

Women's Bible Study

Fall 2020: Isaiah

Suggested Abbreviated Reading Plan for Tuesday, October 27th

"In 1:1-39:8 the dominant note was judgment, but in 40:1-66:24 the dominant note is 'comfort' (40:1). The former section ended in 701 BC with the Assyrian storm over and the cloud of Babylon only beginning to gather on the horizon. Between 39:8 and 40:1 lay 160 years of moral decay, political collapse, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, wholesale slaughter, deportation to forced labor, and fruitless longing for the land of promise. Through this gathering darkness Isaiah's vision pierces, falling upon the year 538 BC when Cyrus of Persia has vanquished the Babylonian army and declared that all deported peoples may return to their homes and their gods." (NavPress Isaiah LifeChange Study)

The full reading assignment for this week is Isaiah 40-48 and Week 8 in the workbook. Following is a suggested reading plan for those who would like a briefer, more focused reading assignment.

1. Read the two short paragraphs on p. 59 in the workbook ("The Place of the Passage" and "The Big Picture").
2. Skip to p. 63, and read through the "Gospel Glimpses," "Whole Bible Connections," and "Theological Soundings" sections to get a sense for the major themes of these chapters.
3. **Optional:** As you read through the following passages, make note of anything the Lord says to counter the nations' claims that their idols are equal to Him.
4. Read **Isaiah 40:1-11**, and answer the first question on p. 60 ("Through Isaiah, God...").
5. Read **Isaiah 41:8-20**, and answer the middle question on p. 61 ("A central phrase...").
6. Read **Isaiah 42:1-9**, and answer the question at the bottom of p. 61 ("The first of four Servant Songs...").
7. Read **Isaiah 42:18-25** and **43:1-7**, and answer the question at the top of p. 62 ("As the Israelites read..."), focusing on the last part of the question: "Yet how does God view them and what will he do for them (Isa. 43:1-7)?"
8. Read **Isaiah 44:24-28** and **45:1-13**, and answer the question at the bottom of p. 62 ("In Isaiah 44:24-45:8, we hear...").
9. **Optional:** After you've completed items 1-7, if you'd like, you can go back and read the full section of Isaiah (chapters 40-48) and answer the remaining workbook questions.
10. **Optional:** Spend some time praying with these passages from Isaiah 40-48:

- “‘To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?’ says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name.... The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.” (Is. 40:25-26, 28)
 - *Begin in a posture of humility, acknowledging God as the Creator of heaven and earth, the one who put each star in place, and yet also the one who cares for us tenderly, who “gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart” (40:11). Give praise to God for both His might and His lovingkindness.*
- “‘I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will ... make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.’” (Is. 42:6-7)
 - *Ask the Lord to show how He is calling you to walk in righteousness at this moment in your life. Is there someone to whom God is calling you to be bring light, or someone who is in bondage in some way, whom God is asking you to help set free?*
- “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Is. 43:18-19b)
 - *Is there a way in which you are dwelling in the past, clinging to some former thing, when the Lord is doing a new thing in your life? Ask God to help you perceive what He is doing in your life in this season.*
- “I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.... Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.” (Is. 44:22, 45:22)
 - *In a spirit of humble repentance (as we have been praying together as a church), turn to God, acknowledging your sins and receiving His forgiveness.*
- “But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. (Is. 43:1-4)
 - *How do you feel as you read these words? Do you think of yourself as one who was created and formed by God? Who has been redeemed and summoned by God, who belongs to God? Who is precious to God, and honored in His sight, and loved by Him? Speak to God about what He reveals in these verses, and how you understand them applying to you.*