response, not a burden. God might not send you to be a prophet. He might send you to sit with a lonely kid at lunch, to stand up for someone being bullied, to help at home without being asked, or to tell a friend about Jesus. The question is whether you'll say, Here I am.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Year King Uzziah Died**

Uzziah, also called Azariah, was one of Judah's most successful kings. He built towers, strengthened the army, developed farming, and became famous. But 2 Chronicles 26 says that when he became strong, his heart was lifted up in pride. He walked into the temple to burn incense, something only priests were allowed to do. When the priests confronted him, he became furious, and leprosy broke out on his forehead. He lived the rest of his life in isolation. So when Isaiah says he saw the Lord high and lifted up in the year Uzziah died, there may be a contrast. The king whose heart was lifted up in pride was gone. The true King, who really is high and lifted up, was still on the throne.

REAL TALK **But I'm Not Ready**

Many people in the Bible felt unqualified when God called them. Moses said he wasn't a good speaker. Jeremiah said he was too young. Gideon said he was the least in his family. Isaiah said he had unclean lips. If you feel like you're too young, too shy, too messed up, or too ordinary for God to use, you're in good company. God doesn't call people because they're impressive. He makes them ready. Paul told young Timothy not to let anyone look down on him because of his youth, but to set an example. You don't have to wait until you're older for your life to matter to God.

God warned Isaiah that his job would be hard. Many people wouldn't listen. But God also promised that, like a tree cut down to a stump, a holy seed would remain. God's story with His people wasn't over.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Isaiah's Children**

Isaiah gave his sons names that were messages. One son was named Shear-jashub, which means a remnant will return. Another was named Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil, a warning that Assyria was about to attack. Imagine walking around town with a name like that! Every time people called the boys, they heard God's word. Isaiah said that he and his children were signs to Israel. Their very lives preached a message of judgment and hope.

It's worth pausing on how Isaiah 1 through 6 is arranged. Most people would expect a prophet's call story to come first, at the start of the book. But Isaiah puts it in chapter 6, after five chapters describing how sinful God's people were. Maybe that's on purpose. By the time you get to chapter 6, you've heard Isaiah say woe to everyone else. Then, standing before God, he says woe to himself. It's a reminder that the people who speak most clearly about sin should be the first to admit their own.

The throne room vision also shows the two sides of God that run through the whole book. He is the Holy One, high and lifted up, so pure that angels hide their faces. And He is the forgiving One, who sends a coal to cleanse a sinner's lips. Isaiah uses the title the Holy One of Israel about twenty-five times, more than the rest of the Old Testament combined. The Holy One isn't distant. He's the Holy One of Israel, the Holy One who belongs to His people and binds Himself to them.

> **REAL TALK** **Unclean Lips**
>
> Isaiah realized his words weren't clean. Most of us could say the same. Think about the words you used this week: in conversations, texts, comments, group chats, and under your breath. Were they kind? True? Helpful? Or did they include gossip, mockery, lies, swearing, or cruelty? God doesn't just want to clean up your vocabulary. He wants to change your heart, because Jesus said the mouth speaks what fills the heart. The good news is that the same God who cleansed Isaiah's lips can cleanse yours. Confess it honestly, receive His forgiveness, and ask Him to help you use your words to build people up.

Isaiah 1 through 6 leaves you with a question: What will you do when you see God clearly? Some people run from Him. Some people try to impress Him with religious activity. Isaiah shows a better way. Let Him show you your sin, let Him cleanse you, and

then let Him send you. That's not a one-time event. Christians have been walking that path, again and again, for thousands of years.

KEY VERSE

Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. What does fake religion look like today? Where are you tempted toward it?
2. Why do you think God cared so much about orphans and widows?
3. What do you think it would feel like to see God the way Isaiah did?
4. Why does it matter that Isaiah was forgiven before he was sent?

TRY THIS *Read Isaiah 6:1-8 slowly. Then spend a few minutes praying through the four steps: worship God for His holiness, confess your sin, thank Him for His forgiveness, and tell Him, Here I am.*

CHAPTER 2

A Child Is Born

Isaiah 7–12

Isaiah 7 begins with a crisis. Two kings, the king of Aram and the king of the northern kingdom of Israel, have teamed up to attack Jerusalem. King Ahaz of Judah is terrified. The Bible says his heart and the hearts of his people shook like trees in the wind.

God sends Isaiah to meet Ahaz with a message: Don't be afraid. These two kings are like smoldering stubs of firewood. Their plan won't succeed. Then Isaiah adds a warning. "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." In other words, if you don't stand firm in faith, you won't stand at all.

God even offers Ahaz a sign, anything he wants, as deep as the grave or as high as the heavens. But Ahaz refuses, pretending to be humble. Really, he had already decided to ask the Assyrian Empire for help instead of trusting God.

So Isaiah says that God will give a sign anyway. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

> BACKGROUND CHECK **Immanuel and the Virgin**
>
> Immanuel means God with us. The Hebrew word translated virgin here is almah, which means a young woman of marriageable age, typically assumed to be unmarried and a virgin. The Greek translation made by Jewish scholars

centuries before Jesus translated it with a word that clearly means virgin, and Matthew quotes that translation when describing Jesus' birth. Readers understand the prophecy in different ways. Many Jewish readers and some Christians think it first referred to a child born in Ahaz's day, as a sign that the threat would pass before the boy was old enough to know right from wrong, which is what Isaiah goes on to say. Many Christians believe it was always ultimately about Jesus, and many see both: a near sign for Ahaz and a far fulfillment in Jesus, the one who is truly God with us. Matthew writes that Jesus' birth fulfilled this word, and that the name means, "God with us."

The next chapters get darker. Because Ahaz trusted Assyria instead of God, Assyria would eventually flood the land like a river. Isaiah warns the people not to fear what everyone else fears, but to fear the LORD instead. He tells them to turn to God's word.

And then, in chapter 9, light breaks through. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. The light has shined on those who lived in the land of the shadow of death."

This promise is especially for the region of Galilee in the north, the first area to be crushed by Assyria. Centuries later, Jesus would grow up in Galilee and begin His ministry there. Matthew points out the connection.

Then comes the most famous Christmas verse in the Old Testament. "For a child is born to us. A son is given to us; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Four Names**

Each of the four names tells us something about this coming King. Wonderful Counselor: His wisdom is beyond anything human, a counselor who never gives bad advice. Mighty God: an astonishing title for a human child, one Isaiah uses for God Himself in the next chapter. Everlasting Father: He cares

for His people like a father, forever. Prince of Peace: He brings shalom, a Hebrew word meaning not just the absence of war but wholeness, flourishing, and everything being as it should be. Isaiah adds that His government and peace will never end, and He will reign on David's throne forever. Many Jewish readers have connected this passage to King Hezekiah or to a future Messiah. Christians see it fulfilled in Jesus, the child born in Bethlehem who is also God.

REAL TALK **Wonderful Counselor**

Who do you go to for advice? Friends? Search engines? Social media? Some of those can be helpful, but none of them is perfect. Jesus is called Wonderful Counselor. He knows you completely, He loves you completely, and His wisdom never fails. You can bring Him your questions about friendships, decisions, worries, and the future. Reading the Gospels is a great way to hear His counsel. And He often speaks through wise people He puts in your life too, like parents, pastors, and mentors. If you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed, talking to a counselor or trusted adult is also wise. Jesus isn't against human help. He often works through it.

REAL TALK **Mediums and Horoscopes**

In Isaiah 8, people were consulting mediums and spiritists, people who claimed to talk with the dead or predict the future. Isaiah asks, Shouldn't a people consult their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? He tells them to turn to God's word instead. Today, the same temptation shows up as horoscopes, tarot cards, astrology apps, psychic readings, and Ouija boards. They can seem harmless or fun. But the Bible consistently warns against looking to them for guidance, because they pull our trust away from God and can open doors to spiritual confusion. If you want guidance, go to the One who actually holds the future. Read His word, pray, and ask wise believers for advice.

Chapter 10 warns that Assyria, the very empire God was using to discipline His people, would also be judged for its pride. The Assyrian king boasted that he had conquered everyone by his own

strength. Isaiah says that's like an ax bragging that it's stronger than the person swinging it.

> **REAL TALK** **Trusting the Wrong Rescuer**
>
> Ahaz sent a huge payment to the king of Assyria, asking for protection. It worked for a while, but Assyria eventually turned on Judah and nearly destroyed it. That's often how false rescuers work. Things that promise to save you from stress, loneliness, or pain, like substances, unhealthy relationships, or endless distractions, may seem to help at first. But over time they take more than they give. If you're leaning on something that's starting to control you, please talk to a trusted adult. Real help exists, and God offers a better rescue.

Then, in chapter 11, Isaiah gives another picture of the coming King. "A shoot will come out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots will bear fruit."

Jesse was King David's father. By Isaiah's time, the royal family of David was like a once-mighty tree that would be chopped down to a stump. But from that stump, a new shoot would grow. And this King would be filled with God's Spirit. "The LORD's Spirit will rest on him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."

He would judge fairly, not by appearances or rumors, but with justice for the poor and the meek. And His kingdom would bring a peace so complete that even nature would be transformed. "The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together; and a little child will lead them."

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Wolf and the Lamb**
>
> Isaiah's picture of predators and prey living together is one of the most beautiful images in the Bible. Some read it literally, as a picture of creation

itself being healed in the age to come. Others read it as poetry about the end of violence between people, enemies becoming friends. Many see both. Either way, it's a picture of a world where nothing hurts or destroys, because, as Isaiah says, the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah returns to this picture at the very end of his book.

