

# Proverbs

**K**ing Solomon uttered some 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32), about 900 of which comprise the famous volume that bears that name. Proverbs is a collection of short, pithy statements of inspired truth and wisdom. Using comparison, contrast, and picturesque language, the author sets forth God's principles for godly living. While it takes only a few seconds to read a proverb, you can easily spend a lifetime working out the implications of that truth in your daily walk with God.

FOCUS	WISDOM DEFINED		WISDOM APPLIED					
DIVISIONS	Call of Wisdom	Companions of Wisdom	Conduct of Wisdom	Contrast of Wisdom and Folly	Choices of Wisdom	Counsel of Wisdom	Collection of Wise Sayings	Counsel Regarding Women
	1 4	5 9	10 13	14 17	18 21	22 24	25 29	30 31
TOPICS	Definition	Explanation			Exhortation			Appendix
	Solomon							Agur and Lemuel
PLACE	Judah							Unknown
TIME	About 950–700 B.C.							

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# Call of Wisdom

*Key Passage: Proverbs 1:1–2:6*

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Beginning of Wisdom	Benefits of Wisdom		Boundaries of Wisdom
	Morally	Materially	
Reverence	Reward		Right Paths

**OVERVIEW** There’s no better person to speak of wisdom from God’s point of view than Solomon: son of David, king of Israel, and wisest man in the Old Testament. From the opening verses, Solomon gives us his purpose and theme in writing: “For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair” (1:2-3). How do you develop that kind of skill in living life to God’s glory? Solomon is quick to answer: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7). By learning to reverence God, you are in line for benefits that only God’s wisdom can bring: moral purity, true prosperity, and guidance in the difficult decisions of everyday life.

*We begin cutting our wisdom teeth the first time we bite off more than we can chew.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** A piano virtuoso, hearing her talents described as “sheer genius,” was quick to respond, “Genius? For 38 years I practiced six hours a day, and now they call me a genius!” Few people play the piano with such style and mastery because few are willing to pay the price. It is not so much a matter of what they are gifted to do as it is what they have given themselves to do with a whole heart.

All too few of God’s children experience the wisdom God has for them in making decisions and in setting priorities because few are growing in their fear of the Lord. As you begin your study of Proverbs, ask this question: “If wisdom from the Lord begins with the fear of the Lord, where do I need to begin today?” Solomon learned the key to wisdom. Have you discovered it yet?

**INSIGHT** *Fostering the Fear of the Lord*

What does it mean to “fear the Lord”? Look up the following verses to see what the Book of Proverbs says about this important response to God’s greatness and grandeur:

- 2:1-5      You will find the fear of the Lord when \_\_\_\_\_.
- 9:10        The fear of the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 14:26-27    The fear of the Lord provides \_\_\_\_\_.
- 23:17-18    You should fear the Lord because \_\_\_\_\_.

# Companions of Wisdom

*Key Passage: Proverbs 6, 9*

CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8	CHAPTER 9
Sexual Sin	Sluggishness	Seduction	Wisdom's Wealth	Wisdom's Welcome
"Be Wary!"			"Be Wise!"	

**OVERVIEW** Throughout the Book of Proverbs, you will find the repeated exhortation to attentiveness. It is not enough merely to give casual attention to the words of wisdom. Hearing without heeding is folly. Nowhere is this more crucial than in the moral choices of life. The wise person avoids the tantalizing invitations of adultery and moral looseness, knowing the terrible price tag for such temporary pleasures. Fidelity, not immorality, is the path of true happiness for the man who will “rejoice in the wife of [his] youth” (5:18).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** If you could take one lesson you learned from your parent or guardian to pass on to your children or grandchildren, what would it be?

Solomon’s childhood must have been a trying time. Think of the trials and tremors that rocked the palace during those turbulent years: Tamar’s defilement by Amnon, David’s abdication, Absalom’s shameful conduct and equally shameful death (2 Samuel 13-18). Do you suppose Solomon was pondering the sins of his parents as he wrote these words of warning to his son about sin’s enticements?

The path that leads to immorality is a slippery one indeed. Flattering lips, deceitful invitations, alluring pleasures—they all lead to one inescapable end: destruction. Solomon’s wise advice to his son is the same advice received from his father, David: To avoid the slippery path, don’t watch your feet; instead, watch your heart (6:20- 23; Psalm 119:9, 11), for that is where sin’s temptations begin.

As you read Solomon’s “Words for a Son to Live By,” use the following outline: Immorality—its pain (6:20-29); its price (6:30-35); and its subtle plan (7:1-27). Then talk with your spouse (or a trusted Christian friend) to discuss how Solomon’s counsel can guide your conduct around members of the opposite sex.