Notice how many times in these chapters Isaiah talks about a remnant. God's people would be cut down by judgment, like a forest chopped by an ax, but a remnant would remain and return to God. Isaiah's son was even named for it. The idea of a remnant runs through the Bible. Even when most people turn away, God always keeps a faithful few, and He works through them. Being part of a small group of people who follow God at your school isn't a sign of failure. It can be exactly how God has always worked.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Spirit on the Branch**

Isaiah 11:2 lists the ways God's Spirit will rest on the coming King: wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD. Christians have often counted these as the gifts of the Spirit. At Jesus' baptism, all four Gospels describe the Spirit coming down on Him like a dove. Isaiah also says the King won't judge by what His eyes see or His ears hear. He won't be fooled by appearances or rumors. He'll judge the poor with fairness. That's the kind of leader the world has always needed and rarely had.

REAL TALK **Light in the Overlooked Places**

Galilee was the region people looked down on. It was far from Jerusalem, mixed with foreigners, and the first part of Israel to be crushed by Assyria. Isaiah 9 says that's exactly where the great light would shine first. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a small Galilean town so unimpressive that someone once asked whether anything good could come from there. If you feel like you come from a nowhere place, a small town, a struggling school, or a family people overlook, remember that God loves to shine His light in the places others ignore.

Chapter 12 is a short song of praise for the day when all this comes true. “Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD, the LORD, is my strength and song; and he has become my salvation.” That’s a song worth learning by heart.

> **REAL TALK** **When You’re Afraid**
>
> King Ahaz was so afraid that his heart shook like trees in the wind. Fear can do that. It can make you grab for the wrong kind of help. Ahaz trusted Assyria because it seemed stronger than God’s promise, and it ended up hurting his country badly. When you’re afraid, you might be tempted to grab for control, to lie, to hide, to numb yourself, or to trust someone who isn’t safe. Isaiah’s advice is to stand firm in faith. That doesn’t mean pretending you aren’t scared. It means taking your fear to God first and letting Him guide your next step.

The child of Isaiah 9 is also described as carrying the government on His shoulders. That’s an interesting picture. Most rulers want power so that others will carry their burdens. This King carries the weight Himself. Jesus later said, Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. The One who carries the government of the universe can carry what you’re carrying too.

It’s remarkable how much of Christmas comes from these few chapters of Isaiah. A virgin conceiving. A child named Immanuel. A great light shining in Galilee. A son given. A shoot from the stump of Jesse. When you hear Christmas carols that mention the Prince of Peace, the rose from Jesse’s stem, or Emmanuel, they’re quoting or echoing Isaiah. Isaiah was writing in a dark time, when the royal family was failing and enemies were closing in. Yet he could see a light coming. Christmas is the moment that light arrived.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Handel's Messiah**

In 1741, the composer George Frideric Handel wrote Messiah, one of the most famous pieces of music ever composed. Much of its text comes straight from Isaiah, including Comfort ye my people, Every valley shall be exalted, For unto us a child is born, He was despised, and Surely he hath borne our griefs. Handel reportedly wrote the whole thing in about twenty-four days. When it's performed today, audiences traditionally stand for the Hallelujah chorus. If you've never listened to it, look it up. You'll be hearing Isaiah sung.

These chapters also show that God's promises often grow out of the darkest places. The Immanuel sign came to a frightened, faithless king. The great light shone on the region crushed first by Assyria. The shoot sprang from a stump, the leftover of a chopped-down tree. If your life feels like a stump right now, cut down by disappointment or loss, Isaiah's message is that God specializes in bringing new life out of stumps.

KEY VERSE

For a child is born to us. A son is given to us; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Ahaz trusted Assyria instead of God? What do people trust instead of God today?
2. What does the name Immanuel, God with us, mean to you personally?
3. Which of the four names in Isaiah 9:6 do you most need right now?
4. What would a world where nothing hurts or destroys look like?

TRY THIS *Pick one of the names in Isaiah 9:6 and pray it each day this week. For example: Jesus, You are my Prince of Peace. Bring peace to this situation.*

CHAPTER 3

Empires, Pride, and the Highway

Isaiah 13–35

Chapters 13 through 23 are a series of messages to the nations around Israel: Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, and more. Isaiah calls them oracles, or burdens. They might seem like a strange thing to include in a book for God's people. Why talk to nations who weren't even listening?

Because Isaiah wants Judah to understand something important. God isn't just Israel's local God. He rules over every nation, every empire, and every king. The superpowers that seemed so terrifying were in His hands. Their pride would be humbled. And some of them, astonishingly, would one day worship Him. Isaiah 19 even says that Egypt and Assyria, Israel's worst enemies, will one day worship God alongside Israel, and God will call them My people.

> BACKGROUND CHECK **Oracles Against the Nations**
>
> Many prophets, including Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos, have sections of messages to foreign nations. These usually focus on pride, cruelty, and violence. God holds every nation accountable for how it treats people. But these chapters also contain surprising hope. Isaiah sees a day when people from every nation will be welcomed. It's an early glimpse of the gospel going to the whole world.

The most famous of these oracles is in chapter 14, a taunt song against the king of Babylon. Isaiah imagines the proud king going

down to the grave, where other dead kings mock him. "How you have fallen from heaven, shining one, son of the dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, who laid the nations low!"

The king had boasted, "I will ascend into heaven! I will exalt my throne above the stars of God!" and even, "I will make myself like the Most High!" But Isaiah says he would be brought down to the grave instead.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Lucifer in Context**

The phrase shining one, son of the dawn, refers to the morning star, the planet Venus, which shines brightly before sunrise and then fades as the sun comes up. When the Bible was translated into Latin, the word for morning star was lucifer, meaning light-bearer, and the King James Version kept it as a name: How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer. Over time, many Christians came to read this passage as describing Satan's fall from heaven. Readers today understand it in different ways. In context, Isaiah 14 is clearly a taunt against the king of Babylon, a human ruler. Many interpreters believe it is only about that king, using poetic imagery from ancient stories. Others believe that the king's pride mirrors a deeper, spiritual rebellion, and that the passage looks behind the human king to Satan, often reading it alongside Ezekiel 28. Whichever view you take, the lesson is the same: pride that tries to grab God's place always ends in a fall. It's also worth knowing that Lucifer is never used as a name for Satan anywhere in the Bible itself.

REAL TALK **Pride Comes Before the Fall**

The king of Babylon's five I will statements are a perfect picture of pride. I will ascend. I will exalt my throne. I will make myself like the Most High. Pride is wanting to be at the center, to be admired, and to answer to no one. It shows up in small ways too, like refusing to admit you're wrong, needing to win every argument, or looking down on people. Jesus showed the opposite. Instead of grabbing a higher place, He came down, became a servant, and humbled Himself. And God lifted Him up.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Isaiah's Sign Acts**

Prophets sometimes acted out their messages. In Isaiah 20, God told Isaiah to take off his sackcloth and sandals and walk around barefoot, dressed like a prisoner of war, for three years. It was a living warning to Judah not to trust Egypt and Cush for help, because Assyria would soon lead those nations away as captives, dressed just like that. Jeremiah wore a yoke. Ezekiel lay on his side for months. These strange actions grabbed attention in a world without screens. They made God's message impossible to ignore.

Chapters 24 through 27 zoom out even further to the whole world. Some call this section Isaiah's apocalypse. It describes God judging the whole earth, and then hosting a great feast for all peoples on His mountain. And then comes a breathtaking promise. "He has swallowed up death forever! The Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces."

Paul quoted this verse when he wrote about the resurrection, and Revelation echoes it in its final chapters. Imagine a world where God personally wipes away every tear.

Isaiah 26 adds a promise for anxious hearts. "You will keep whoever's mind is steadfast in perfect peace, because he trusts in you." In Hebrew, perfect peace is literally peace, peace, the same repetition that makes something the ultimate.

REAL TALK **Perfect Peace**

Anxiety is one of the biggest struggles teenagers face today. Your mind can race with worries about grades, friendships, your future, your family, and the news. Isaiah 26:3 doesn't promise that you'll never feel anxious. It promises peace when your mind keeps returning to God. That might look like praying when you feel worry rising, memorizing a verse, writing your fears down and giving them to God, or taking a walk outside and noticing His creation. If anxiety is constant or overwhelming, talk to a parent, counselor, or doctor.

There's no shame in getting help. God often brings His peace through people He's placed in your life.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Feast on the Mountain**

Isaiah 25 describes God preparing a feast for all peoples on His mountain, with the best food and the finest aged wine. In the ancient world, a feast was the ultimate picture of celebration and friendship. Sharing a meal meant peace between people. Jesus often described God's kingdom as a banquet, and He shared meals with outsiders and sinners, which shocked religious leaders. Revelation describes the wedding supper of the Lamb. Isaiah's picture is a reminder that God's future isn't boring. It's a party, and everyone is invited.

REAL TALK **When God Feels Slow**

Isaiah 30 says the LORD waits to be gracious to His people, and blessed are all who wait for Him. Waiting is hard, especially in a world of instant downloads and same-day delivery. You might be waiting for a prayer to be answered, a friendship to heal, a family situation to change, or a dark season to end. Isaiah doesn't say waiting is easy. He says God is not idle while you wait. He's preparing to be gracious. Keep praying, keep trusting, and keep doing the next right thing.

Chapters 28 through 33 return to Judah, warning against trusting Egypt for help against Assyria. Isaiah keeps saying the same thing: your strength is in trusting God. "You will be saved in returning and rest. Your strength will be in quietness and in confidence." He also promises that God will guide those who listen. "When you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way. Walk in it."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Assyria's Reputation**

Assyria was famous for its brutality. Its kings boasted in their records about the cruel ways they punished conquered peoples, and they often deported whole populations to other parts of the empire to break their spirit. That's

what happened to the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. Assyria's capital, Nineveh, was so feared that when God sent the prophet Jonah there, Jonah ran the other way. Knowing this helps you understand how terrifying it was for Judah to see Assyria at the gates, and how astonishing Isaiah's message of trust really was.

REAL TALK **Shortcuts**

In Isaiah 30 and 31, Judah's leaders rushed to Egypt to make a military alliance instead of trusting God. Isaiah says they were looking for help from horses and chariots instead of from the Holy One of Israel. It's the temptation to take a shortcut: to grab the solution you can see instead of trusting the God you can't. Teens face that temptation too. Cheating instead of studying. Lying instead of facing the consequences. Getting into a relationship to fill loneliness. Isaiah's words still apply: in returning and rest you will be saved, and in quietness and trust is your strength. Trusting God usually feels slower. It's always wiser.

Isaiah 28 contains a promise that the New Testament later applies to Jesus. God says He is laying in Zion a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, and the one who trusts will not be in a hurry, or in some translations, will not be shaken. Peter quotes this when he calls Jesus the living cornerstone. Everything else might be shaky, but a life built on Him stands.

Then chapter 35 ends the first big section of Isaiah with a song of pure joy. The desert will bloom like a rose. Weak hands will be strengthened. Fearful hearts will hear, Be strong, don't be afraid. "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame man will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing."

And there will be a road. "A highway will be there, a road, and it will be called 'The Holy Way'." Along this road, God's ransomed people will come home to Zion, singing.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Highway of Holiness**

In the ancient world, travel was dangerous. Roads were rough, and robbers and wild animals waited along the way. Isaiah pictures a safe, smooth highway through the desert, where no lion or dangerous beast will be found, and where even someone who isn't very smart can't get lost. It's a picture of God bringing His people home from exile. Centuries later, when John the Baptist asked whether Jesus was the one they were waiting for, Jesus answered by pointing to Isaiah's promises: the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear. Jesus was saying, the highway is open.

Notice how Isaiah's long section on the nations ends. After chapters of warnings against proud empires, Isaiah closes with a desert in bloom and a highway home. That's the pattern of the whole book. Judgment is real, but it's never the last word. God tears down what is proud so He can build up what is humble. He judges oppressors so the oppressed can go free. And He brings His people home singing.

REAL TALK **The News and the Nations**

Isaiah lived in a world of terrifying headlines: empires conquering nations, refugees fleeing, cities destroyed. You live in a world of headlines too, and sometimes the news can make you anxious or hopeless. Isaiah's chapters about the nations remind you that God is still in charge of history. No ruler is too powerful for Him, and no nation is beyond His reach. That doesn't mean you should ignore what's happening in the world. It means you can pray for the world without despairing, care about injustice without panicking, and trust that God is working toward a day when nations won't learn war anymore. If the news is making you anxious, it's okay to take breaks from it and to talk with someone you trust.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Isaiah 35 and Jesus' Miracles**

When John the Baptist was in prison, he sent messengers to ask Jesus whether He was the one they had been waiting for. Jesus didn't answer with a simple yes. He told them to report what they saw: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the poor have good news preached to them.

> Those were promises straight from Isaiah 35 and 61. Jesus was saying, Look at the signs. The future Isaiah described is breaking into the present.

Chapters 13 through 35 can feel like a long, rocky road, with a lot of names and places most readers don't recognize. But the big message is clear and simple. God is King over all the earth. Pride always falls. Trusting human power instead of God always disappoints. And at the end of the road, God brings His people home, singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. When you read these chapters, don't get lost in every detail. Look for the King, the warnings about pride, and the flashes of hope.

> **REAL TALK** **Everlasting Joy**
>
> Isaiah says that sorrow and sighing will flee away. Imagine sadness itself running away from you. That's the future God promises. Right now, joy and sorrow often mix together. Even good days have something hard in them. But Isaiah looks ahead to a day when joy is permanent, like a crown that never comes off. Christians call this hope, not wishful thinking, but confident expectation based on God's promises. That hope can carry you through hard days. It doesn't erase your pain, but it reminds you that pain doesn't get the last word.

KEY VERSE

Then the LORD's ransomed ones will return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah 35:10 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think God sent messages to nations that weren't listening?
2. What are some I will statements that pride makes today?
3. What would it look like for your mind to be steadfast on God this week?
4. Which promise in Isaiah 35 gives you the most hope?

TRY THIS *Memorize Isaiah 26:3. Write it on a card or set it as your lock screen, and pray it whenever you feel anxious this week.*

CHAPTER 4

Hezekiah Under Siege

Isaiah 36–39

In the middle of Isaiah, the poetry stops and a story begins. Chapters 36 through 39 tell about King Hezekiah, Ahaz's son, and the most terrifying moment of his reign. You can also read this story in 2 Kings 18 through 20, almost word for word.

"Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all of the fortified cities of Judah and captured them." The Assyrian army swept through Judah, city after city. Only Jerusalem was left.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Sennacherib's Prism**
>
> Archaeologists have found Assyrian records describing this very campaign. A six-sided clay prism from Sennacherib's reign boasts that he conquered forty-six of Hezekiah's walled cities and shut Hezekiah up in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. Notice what it doesn't say: that he captured Jerusalem. Assyrian kings loved to brag about their victories, so the silence is striking. Archaeologists have also found carved wall panels from Sennacherib's palace showing his siege of Lachish, one of Judah's cities. And in Jerusalem, you can still walk through Hezekiah's Tunnel, a channel he dug through solid rock to bring water inside the city walls before the siege.

Sennacherib sent his field commander, called the Rabshakeh, to stand outside Jerusalem's walls and shout up at the people. He mocked them. He said, "What confidence is this in which you

trust?" Egypt won't help you, he said. Your God won't help you. Every other nation's gods failed to save them from Assyria. Why would yours be any different? He even spoke in Hebrew, the people's own language, so everyone on the wall could hear and lose heart.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Speak in Aramaic!**

Hezekiah's officials begged the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic, the international language of diplomacy in that day, instead of Hebrew, so that the ordinary people on the wall wouldn't understand. He refused and shouted even louder in Hebrew. He wanted the common people to hear and panic. Aramaic later became the everyday language of many Jews, and Jesus Himself spoke it. A few parts of the Old Testament, in Ezra and Daniel, are even written in Aramaic.

It was psychological warfare. And it was working. Hezekiah tore his clothes and went to the temple. He sent messengers to Isaiah, who answered with God's word: Don't be afraid of the words you've heard. Sennacherib will hear a rumor and go home.

Then Sennacherib sent a letter, repeating his threats. And Hezekiah did something beautiful. "Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. Then Hezekiah went up to the LORD's house, and spread it before the LORD."

REAL TALK **Spread It Before the LORD**

Hezekiah didn't pretend the letter didn't exist. He didn't panic or try to fix everything himself. He took it to God and laid it out, as if to say, God, look at this. You read it. What do we do? You can do the same thing with whatever is threatening you. A bad grade. A hurtful message. A medical test. A family crisis. A list of everything you're worried about. Literally write it down or take the screenshot, and then spread it before God in prayer. Tell Him honestly what's going on. He's not overwhelmed by what overwhelms you.

Hezekiah's prayer is a model for anyone facing something too big for them. He started with who God is. "LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, who is enthroned among the cherubim, you are the God, even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth." Then he admitted the threat was real. Assyria really had destroyed other nations. Then he asked for help, for a bigger reason than just his own safety. "Save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are the LORD, even you only."

God answered through Isaiah with a long poem mocking Sennacherib's pride. You think you did all this yourself, God says, but I planned it long ago. Now I'll put My hook in your nose and turn you back the way you came. He promised that Sennacherib would not shoot a single arrow into Jerusalem.

That night, "the LORD's angel went out and struck one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the camp of the Assyrians." Sennacherib went home to Nineveh, and later, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god, two of his own sons killed him.

BACKGROUND CHECK **What Happened to the Army?**

The Bible says the angel of the LORD struck the Assyrian camp. How exactly that happened isn't described. Some have suggested a sudden plague. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus records a story that an Egyptian army facing Sennacherib was saved when mice overran the Assyrian camp and chewed through their bowstrings, which some think might be a distorted memory of a disaster that struck Sennacherib's army. Whatever the means, the result was clear: Jerusalem was saved, and Assyrian records never claim to have taken it. Assyrian records also confirm that Sennacherib was later murdered by his sons.

REAL TALK **When the Threat Is Real**

Notice that Hezekiah's faith didn't mean pretending the danger wasn't real. He admitted Assyria had destroyed other nations. Faith isn't denial. It's being honest about how big the problem is, and then remembering that God is bigger. If you're facing something scary, you don't have to act like you're fine. Tell God exactly how afraid you are. Then tell Him what you know is true about Him.

Chapter 38 tells a more personal story. Hezekiah became deathly ill, and Isaiah told him to set his house in order because he was going to die. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept and prayed. Before Isaiah had even left the palace, God sent him back with a message: "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life." God even gave a sign, making a shadow go backward on a stairway used as a sundial.