*A life of worldly pleasure is life in appearance only.*

**INSIGHT** *When Is a Wise Man Not a Wise Man?*

A man is no longer wise when he says he is wise enough to stop learning: “Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still” (9:9).

# Conduct of Wisdom

*Key Passage: Proverbs 10*

CHAPTER 10	CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12	CHAPTER 13
Speech	Be Wise, Not Wicked in Your . . . Stewardship	Companionship	Choices
Righteousness vs. Recklessness			

**OVERVIEW** Wisdom can be defined in a single sentence: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (9:10). But for wisdom to be demonstrated fully would take a lifetime. Consider the many facets of daily life that demand wise actions and reactions: speech, stewardship, friendships, business ethics, family relationships. In each case Solomon’s words guide you into God-honoring paths. The first nine chapters of Proverbs ask and answer the question, “Who pleases the Lord?” How would you answer that question?

**YOUR DAILY WALK** The balance of the book (chapters 10–31) asks and answers the question, “How do you please the Lord?” The answer is complex, for the situations of life are complex and varied. But for each decision you are called upon to make, there is a divine principle to guide you. God is concerned about the most minute details of your walk with Him. Nowhere is this more evident than in the dozens of one-verse maxims you will read, ponder, and begin to apply today.

Read the proverbs below. Next to each one, jot down a way you could put the proverb to work in situations in your own life.

*A prudent question is one-half of wisdom.*

“The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight” (11:1). \_\_\_\_\_

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice” (12:15). \_\_\_\_\_

“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him” (13:24). \_\_\_\_\_

**INSIGHT** *A Rod to Lean On and Learn By*

In biblical times a rod was a stick with many uses. Mentioned several times in Proverbs as an instrument of correction (22:15; 23:13; 29:15), it could also be a staff to aid in walking (Genesis 32:10); an instrument of punishment (2 Samuel 7:14); a shepherd’s crook (Ezekiel 20:37); a measuring stick (Ezekiel 40:3; Revelation 11:1); or a scepter of authority (Exodus 4:20).

# Contrast of Wisdom and Folly

## Key Passage: Proverbs 16

CHAPTER 14	CHAPTER 15	CHAPTER 16	CHAPTER 17
Watch Your Step	Watch Your Tongue	Watch Your Trails	Watch Your Thoughts
Wise Ways . . . Wicked Ways			

**OVERVIEW** The first half of today's section (chapters 14-15) consists mostly of anti-thetic proverbs in which the word *but* sets up a contrast between the two parts of each verse. The second half (chapters 16-17) employs many synonymous proverbs in which the linking word is *and*, and repetition and expansion emphasize the point of the proverb. The structure of these proverbs is simple, but the range of topics is immense. Your temper and tongue, paths and pursuits, thoughts and motives should all demonstrate your commitment to make godliness the pattern of your life.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** What do the first seven verses of Proverbs 16 have in common? (You may need to read this section several times until you discover the answer.)

Did you find it? All those verses contain the name *LORD*. In fact, *LORD* occurs more than 25 times in today's section, and more than 80 times in Proverbs. It is a helpful reminder that the Lord is the key to wise and godly living. He is the Maker of Life (14:31); and the Bible is His divinely provided owner's manual to tell you how to live life to the fullest.

When was the last time you thanked God for creating you or acknowledged His daily presence and provision in your life? If it's been too long, then try this helpful exercise. Circle the word *LORD* each time it occurs in today's reading. Then pray those verses that contain God's name back to Him as a testimony of praise: "Lord, thank You that You are my secure fortress" (14:26), "You are a fountain of life (14:27)," etc. You'll find that putting the Lord in the center of your life is precisely where He fits best.

*Bless the  
Lord today;  
He blesses  
you every  
day.*

### INSIGHT Peacemakers and Troublemakers

For an interesting study, divide a sheet of paper in half. Label the left side "How to Be a Peacemaker" and the right "How to Be a Troublemaker." Then read chapter 17 and jot down what you find in the appropriate column. When you've finished, you should have expert insights on both.

## GOD'S RESOURCES FOR YOUR

# Daily Walk

It has been well said, "Life by the yard is hard, but life by the inch is a cinch"—provided you are using the resources God has supplied for your everyday life.

This month you will read four books, three that were primarily written by Solomon and one written by Isaiah. Each gives divinely-inspired counsel to help you live your life to God's glory: in the decisions you make, the paths you follow, the family life you lead, and the steps of obedience you take.

Though penned thousands of years ago, the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Isaiah remain part of God's blueprint for victorious Christian living every inch of the way.