REAL TALK **God Sees Your Tears**

Hezekiah's prayer wasn't polished. He turned to the wall and cried. And God said, I have seen your tears. God doesn't only respond to perfect, calm, well-worded prayers. He sees your tears too. Not every prayer for healing is answered the way Hezekiah's was, and that can be very painful. But every tear is seen. If you're facing an illness, yours or someone else's, it's okay to cry and to ask God for help. And it's okay to talk with a parent, pastor, or counselor about the fear and sadness you're feeling.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Siloam Inscription**

In 1880, a boy wading in Hezekiah's Tunnel in Jerusalem noticed writing carved into the rock wall. It turned out to be an ancient Hebrew inscription describing the moment when two teams of workers, digging from opposite ends through solid rock, finally heard each other's voices and broke through to meet. The tunnel is about 1,750 feet long and winds through the hill. Second Kings and 2 Chronicles say Hezekiah built it to bring water from the Gihon Spring into the city. The inscription, now in a museum in Istanbul, is

one of the oldest examples of Hebrew writing ever found. Today, visitors can still wade through the tunnel with flashlights.

Hezekiah also wrote a poem after he recovered, recorded in Isaiah 38. He describes feeling like a tent being pulled up, like a weaver's cloth being cut off the loom, and like a bird moaning. Then he praises God for casting all his sins behind His back. It's an honest psalm from someone who faced death and was given more time.

But the story doesn't end on a high note. In chapter 39, envoys arrived from Babylon, then a rising power, with letters and a gift for Hezekiah because they'd heard he was sick. Hezekiah was flattered. And he showed them everything. "There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah didn't show them."

He gave them the grand tour of his treasury, armory, and storerooms. It was a moment of pride and foolishness, trying to impress the wrong people. Isaiah came and asked what they had seen. Then he delivered a devastating message. "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up until today, will be carried to Babylon. Nothing will be left."

And Hezekiah's response is one of the saddest lines in the book. He said the word was good, because he thought, At least there will be peace and security in my lifetime. He was relieved the disaster wouldn't happen to him.

REAL TALK **Showing Off**

Hezekiah had just experienced two miracles: God saved his city and his life. And then he turned around and showed off his wealth to impress foreign visitors. It's a reminder that pride often sneaks in right after a victory. It's easy to start bragging about your stuff, your accomplishments, or your status, especially when someone important seems impressed. Hezekiah also shows

how easy it is to care only about yourself and not about the people who come after you. Wise people think about how their choices will affect others, including future generations.

There's a sad footnote to Hezekiah's story. During his extra fifteen years, his son Manasseh was born. Manasseh became one of the most evil kings in Judah's history, leading the people into terrible idolatry. Some readers see Hezekiah's attitude in chapter 39, caring only about peace in his own lifetime, as a hint of why his son grew up the way he did. Others point out that Manasseh made his own choices, and that 2 Chronicles says he later repented. Either way, it's a reminder that the faith of one generation isn't automatically passed to the next. Each person has to choose.

These four chapters form a bridge in Isaiah. They close the Assyrian era and point toward Babylon. And the very next chapter, Isaiah 40, will speak to God's people as if Isaiah's warning has already come true, as if they're in exile in Babylon, needing comfort.

REAL TALK **The Voice Outside the Wall**

The Rabshakeh's speech is a great picture of how discouragement works. He questioned their trust. He mocked their God. He compared them with others who had failed. He spoke loudly, so everyone could hear. And he made it personal, using their own language. Discouraging voices often work the same way, whether they come from bullies, social media, or your own thoughts. Who do you think you are? God won't help you. Look at everyone else who failed. Hezekiah's people did something wise: they didn't answer him back. They went to God. When you hear a voice like that, you don't have to argue with it. Take it to God, and listen to what He says instead.

Isaiah 36 through 39 is also a reminder that faith isn't a one-time event. Hezekiah trusted God beautifully in chapter 37, and then made a foolish, prideful choice in chapter 39. Even great leaders

have ups and downs. That's true for you too. You might have a season of strong faith and then stumble. The answer isn't to give up. It's to keep coming back to God, who is faithful even when we aren't.

REAL TALK **Prayer That Starts With God**

Hezekiah's prayer begins with God, not the problem. Starting that way doesn't make the problem disappear, but it puts it in perspective. Try it this week. Before you tell God what's wrong, spend a moment telling Him who He is: Creator, King, faithful, powerful, good. Then tell Him what's going on. You may find that your prayers become less panicked and more trusting.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Isaiah and 2 Kings**

The story in Isaiah 36 through 39 appears almost word for word in 2 Kings 18 through 20. Scholars debate which came first, or whether both used a common source. Isaiah adds Hezekiah's poem in chapter 38, which isn't in 2 Kings. Second Kings adds that Hezekiah stripped gold from the temple doors to pay Sennacherib before the siege, a detail that shows he didn't always trust God perfectly. Second Chronicles 32 adds that Hezekiah encouraged the people by saying that with Sennacherib was only an arm of flesh, but with them was the LORD their God to help them and fight their battles. Reading all three accounts together gives the fullest picture.

KEY VERSE

LORD of Armies, the God of Israel, who is enthroned among the cherubim, you are the God, even you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Isaiah 37:16 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. What are the voices in your life, like the Rabshakeh, that try to make you lose heart?
2. What's something you need to spread before the LORD right now?
3. Why do you think pride often shows up right after a victory?
4. What does Hezekiah's reaction to Isaiah's warning teach about thinking of others?

TRY THIS *Write down the biggest thing you're worried about right now. Then, like Hezekiah, spread it before God. Start your prayer by telling Him who He is, then ask for His help.*

CHAPTER 5

Comfort and Eagles' Wings

Isaiah 40–48

After thirty-nine chapters full of warnings, Isaiah 40 opens with two words, repeated for emphasis. "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God.

The setting has shifted. These chapters speak to God's people as exiles in Babylon, far from home, their temple destroyed, wondering if God had abandoned them forever. And God's first words to them are tender. "Speak comfortably to Jerusalem," He says. Literally, speak to her heart. Tell her that her hard service is over and her sin has been paid for.

Then a voice calls out, "Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness! Make a level highway in the desert for our God." Every valley will be raised and every mountain made low. God Himself is coming to lead His people home. All four Gospels quote this verse about John the Baptist, the voice in the wilderness who prepared the way for Jesus.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Voice in the Wilderness**

In the ancient world, when a king was going to travel, workers would go ahead of him to prepare the road, filling in potholes, clearing rocks, and leveling the path. Isaiah pictures a road being prepared through the desert for God Himself. John the Baptist lived in the wilderness near the Jordan River and called people to prepare their hearts through repentance. Matthew

writes that he was the one Isaiah spoke of, the voice crying in the wilderness. When John saw Jesus, he pointed and said, Look, the Lamb of God.

REAL TALK **Prepare the Way**

Isaiah's highway in the desert is also a picture of preparing your heart for God. John the Baptist told people to repent, to turn around, before Jesus came. What are the potholes and roadblocks in your heart? Maybe it's a habit you know isn't good, a grudge you're holding, a secret you're hiding, or just a schedule so packed that there's no room for God. Preparing the way can be as simple as setting aside a few minutes each morning to read and pray, confessing something to God, or making something right with someone you hurt.

Isaiah 40 goes on to remind God's people how small everything else is compared to Him. People are like grass. They wither and fade. "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever." The nations are like a drop in a bucket. God measures the oceans in the hollow of His hand and calls every star by name.

BACKGROUND CHECK **He Calls Them All by Name**

Isaiah 40 invites the exiles to look up at the night sky and ask who created the stars. God brings them out like an army, Isaiah says, and calls each one by name. Astronomers today estimate that our galaxy alone contains around a hundred billion stars or more, and that there are perhaps trillions of galaxies. Isaiah couldn't have known those numbers, but his point lands even harder today. If God knows every star by name, He hasn't lost track of you. That's exactly Isaiah's argument: Why do you say, My way is hidden from the LORD? The God who names the stars knows your name too.

But this mighty God is also gentle. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom." The God who holds the universe also carries the little lambs close to His heart.

Then comes the passage on many posters and coffee mugs, and it's worth reading in context. The exiles were saying that God had forgotten them. Isaiah answers, Haven't you heard? God doesn't get tired. "He gives power to the weak. He increases the strength of him who has no might. Even the youths faint and get weary, and the young men utterly fall; but those who wait for the LORD will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run, and not be weary. They will walk, and not faint."

REAL TALK **When You're Exhausted**

Isaiah says even young people get tired, and you probably know that's true. School, sports, jobs, activities, homework, family stress, and late nights scrolling can leave you running on empty. Isaiah's answer is to wait for the LORD. Waiting doesn't mean doing nothing. It means trusting, hoping, and depending on God instead of only on your own strength. It also means rest. God built rest into creation, and getting enough sleep is not laziness. If you feel exhausted all the time, talk to a parent or doctor, because sometimes there are physical or emotional reasons. And bring your tiredness to God. He doesn't get tired of you.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Eagles' Wings**

Eagles are known for soaring. Instead of flapping their wings constantly, they ride rising columns of warm air called thermals, gliding for long distances with very little effort. That's a great picture of what Isaiah means. Those who wait on the LORD don't have to power through on their own strength. They're carried by His strength, like an eagle carried on the wind.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Word That Stands Forever**

Isaiah 40:8 says the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. The Great Isaiah Scroll is a living example. Empires like Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome rose and fell. Scrolls rotted, cities burned, and languages changed. Yet the words of Isaiah were copied, treasured, and read for more than twenty-five centuries, and today they're

available in thousands of languages. Peter quoted this verse to remind Christians that the good news they had heard was God's enduring word.

Then God speaks to His people with promises of His presence. "Don't you be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you."

And in chapter 43, one of the most comforting passages in the Bible. "Don't be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and flame will not scorch you."

REAL TALK **Through the Waters**

Notice that God doesn't say if you pass through the waters. He says when. Hard times will come. God never promises a life without floods or fires. He promises something better: I will be with you. You won't go through it alone, and it won't destroy you. Whatever you're going through right now, the divorce, the diagnosis, the loss, the loneliness, the anxiety, God says, You are mine, and I am with you. He also tells His people, "Behold, I will do a new thing." Your story isn't finished.

REAL TALK **You Are Mine**

God says to His people, I have called you by your name. You are mine. Many teens struggle with the question, Who am I? You might try to answer it with your grades, your sport, your looks, your friends, your followers, or your mistakes. But all of those can change. Isaiah 43 gives an identity that can't be taken away. God created you, formed you, redeemed you, and calls you His. He also says, You are precious and honored in my sight, and I love you. When the voices around you or inside you say you're not enough, you can answer with what God says.

Chapter 42 introduces the Servant of the LORD for the first time, and Matthew quotes it about Jesus. We'll look at the Servant closely in the next chapter. For now, notice the contrast. The idols in these chapters can't move, speak, or save. People have to carry them around. But God says He carries His people, from birth to old age. Either you carry your gods, or your God carries you.

Chapter 44 contains one of the funniest passages in the Bible. Isaiah mocks idol-making. He describes a man who cuts down a tree. He uses half of the wood to build a fire, warm himself, and bake bread. "Aha! I am warm," he says. Then with the other half, he carves a god, bows down to it, and prays, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"

Isaiah points out the absurdity. No one stops to think, "Shall I bow down to a tree trunk?" The man worships a piece of the same log he just used to cook his lunch.

> **REAL TALK** **Modern Idols**
>
> You're probably not tempted to carve a statue and bow down to it. But an idol is anything you look to for what only God can give: meaning, security, worth, or salvation. Today's idols might be popularity, appearance, achievement, money, a relationship, sports, gaming, or your phone. Like the man with the log, we can take a good thing God made and turn it into something we worship. Isaiah says the idol-maker "feeds on ashes," and a deceived heart has led him astray. Ask yourself, What do I look to when I'm anxious, lonely, or afraid? What would I be devastated to lose? Those answers can point to your idols.

Then Isaiah names a specific foreign king who would free God's people from Babylon: Cyrus. "The LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him." God says He called Cyrus by name, even though Cyrus did not know Him.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Cyrus and the Cylinder**

Cyrus the Great was king of Persia. In 539 BC, his army conquered Babylon, and soon afterward he allowed exiled peoples, including the Jews, to return to their homelands and rebuild their temples. A clay cylinder from his reign, called the Cyrus Cylinder, now in the British Museum, describes this policy. Ezra 1 records his decree allowing the Jews to go home. Isaiah calls Cyrus God's anointed, a remarkable title for a pagan king, showing that God can use anyone to accomplish His purposes. The naming of Cyrus is one of the reasons some scholars believe this part of Isaiah was written later, during the exile, while others believe it shows God revealing the future to Isaiah long in advance.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Fall of Babylon**

Isaiah 47 pictures Babylon, the proud queen of the nations, being humbled and made to sit in the dust. Babylon had said, I am, and there is no one besides me, and I will never be a widow. That's a claim only God can make. In 539 BC, Cyrus's army captured the city, reportedly with little fighting. Daniel 5 tells how, on that very night, King Belshazzar was holding a feast when a mysterious hand wrote on the wall. Babylon, which had seemed unbeatable, fell in a single night.

Chapter 48 adds a picture that's worth holding on to when life is hard. God says He has refined His people, not like silver, but in the furnace of affliction. Refining was the process of heating metal until the impurities rose to the top and could be removed. Hard seasons aren't pleasant, but God can use them to make us stronger, purer, and more like Him. That doesn't mean God causes every hard thing, or that suffering is good in itself. It means that nothing you go through is wasted in His hands.

God's point is that He alone is God and He alone controls history. "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." The invitation is for everyone, not just Israel.

And He promises lifelong care. “Even to old age I am he, and even to gray hairs I will carry you.”

It’s worth noticing how often Isaiah 40 through 48 says Don’t be afraid. God says it again and again, to people who had every reason to be afraid. They had lost their homes, their temple, and their independence. They lived in a foreign empire. And God keeps saying, Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. The reason not to fear is never that nothing bad can happen. It’s that God is present, powerful, and faithful.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Life in Exile**

When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, they took thousands of people, especially leaders, skilled workers, and young people from noble families, to Babylon. Daniel was one of them. The exiles lived in a huge, impressive city full of temples to Babylonian gods, like Marduk. Many must have wondered whether Babylon’s gods were stronger than the LORD. Psalm 137 captures their grief: By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept. Isaiah 40 through 48 speaks right into that situation, insisting that Babylon’s gods are just carved wood and that the LORD alone controls history.

REAL TALK **Carried**

God says that from birth to gray hair He carries His people. Maybe you’ve seen the poem about footprints in the sand, where a person notices only one set of footprints during the hardest times of life and realizes that was when God was carrying them. Isaiah said it first. If you feel like you can’t take another step, God isn’t waiting for you to pull yourself together. He’s ready to carry you.

KEY VERSE

but those who wait for the LORD will renew their strength.
They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run,
and not be weary. They will walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think God's first word to the exiles was comfort?
2. What does it mean to wait for the LORD in your daily life?
3. What waters or fires are you passing through right now? How does Isaiah 43:2 speak to that?
4. What modern idols are you most tempted to trust?

TRY THIS *Write Isaiah 43:1-2 on a card, putting your own name in place of Jacob and Israel. Read it every morning this week.*

CHAPTER 6

The Suffering Servant

Isaiah 49–53

In the middle of Isaiah's comfort chapters, a mysterious figure keeps appearing: the Servant of the LORD. He shows up in four special poems, often called the Servant Songs, in chapters 42, 49, 50, and 52 through 53.

In the first song, the Servant is gentle. "He won't break a bruised reed. He won't quench a dimly burning wick. He will faithfully bring justice." A bruised reed is a weak, bent plant. A dimly burning wick is a candle about to go out. The Servant doesn't crush the weak or snuff out people who are barely holding on. He's gentle with them.

> **REAL TALK** **Gentle With Bruised Reeds**
>
> The Servant is gentle with the weak. That's a model for how we treat others, and even ourselves. Some people are like bruised reeds, already bent by something hard in their lives. Others are like smoldering wicks, barely hanging on. A harsh word could break them. Followers of Jesus are called to be gentle: to notice when someone is struggling, to speak kindly, and to be patient. And if you're the bruised reed right now, Jesus isn't going to snap you in half. He's going to hold you up.

In chapter 49, the Servant speaks, and God gives Him a huge mission. Bringing Israel back isn't enough, God says. "I will also

give you as a light to the nations, that you may be my salvation to the end of the earth."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Who Is the Servant?**

Readers have long asked the same question an Ethiopian official asked Philip in Acts 8: "Who is the prophet talking about? About himself, or about someone else?" In some places, Isaiah calls the nation of Israel God's servant. Many Jewish interpreters understand the Servant Songs as describing Israel, or a faithful remnant within Israel, suffering among the nations. Some ancient Jewish interpreters saw the Servant as the Messiah. Christians, following the New Testament, believe the Servant Songs find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. Many Christian scholars see both: the Servant is Israel, but Israel couldn't fulfill the mission perfectly, so one faithful Israelite, Jesus, fulfilled it for them. Notice that in chapter 49, the Servant is called Israel and yet is sent to restore Israel, which suggests an individual who represents the whole nation.

REAL TALK **A Light to the Nations**

God told the Servant that saving Israel alone was too small a thing. His mission was for the whole world. Jesus later told His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, and Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6 when he explained why he was taking the gospel to non-Jewish people. You're part of that story. The good news isn't just for people who look like you, live near you, or grew up like you. It's for everyone. That might mean praying for people in other countries, getting to know classmates from different backgrounds, supporting missionaries, or simply being kind to someone who is different from you.

Chapter 49 also contains a beautiful promise for anyone who feels forgotten. God's people said, The LORD has forgotten me. God answered, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, these may

forget, yet I will not forget you! Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

REAL TALK **Engraved on His Hands**

Have you ever felt forgotten? Left out of the group chat, unseen at home, overlooked by teachers or coaches? God says even if a mother could forget her baby, He will never forget you. He says your name is engraved on His hands, like a tattoo that can't be erased. Christians have often noticed that Jesus' hands were literally marked for us, with nail scars He still carried after His resurrection. You are not forgotten. You are written on the hands of God.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Servant Songs**

Here's a quick guide to Isaiah's four Servant Songs. The first, in 42:1-9, shows the Servant as gentle and Spirit-filled, bringing justice to the nations. The second, in 49:1-13, shows Him as a light to the nations. The third, in 50:4-11, shows Him listening to God each morning and enduring abuse without turning back. The fourth, in 52:13-53:12, shows Him suffering, dying, and being exalted for the sins of many. Read together, they tell a story that moves from gentle mission, to rejection, to suffering, to victory.