PROVERBS	ECCLESIASTES	SONG OF SONGS	ISAIAH
Godly Wisdom	Godly Ways	Godly Wedding	Godly Warning
In the Days of Solomon			In the Days of Isaiah
Helping You to Live Your Life . . .			
Skillfully	Purposefully	Lovingly	Obediently

# Choices of Wisdom

*Key Passage: Proverbs 21*

CHAPTER 18	CHAPTER 19	CHAPTER 20	CHAPTER 21
A Proper Response to . . .			
Loose Lips	Senseless Sons	Wicked Weights	Wicked Wealth
"The righteous man leads a blameless life" (20:7).			

**OVERVIEW** Though the proverbs in today’s section are varied in their subject matter (and no clear grouping of proverbs can be readily found), they deal repeatedly with the same important topics: how to speak, how to act, how to avoid evil, how to use money, how to please the Lord, how to avoid judgment, how to guard your heart, and how to be truly wise.

TOPIC	CHAPTER 18	CHAPTER 19	CHAPTER 20	CHAPTER 21
Speech				
Conduct				
Evil				
Money				
Lord				
Judgment				
Heart				
Wisdom				

As you read each chapter (or the Key Passage), jot down the references in the appropriate column above for future study.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Eight Timely Topics in Proverbs

Now pick one verse that speaks to an area of your life that needs renovation (such as the use of your tongue), and write it on an index card. On the back, answer these questions: What will I begin to do? How will I begin? When will I begin?

**INSIGHT** A Thousand Years Older, and No Wiser

Although more than a thousand years separate the writing of Proverbs 21:23 and James 3:6-8, both of these passages testify to humanity’s continuing inability to tame the tongue.

*Obedience  
is to be our  
grateful  
response  
to our  
salvation.*

# Counsel of Wisdom

*Key Passage: Proverbs 23*

CHAPTER 22	CHAPTER 23	CHAPTER 24
	The Folly of . . .	
Injustice	Indulgence	Indifference
"Do not let your heart envy sinners" (23:17).		

**OVERVIEW** Chapters 10-21 define godly and ungodly living as seen in actions, reactions, priorities, and relationships. Now beginning with chapter 22, Solomon shifts the emphasis from knowing the truth to living the truth. The issue is not how many proverbs you know in your head, but how many proverbs you apply in your heart. "Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach" (22:17)—wise words in any generation.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Here is a scene that has probably been repeated many times in the average Christian home. Names have been changed to protect the guilty.

Father: "Son, please do what I told you."

Son: "Why, Dad?"

Father: "Because I told you to, that's why!"

This drama can unfold with almost limitless variations. Sometimes it's mother and daughter, or mother and son, or father and daughter. On occasion, the "do what I told you" is as crucial as life and death or as trivial as picking up a pair of shoes or pajamas.

While there is good reason for children to learn instant obedience, it is equally important for parents to be able to explain the convictions behind their commands. At least nine times in chapter 23 the command to do something is followed by the reason why the command is given. (Watch for the telltale word *for*.)

Parents, have you ever fallen back on the words "because I told you to" rather than take the time to explain your convictions to your children? Carve out some time to do that today. Your children will respect you all the more for it.

**INSIGHT** *Striking a Balance in Your Child's Discipline*

While corporal punishment is biblical (23:13-14), there is also a balance to be maintained. Proverbs 19:18 says, "Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." Firm but gracious discipline should characterize the home.

*Let's not  
only read  
and hear,  
but also  
believe  
and do.*



# Collection of Wise Sayings

*Key Passage: Proverbs 25–26*

CHAPTER 25	CHAPTERS 26-27	CHAPTER 28	CHAPTER 29
A King's Heart	A Fool's Folly	A Son's Discernment	A Father's Discipline
"A man of lowly spirit gains honor" (29:23).			

**OVERVIEW** Nearly three centuries after the death of Solomon, King Hezekiah of Judah commissioned scribes to compile the five chapters of proverbs you will read today (25:1). Think of them as a four-volume dissertation on wise leadership. Volume 1: How to Be a Wise King (chapter 25); Volume 2: How to Avoid Being a Lazy Fool (chapters 26-27); Volume 3: How to Be a Discerning Son (chapter 28); Volume 4: How to Be a Disciplining Father (chapter 29).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** After reading chapters 25-29, close your Bible and complete each of the following proverbs. As you do, notice the picturesque imagery that Solomon uses:

Now pick one of the proverbs you have just completed and put it to work in your everyday life. Is there an overdue email of "good news from a distant land" that you need to send? A "word aptly spoken" that you need to give? A matter of "false testimony" that you need to correct? Do it today.

## **INSIGHT** Making Sense Out of Proverbial Hash

The apparently random proverbs in these five chapters are, in fact, carefully arranged groups of proverbs all dealing with the same general topic. (For example, the tongue in 25:11-15 and laziness in 26:13-16.) How many groups can you find?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ___ 1. "A word aptly spoken ..."                   | a. "... is the man who gives false testimony" (25:18).               |
| ___ 2. "Like a club ... or a sharp arrow ..."      | b. "... is a passerby who meddles in a quarrel not his own" (26:17). |
| ___ 3. "Like cold water to a weary soul ..."       | c. "... is good news from a distant land" (25:25).                   |
| ___ 4. "Wounds from a friend ..."                  | d. "... apples of gold in settings of silver" (25:11).               |
| ___ 5. "Like one who seizes a dog by the ears ..." | e. "... can be trusted" (27:6).                                      |

*He who finds  
no fault  
in himself  
needs a  
second  
opinion.*

# Counsel Regarding Women

*Key Passage: Proverbs 31*

CHAPTER 30		CHAPTER 31	
God's Flawless Word	God's Fourfold Wisdom	A Wise Mother	A Virtuous Wife
Sayings of Agur		Sayings of Lemuel	

**OVERVIEW** It may surprise you to learn that not all of Proverbs was written by King Solomon. In fact, chapter 30 begins, “The sayings of Agur . . . to Ithiel and Ucal.” None of these people are found anywhere else in the Bible, but the words of Agur live on in the timeless truths he shares. You might think of it as “Wisdom in Twos, Threes, and Fours.” Agur describes four things that are never satisfied (vv. 15-16); four that are amazing (vv. 18-19); four that are insufferable (two from each sex! vv. 21-23); four that are small and yet extremely wise (vv. 24-28); and four that are stately (vv. 29-31). The concluding chapter of Proverbs was penned not by King Solomon, but by King Lemuel. In it you will read godly advice handed down from his mother, and you will find a description of a virtuous woman who honors the dignity of womanhood. A godly wife is a rare treasure indeed.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Can you think of 22 good reasons to applaud your wife or mother? The Book of Proverbs closes with the exhortation: “A woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (31:30).

Then, just to show it can be done, Lemuel writes 22 verses (vv. 10-31, one verse for each of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet) extolling the virtuous women in his life. Think of it as going from A to Z in his praise of the godly women who have impacted his life for God.

Take a sheet of paper and try it yourself. Across the top write the name of your wife, mother, or another virtuous woman in your life. Down the left side of the paper, write the 26 letters of the English alphabet. Then begin combing 31:10-31 for praiseworthy characteristics of your “Mrs. Far Above Rubies.” For example: T=Trustworthy (v. 11), Z=Zealous about her housework (v. 27). When you’ve finished, invite the woman in your life out for a special dinner and present her with your “Scroll of Praise.”

**INSIGHT** *Women to Be Avoided, Women to Be Applauded* Contrast the immoral woman of Proverbs 7 with the impeccable woman of Proverbs 31 in dress, speech, and conduct.

*When a woman is speaking to you, listen to what she says with her eyes.*

# Ecclesiastes

The author of Ecclesiastes (traditionally thought to be Solomon) enjoyed power, wealth, and access to all of life's pursuits and pleasures. After experiencing a full measure of life "under the sun," he declares it all to be futile and unsatisfying. Only as he lives "above the sun"—with an eye toward God—does life become meaningful and fulfilling. Ultimate satisfaction comes not from the good things of life, but from the Giver of life—the One we are to fear, honor, and obey.

FOCUS	SUBJECT	SERMONS					SUMMARY		
DIVISIONS	Search for Meaning in Life	Futility in Every Area of Life: Time (Ch. 3) Work (Ch. 4) Money (Ch. 5) Prosperity (Ch. 6)		Lessons on Practical Wisdom	Observations on Wisdom and Folly	The Source of Real Meaning in Life			
	1	2	3	6	7	9	10	11	12
TOPICS	Meaning Explored				Meaning Explained				
	"Everything is Futility Under the Sun" vs. "Fear of the Lord"								
PLACE	Anywhere . . . Everywhere								
TIME	Days of King Solomon (10th Century B.C.)								