In the third Servant Song, the Servant suffers. "I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who plucked off the hair. I didn't hide my face from shame and spitting." But He sets His face like flint, determined, trusting that God will help Him.

Then chapter 52 bursts with good news. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns!" Imagine a runner coming over the hills to a besieged city, bringing news that the battle is won. Paul quotes this verse about everyone who shares the gospel.

And then comes the fourth Servant Song, from Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. It's one of the most important passages in the entire Old Testament.

It begins with a surprise. "Behold, my servant will deal wisely. He will be exalted and lifted up, and will be very high." Lifted up is the same phrase used for God on His throne in Isaiah 6. But then the Servant's appearance is "marred more than any man." People are shocked at how much He suffered.

Isaiah 53 describes Him in detail. He grew up like a tender plant out of dry ground, nothing special to look at. "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering and acquainted with disease." People turned away from Him. And they assumed God was punishing Him for His own sins.

But they were wrong. "Surely he has borne our sickness and carried our suffering; yet we considered him plagued, struck by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed."

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Substitution**
>
> The heart of Isaiah 53 is substitution: one person taking the place of others. Notice the pronouns. He was pierced. Our transgressions. He was crushed. Our iniquities. The punishment was on him. We are healed. Over and over, the Servant suffers what others deserve. Isaiah uses the language of sacrifice from the temple, calling the Servant an offering for sin. In the sacrificial system, an innocent animal died in place of a guilty person. Isaiah 53 describes a person doing that. Peter quoted this chapter when he wrote, "You were healed by his wounds." Paul summed it up this way: "For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Then Isaiah describes why we needed this. "All we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The Servant doesn't fight back. "He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he didn't open his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he didn't open his mouth." He was taken away by an unjust trial. He was cut off from the land of the living. And His grave was assigned with the wicked and with a rich man in His death, even though He had done no violence and spoken no lies.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Isaiah 53 and the Gospels**

Christians have long been amazed at how closely Isaiah 53, written centuries before Jesus, matches His story. Jesus was rejected by His own people. He was silent before His accusers, like a lamb. He was beaten and pierced. He was executed between two criminals, counted with the transgressors, and He prayed for those who crucified Him, making intercession for them. He was buried in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea. Isaiah 53 was in the Great Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea, copied well before Jesus was born, so it wasn't written after the fact.

REAL TALK **Silence Isn't Always Right**

The Servant stayed silent before His accusers, like a lamb. That was His unique mission, choosing to suffer for others. But that doesn't mean God wants you to stay silent when you're being hurt. Jesus Himself spoke up many times against injustice and hypocrisy. If someone is abusing, bullying, or threatening you, speaking up isn't a lack of faith. It's wise and right. Tell a trusted adult. If you're being hurt at home, you can call or text Childhelp at 1-800-422-4453. If you're in danger, call 911. If you're feeling hopeless, call or text 988. Jesus suffered so that you could be free, not so that you would suffer abuse in silence.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Lamb of God**

Isaiah's picture of the Servant as a lamb led to the slaughter connects with lambs throughout the Bible. At the first Passover, a lamb's blood protected Israel's families from judgment. Every day, lambs were sacrificed at the

temple. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus died during the Passover festival. And in Revelation, Jesus is worshiped as the Lamb who was slain and is now alive on the throne.

And then, the most astonishing turn of all. After all this suffering and death, Isaiah says the Servant "will see his offspring. He will prolong his days." "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light and be satisfied." How can someone who died see light and live long? Christians believe there's only one answer: resurrection. The Servant who was pierced and buried would live again, and would justify many.

REAL TALK **By His Wounds**

Some people feel too guilty to come to God. Others feel like they're not that bad. Isaiah 53 speaks to both. All of us have gone astray. And the Servant took the punishment for all of it. You don't have to carry your guilt anymore. Jesus already carried it. Isaiah also says He was "a man of suffering." If you're hurting, Jesus understands. He knows what it's like to be rejected, misunderstood, mocked, and in pain. He doesn't stand far off from your suffering. He entered it.

Isaiah 53 has had a remarkable effect on readers throughout history. Many people, including some Jewish readers, have come to believe in Jesus after reading it for the first time. In some synagogues, the chapter is not read in the regular cycle of readings, which has led to many conversations about it. Whatever your background, it's worth reading slowly and asking honestly: Who is this about? The Ethiopian official in Acts 8 asked exactly that question, and Philip started with this very Scripture and told him about Jesus.

The Servant's suffering also changes how we see our own suffering. Isaiah says people looked at the Servant and assumed God was

against Him. They thought, He must have done something terrible. But they were wrong. That's a reminder not to assume that people who are suffering are being punished. And it's a reminder that, if you're suffering, it doesn't mean God has abandoned you. The Servant, the one God loved most, suffered deeply. And His suffering brought healing to the world.

When you read Isaiah 53, it's worth remembering that it was written to be heard as good news. It's not mainly a sad poem. It's a victory song. The Servant is despised, but He is exalted. He is crushed, but He sees light. He is counted with sinners, but He justifies many. The cross and the resurrection belong together. Without the suffering, there's no forgiveness. Without the resurrection, there's no hope. Isaiah 53 holds both.

> **REAL TALK** **Healed by His Wounds**
>
> Isaiah says by His wounds we are healed. Peter applies this mainly to being healed from sin, set free to live for righteousness. Some Christians also believe it includes physical healing, either now or in the resurrection, when every disease will be gone. Christians differ on how much physical healing to expect in this life, and it's painful when prayers for healing aren't answered the way we hope. But all agree on the deepest healing: Jesus heals the broken relationship between us and God, and one day He will heal everything else too. If you or someone you love is sick, it's good to pray for healing, to see doctors, and to trust God with the outcome.

KEY VERSE

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. What does it mean that the Servant won't break a bruised reed? When have you felt like a bruised reed?
2. How does it feel to know you're engraved on the palms of God's hands?
3. Read Isaiah 53 slowly. Which line stands out most to you, and why?
4. Why do you think Isaiah 53 has been so important to Christians?

TRY THIS *Read Isaiah 53 aloud, and every time you read the word our or we, pause and say me. Then thank Jesus for what He did for you.*

CHAPTER 7

Free Grace and True Fasting

Isaiah 54–59

After the Servant suffers, everything changes. Isaiah 54 tells God's people to sing and to enlarge their tents, because their family is about to grow. God speaks like a husband taking back the wife who left Him. "For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but my loving kindness will not depart from you, and my covenant of peace will not be removed."

Then, in chapter 55, God throws open the doors to a feast and invites everyone. It's like a street vendor calling out to the crowd, except everything is free. "Hey! Come, everyone who thirsts, to the waters! Come, he who has no money, buy, and eat! Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Then God asks a question that cuts to the heart. "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which doesn't satisfy?"

> REAL TALK **What Doesn't Satisfy**
>
> God's question in Isaiah 55:2 sounds a lot like Ecclesiastes. We spend so much money, time, and energy on things that don't satisfy: the next purchase, the next achievement, the next relationship, the next hour of scrolling. They're like junk food for the soul, filling for a moment but never nourishing. God offers something different: Himself, freely, without price. Jesus said something similar when He stood up at a festival in Jerusalem and called out,

> If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. What are you spending yourself on that isn't satisfying you?

God's grace is free, but it isn't cheap. The invitation calls for a response. "Seek the LORD while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, to our God, for he will freely pardon."

And if that seems too good to be true, God explains that He doesn't think the way we do. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." His mercy is as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. And His word always accomplishes what He sends it to do, like rain that waters the earth and makes things grow.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Foreigners and Eunuchs Welcome**

Isaiah 56 contains a surprising promise. Foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, and eunuchs, men who could not have children and were excluded from some parts of temple worship, are promised a place in God's house and a name better than sons and daughters. God says, My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Jesus quoted that line when He cleared the temple. It's a beautiful reminder that God's family includes people others shut out. Centuries later, an Ethiopian eunuch, a foreigner, read Isaiah 53, believed in Jesus, and was baptized. Isaiah's promise came true for him.

REAL TALK **Sing, You Who Feel Left Out**

Isaiah 54 begins by telling a woman who could never have children to sing and shout for joy, because her family will grow beyond what she can imagine. In the ancient world, being unable to have children brought deep sadness and often shame. God's message is that people who feel left out, overlooked, or unwanted are the very ones He welcomes and blesses. If you've ever felt like you don't fit, at school, in your family, or even at church, Isaiah 54 and 56 are for you. God makes room in His house for people others leave out.

Isaiah 57 adds another beautiful picture of God's nearness. The high and lofty One who lives forever says He dwells in the high and holy place, and also "with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble." God lives at the top of the universe and in broken hearts at the same time.

Then chapter 58 tackles fake religion again, this time focused on fasting. God's people were fasting, going without food as a spiritual practice, and complaining that God wasn't noticing. "Why have we fasted," they asked, "and you don't see?"

God's answer is blunt. On the very days you fast, He says, you do whatever you want and oppress your workers. You fast while quarreling and fighting. You bow your heads and put on sackcloth and ashes, but you think that's what I want? "Isn't this the fast that I have chosen: to release the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Isn't it to distribute your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor who are cast out to your house?"

> **REAL TALK** **Performative Faith**
>
> Performative means doing something for show. Isaiah 58 describes performative fasting, looking super spiritual while treating people badly. Jesus warned about the same thing, telling His followers not to make sad faces when they fast so people will notice, but to fast secretly for God alone. Performative faith can look like posting spiritual content while being cruel in the group chat, praying loudly but ignoring the kid nobody likes, or going on a mission trip mostly for the photos. God says the kind of worship He wants shows up in how we treat the hungry, the poor, the oppressed, and our own families.

REAL TALK **A Healthy Note on Fasting**

Fasting is a real spiritual practice in the Bible. Jesus fasted, and He assumed His followers would too. But for teenagers, whose bodies are still growing, long food fasts usually aren't wise. Many Christians your age fast in other ways: from social media, video games, a favorite snack, or music for a day or a week, using that time to pray instead. If you want to try fasting from food, talk with a parent or doctor first. And if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder, restricting food, or body image, please don't fast from food at all. Choose a different kind of fast, and talk to someone you trust. The point of fasting is drawing near to God, not punishing your body.

Then God makes beautiful promises to people who live out true worship. "Then your light will break out as the morning, and your healing will appear quickly." "If you pour out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light will rise in darkness." God promises to guide them continually, satisfy them in dry places, and make them "like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters don't fail."

REAL TALK **When You Don't Understand God**

God says His thoughts aren't our thoughts and His ways aren't our ways. That can be comforting and frustrating at the same time. There will be times you don't understand why God allowed something or didn't answer the way you hoped. Isaiah doesn't ask you to pretend you understand. He invites you to trust that God's thoughts are higher, and that His word will accomplish what He intends, even when you can't see how. It's okay to bring your questions to God. The Psalms and Job are full of honest questions. Faith isn't having all the answers. It's trusting the One who does.

Chapter 58 also talks about the Sabbath, calling it a delight, a day to stop chasing your own interests and enjoy God. Rest is a gift, not a burden.

REAL TALK **Rest Isn't Laziness**

Many teens feel guilty when they rest, as if they're falling behind. But God commanded rest because He knows we need it. Even Jesus took time away from crowds to pray and rest. Getting enough sleep, taking breaks from screens, spending time outside, and enjoying friends and family aren't wasted time. They're part of living the way God designed you. If you feel like you can never slow down, talk to someone about what's driving you.

Chapter 59 explains why God's people felt far from Him. It wasn't that God's arm was too short to save or His ear too dull to hear. "But your iniquities have separated you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you." Isaiah describes a society where truth stumbles in the streets and justice stands far off. And then God Himself puts on righteousness like armor and salvation like a helmet, and comes to rescue. A Redeemer will come to Zion, to those who turn from their sins.

REAL TALK **Justice Starts Close to Home**

Isaiah 58 ends one of its lists with a surprising phrase: don't hide yourself from your own flesh. In other words, don't ignore your own family. Sometimes it's easier to care about people far away than people right in front of you. You might feel passionate about global issues but be unkind to your siblings, or care about the poor but ignore the lonely kid in your class. True worship starts close to home. It looks like helping at home without being asked, including someone who's left out, speaking up when someone is being mistreated, and sharing what you have with people nearby who need it.

REAL TALK **Come Thirsty**

Isaiah 55 invites everyone who is thirsty, not everyone who is good, put together, or religious enough. The only qualification is thirst. If you feel empty, restless, tired of chasing things that don't satisfy, you're exactly who God is calling. You don't need to bring anything. You don't need money. You don't need to clean yourself up first. You just come. Jesus made the same

offer to a Samaritan woman at a well, promising living water that would become a spring welling up to eternal life.

Isaiah 54 through 59 holds two big ideas together: grace and justice. God's grace is free, poured out on anyone who is thirsty. And God's people are called to live justly, caring for the hungry, the poor, and the oppressed. Some people emphasize only grace and forget justice. Others emphasize only justice and forget grace. Isaiah refuses to separate them. Grace changes us, and changed people pour out their lives for others.

Isaiah 59 pictures God putting on righteousness like body armor and salvation like a helmet. Paul borrows this image in Ephesians 6, when he tells Christians to put on the armor of God, including the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. The armor isn't something we make. It's God's own armor, which He shares with His people so they can stand firm against evil.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Sabbath as Delight**

Isaiah 58:13-14 tells God's people to call the Sabbath a delight, not chasing their own pleasures or talking idly, but finding joy in the LORD. The Sabbath was a weekly day of rest given in the Ten Commandments. Christians have different views on how the Sabbath applies today, and many observe Sunday as a day of worship and rest. But almost everyone agrees on the principle: humans need rest, and regularly stepping away from work, screens, and busyness to enjoy God, family, and creation is a gift. Try taking a few hours each week to unplug and rest. You might be surprised how much you need it.

Isaiah 56 also has a strong message about who belongs. Some people in Isaiah's day thought foreigners could never be part of God's people, and that people with certain physical conditions were second class. God says no. Anyone who holds fast to Him, keeps His covenant, and loves His name is welcome. The church at its best is a

community where people from every background, ability, and story find a home. If your church or youth group has people who seem left out, you can be the one to welcome them.

BACKGROUND CHECK **My House Shall Be Called a House of Prayer**

When Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem near the end of His ministry, He found the outer courts filled with merchants and money changers. That outer court was the area where non-Jewish people were allowed to pray. Jesus drove out the sellers, quoting Isaiah 56:7, My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples, and Jeremiah 7, saying they had made it a den of robbers. He was angry that the one place set aside for outsiders to seek God had been turned into a marketplace.

KEY VERSE

Seek the LORD while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Isaiah 55:6–7 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. What are you spending money or energy on that doesn't satisfy?
2. Why do you think God's grace is free but still calls for a response?
3. What does performative faith look like at your school or online?
4. What would a fast like Isaiah 58 describes look like in your life this week?

TRY THIS *Choose a healthy fast for one day this week, like no social media or no gaming. Use that time to pray, and do one practical act of kindness for someone in need.*

CHAPTER 8

Good News and New Creation

Isaiah 60–66

The last section of Isaiah begins with a sunrise. "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the LORD's glory has risen on you!" Darkness covers the earth, but God's glory is rising on His people like the dawn. "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

Isaiah pictures people from every nation streaming to Jerusalem, bringing gifts, and the city's gates staying open day and night. And then he looks even further ahead. "The sun will be no more your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon give light to you, but the LORD will be your everlasting light." Revelation quotes this picture when it describes the New Jerusalem, where the glory of God is its light and the Lamb is its lamp.

Then, in chapter 61, someone speaks in the first person, someone filled with God's Spirit. "The Lord GOD's Spirit is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the humble. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor."

He will comfort all who mourn, and give them "a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of

heaviness." People who mourned with ashes on their heads will wear crowns of beauty instead.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Year of the LORD's Favor**

The year of the LORD's favor probably refers to the Year of Jubilee from Leviticus 25. Every fiftieth year, slaves were to be set free, debts canceled, and land returned to the families who originally owned it. It was a year of fresh starts and freedom. Isaiah pictures God's Anointed One bringing an ultimate Jubilee, freedom for everyone held captive by sin, sorrow, and oppression. The word anointed in Hebrew is related to the word Messiah, and the Greek equivalent is Christ.

Centuries later, Jesus came to His hometown of Nazareth and went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Luke writes, "The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him." Jesus unrolled the scroll, found this passage, and read it aloud. Then He rolled up the scroll, handed it back, and sat down. Everyone was staring at Him. And He said, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Where Jesus Stopped Reading**

When Jesus read Isaiah 61 in Nazareth, He stopped in the middle of a sentence, right after the year of the LORD's favor, and didn't read the next phrase, the day of vengeance of our God. Many Christians believe that's significant. Jesus' first coming was about mercy, good news, and freedom. The day of judgment is real, but it was postponed, giving people time to turn to Him. The New Testament says God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

REAL TALK **Beauty for Ashes**

Isaiah 61 is a promise for people who are hurting. The brokenhearted, the captives, the mourners, people with a spirit of heaviness. Maybe that describes you today. Jesus said this is exactly why He came: to bind up broken hearts, to set captives free, and to trade ashes for beauty. That doesn't always happen instantly, and it's okay to grieve and to get help from

people who love you. If heaviness has settled over you and won't lift, please talk to a trusted adult or counselor, or call or text 988 any time. Jesus came for the brokenhearted, and He often sends people to help carry the weight.

REAL TALK **A New Name**

In Isaiah 62, God's people are given new names. Once they were called Forsaken and Desolate. Now they'll be called My Delight Is in Her, and Married. Maybe you've been given names you didn't choose: nicknames, labels, insults, or things you call yourself in your head. Stupid. Ugly. Loser. Too much. Not enough. God doesn't call you by those names. In Christ, He calls you beloved, forgiven, chosen, and His delight. Revelation even promises that God will give His people a new name. If cruel labels are sticking to you and dragging you down, talk to someone you trust about them. And let God's names for you be louder than anyone else's.

Chapters 62 through 64 alternate between joy and longing. God promises His people new names. They won't be called Forsaken anymore, but My Delight Is in Her. God says, "As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you." But the people also cry out honestly. They confess their sins. "All our righteousness is like a polluted garment," they admit. Even our best efforts aren't clean enough. And they plead with God, Oh that You would tear open the heavens and come down!

BACKGROUND CHECK **Hard Passage: The Winepress in Isaiah 63**

Isaiah 63 pictures God as a warrior coming from Edom with garments stained red, like someone who has been treading grapes in a winepress. It's a picture of God's judgment on evil, and it can be disturbing to read. It helps to remember that the Bible pictures God's judgment not as cruelty but as the defeat of everything that destroys His creation, like oppression, violence, and evil itself. Revelation 19 uses this same imagery for Jesus returning as King. Christians hold together two truths: God is patient and merciful, and God will one day put a final end to evil. Right after this passage, Isaiah 63 turns to a

prayer remembering God's kindness and compassion, and how in all His people's distress, He was distressed too.

And then, in chapters 65 and 66, God answers with the grandest promise in the book. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered, nor come into mind."

REAL TALK **Your Work Isn't Wasted**

In Isaiah 65, people build houses and live in them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit, and their work isn't in vain. Under the sun, as Ecclesiastes said, so much work seems to slip away. But in God's new creation, nothing good is wasted. Paul said the same thing at the end of 1 Corinthians 15: your labor in the Lord is not in vain. The homework you do faithfully, the kindness no one notices, the prayers that seem unanswered, God sees all of it, and none of it is lost.

Isaiah describes this new creation with ordinary, joyful pictures. No more weeping or crying in the city. No more babies dying young. People will build houses and live in them, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Their work won't be wasted. And Isaiah returns to his picture from chapter 11. "The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like the ox." "They will not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

BACKGROUND CHECK **New Heavens and a New Earth**

Many people imagine eternity as floating on clouds. But Isaiah, and later Revelation, picture something much more solid: a renewed creation, with cities, gardens, homes, work, and feasting, but with all the sin, pain, and death removed. Christians differ on some details of how and when this happens, and on how to read some of Isaiah's images, like people living to a hundred, which may be poetry for long, full lives. But the big picture is clear: God isn't abandoning His creation. He's making it new. Revelation 21 describes John seeing "a new heaven and a new earth," and God promising that "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more."

REAL TALK **Hope for the Future**

A lot of teens feel anxious about the future: climate, wars, the economy, technology, and whether the world is getting worse. Those concerns are real, and caring for God's world is part of being faithful. But Isaiah 65 gives a hope that doesn't depend on headlines. God has promised to make all things new. That hope doesn't make you passive. It frees you to work for good now, planting trees, caring for people, and seeking justice, because you know that God will finish what He started. If worry about the future is overwhelming you, talk to someone you trust about it.

The last chapter of Isaiah reminds us of God's greatness once more. "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." No temple can contain Him. Yet He looks to the humble and contrite, who tremble at His word. And He promises to comfort His people tenderly. "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you."

BACKGROUND CHECK **God Like a Mother**

Isaiah uses some of the Bible's most tender images of God. In chapter 49, God compares Himself to a nursing mother who can't forget her child. In chapter 66, He says, As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you. The Bible usually speaks of God as Father, and Jesus taught His followers to pray Our Father. But these motherly pictures show that God's love includes all the tenderness, nearness, and comfort that the best mothers give. For anyone who has a hard relationship with a parent, these verses are a reminder that God's love is better than even the best human parent's.

Isaiah's book also ends right where it began. In chapter 1, God called on the heavens and the earth as witnesses against His rebellious people. In chapters 65 and 66, He promises new heavens and a new earth, where His people will worship Him forever. The same heavens and earth that once testified against them will be remade for them. That's the story of grace.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Hard Passage: Isaiah's Final Verse**

The very last verse of Isaiah is sobering. It pictures the bodies of those who rebelled against God, where their worm doesn't die and their fire isn't quenched. Jesus used this verse when He warned about hell. It's a hard way to end such a hopeful book, and in Jewish tradition, when Isaiah is read aloud in the synagogue, the second-to-last verse is often repeated at the end so the reading closes on a note of hope. Christians understand the verse in different ways, but all agree that it's a serious warning: God's new creation is offered to everyone, but rejecting Him has real consequences. Isaiah's whole book, from chapter 1's invitation to come and reason together to chapter 55's free feast, is God pleading with people to come to Him while there's time.

Isaiah's book began with a rebellious people and fake religion. It ends with a renewed people from every nation worshiping God in a new creation. Everything in between shows how God gets them from one to the other: through judgment and mercy, through a child born, a Servant pierced, and a King who reigns forever.

It's also worth noticing that the very last chapters of Isaiah have a strong focus on the humble. God says He looks to the one who is humble and contrite and trembles at His word. He lives with the lowly. He gives good news to the poor. In a world that celebrates the powerful, popular, and impressive, Isaiah keeps saying that God's eyes are on the humble. That's good news if you've ever felt small, overlooked, or unimportant. God sees you.

REAL TALK **Arise, Shine**

Isaiah 60 begins with a command: Arise, shine, for your light has come. Notice that the light isn't your own. It's God's glory rising on you, like the sun shining on the moon. You don't have to generate your own light or be impressive to shine. You just have to reflect His. Jesus told His followers that they are the light of the world and should let their light shine so that others see their good

works and praise God. That can happen in small ways: kindness, honesty, generosity, courage, and joy in a world that often feels dark.

As you finish Isaiah, think about how big his vision is. It starts in a small, rebellious kingdom and ends with all nations worshiping God in a renewed creation. It moves from a throne room in Jerusalem to a cross outside it, and then to a new heavens and a new earth. It shows a God who is too holy to ignore sin and too loving to leave sinners alone. Isaiah's name means the LORD saves. By the end of his book, you can see just how far that salvation reaches.

KEY VERSE

The Lord GOD's Spirit is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the humble. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to those who are bound,

Isaiah 61:1 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Jesus chose Isaiah 61 for His first sermon in Nazareth?
2. Which phrase in Isaiah 61:1-3 speaks most to your life right now?
3. How is Isaiah's picture of the new creation different from how people usually imagine heaven?
4. What would it look like for you to bring good news to someone this week?

TRY THIS *Read Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21:1-5 side by side. Write down three things you're looking forward to in God's new creation.*

THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

Where This Points

Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more than almost any other Old Testament book. That's why Christians sometimes call it the Fifth Gospel. Read it alongside Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and you start to see the lines converge, like streets all leading to one city square. Jewish readers treasure Isaiah in their own rich ways, as a book of God's faithfulness to Israel, of comfort in exile, and of hope for a world made right. The New Testament writers, who were Jewish themselves, saw all of that hope coming together in one Person.

Isaiah promised a sign: a child called Immanuel, which Matthew explains means "God with us." He promised a son who would be called Mighty God and Prince of Peace, sitting on David's throne forever. He promised a shoot from Jesse's stump, filled with the Spirit. He promised a voice in the wilderness preparing the way, and all four Gospels say that was John the Baptist pointing to Jesus. He promised a Servant who would be a light to the nations, who would be pierced and crushed for others, and who would see light after His suffering. When an Ethiopian official was reading Isaiah 53 in his chariot, Philip "preached to him about Jesus." When Jesus stood up in His hometown synagogue and read Isaiah 61, He said, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And John tells us that Isaiah "saw his glory, and spoke of him." The King Isaiah saw on the throne is the same King who wore a crown of thorns. And Isaiah's final vision, new heavens and a new earth, is

exactly where the Bible ends. Revelation hears God say, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Here's what that means for you, as plainly as I can put it.

1 God made you, and He loves you.

God made you on purpose, and He loves you. He has called you by name.

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* **John 3:16 (WEB)**

2 We've all sinned.

Isaiah says we've all gone astray like sheep, each of us turning to our own way. The Bible says all of us have sinned.

> *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;* **Romans 3:23 (WEB)**

3 Sin has a real cost.

God is holy, so He doesn't shrug off evil. The Bible says its result is death, separation from God forever.

> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* **Romans 6:23 (WEB)**

4 Jesus was pierced for you.

Jesus is the Servant Isaiah saw. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, and then He rose again.

> *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness. You were healed by his wounds.* **1 Peter 2:24 (WEB)**

5 You can't earn it. You receive it.

Isaiah invites everyone who is thirsty to come and buy without money. Salvation isn't a reward for being good enough. It's a gift you receive by trusting Jesus.

> *for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*
> **Ephesians 2:8–9 (WEB)**

6 Here I am.

Turn from running your own life, and trust Jesus as your Savior and King. Then you can know, not just hope, that you have eternal life.

> *that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
> **Romans 10:9 (WEB)**

So what do you do with that? You don't need perfect words. Isaiah's prayer in the throne room was only a few words long. You can talk to God right now, wherever you are. If it helps, you could pray something like this:

> *Holy God, like Isaiah, I'm a person of unclean lips, and I've gone my own way. I can't fix that myself. Thank You that Jesus was pierced for my sins and crushed for my wrongs, and that by His wounds I can be healed. Thank You that He rose again. Forgive me, wash me white as snow, and make me Yours. Help me wait on You and find new strength. I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I want Him to be my King. Here I am. Send me. In Jesus' name, amen.*

If You Just Said Yes

Tell someone. A parent, a youth leader, a pastor, or a Christian friend. Start there.

Read the real thing. Read Isaiah 53, then Luke 4 and Acts 8, and watch how the New Testament reads Isaiah.

Find your people. Get connected to a church where the Bible is taught and Jesus is honored. Ask about being baptized.

Be sent. Ask God to show you one person who needs good news this week, and be kind to them.

Not Sure Yet?

Not ready? That's honest, and honesty is a good place to start. Isaiah's first response to God was Woe is me. Keep asking questions. Keep reading. Just don't settle for "I already know all that."

Because if Isaiah is right, the King on the throne was pierced for you, and He is calling your name.

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God stands forever.

Isaiah 40:8 (WEB)