# The Meaning of Life Explored

*Key Passage: Ecclesiastes 1–2*

CHAPTERS 1-2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTERS 4-6
Meaningless Endeavors	Meaningful Times	Meaningless Conditions
The Exploration of Life's Meaning		

**OVERVIEW** Making sense out of life is not always easy. This is the problem facing the Teacher of the Book of Ecclesiastes as he thinks his way through what he has seen and experienced in life. Every enterprise he has undertaken—from acquiring wisdom to amassing wealth—has ended in emptiness. In a sudden burst of emotion, the Teacher realizes that God does indeed appoint the times and purposes of life. But his insight fades as he focuses on the futility of life under the sun, and he overlooks the One who alone can put life together into a meaningful whole.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Think about the people in your school, office, or neighborhood, and select the three you would consider “Most Likely to Succeed.” Now analyze what caused you to select them: their money, intelligence, position, or possessions.

If any Old Testament character was ever a candidate for success, Solomon was the one. Blessed with wisdom, wealth, power, and prestige, he had everything a man could want. Or did he? Look at his evaluation of it all: “Pleasure . . . [is] meaningless. . . . Laughter . . . is foolish. . . . Silver and gold . . . wisdom . . . this was the reward for all my labor . . . everything was meaningless . . . nothing was gained under the sun” (2:1-11).

A depressing picture? Perhaps. But don’t miss verse 24. As Solomon sees the events and endeavors of life from God’s perspective and the good things of life as gifts “from the hand of God,” his life takes on meaning and purpose. Make a list of the good things you are enjoying today that come from the hand of God: health, employment, family, education, etc.

**INSIGHT** *Silver Threads Among the Gold*

One of the most moving passages in Ecclesiastes is the figurative description of the aging process (12:1-7). Realizing that the afflictions of age will catch up with everyone, the writer of Ecclesiastes counsels his audience: “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come” (12:1).

*The answer to the question, “What is the purpose of life?” is not a what but a Who.*

# The Meaning of Life Explained

*Key Passage: Ecclesiastes 7, 9, 12*

CHAPTER 7	CHAPTERS 8-10	CHAPTERS 11-12
Wisdom Against Wickedness	Purpose Amid Perplexity	Worship from the Womb to the Tomb
The Explanation of Life's Meaning		

**OVERVIEW** Up to this point the Teacher has concentrated mainly on the problems of life without seeking an explanation. But the deeper he probes life's patterns and perplexities, the more conclusive becomes the evidence that points him to the solution: Fear God. When wisdom becomes meaningless, fear God (7:18). When God's ways seem unsearchable or uncertain, fear Him (8:12-13). When all is said and done, fear God (12:13), "for this is the whole duty of man."

**YOUR DAILY WALK** If life to you seems meaningless, then you could be on the verge of the greatest discovery of your life. God has many unusual ways of drawing individuals to Himself and of demonstrating His love and care. With Job, He used tragedy; with the psalmist David, He used the life of a fugitive; with the Teacher of Ecclesiastes, He used the emptiness of existence on earth. What is He using in your life today to teach you the same important lessons?

It is interesting to note that every time the word *God* appears in the Book of Ecclesiastes, it is the Hebrew word meaning Creator. The personal name *Lord* never appears. The Teacher is speaking not of a God he knows personally, but of a God who is far above—like many speak of God today. And this is why the discovery of life's meaninglessness apart from God can be so important. If an empty, unsatisfying life causes you to search for the personal God of the universe, then you are about to meet the most important Person in life!

The Bible says that meaningful life, eternal life, abundant life, only comes through knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ (John 10:10; 17:3). Read those two verses several times. Then tell God the desire of your heart. He is waiting to meet you—right now.

## **INSIGHT** An Atheist's Testimony Concerning Ecclesiastes

An atheistic professor, after reading Ecclesiastes, commented that it was the only book in the Bible that made sense to him. Too bad he overlooked the last two verses of the book.

*Make sure  
the thing  
you are  
living for  
is worth  
dying for.*

# Extolling Marital Love

*Key Passage: Song of Songs 1, 3, 6*

CHAPTERS 1-3	CHAPTER 4	CHAPTERS 5-6	CHAPTERS 7-8
Falling in Love	United in Love	Divided in Love	Devoted in Love
Fostering of Love		Faithfulness of Love	

**OVERVIEW** Song of Songs is a love song written by Solomon that abounds in metaphors and oriental imagery. Historically, it depicts the wooing and wedding of a shepherdess by King Solomon and the joys and heartaches of their love for each other. Many have seen in the book a majestic picture of God’s love for His people Israel, and of Christ’s love for His bride, the church. As human love finds its highest fulfillment in the love of husband and wife, so spiritual life finds its highest fulfillment in the love of the Creator for His creation.

*Nothing in this lost world bears the imprint of the Son of God so surely as forgiveness.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** True or False: “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.” The writer of the old song with this line seems to imply that apologizing is out of vogue when true love exists. (If the Shulammitte had followed that ill-guided advice instead of seeking her lover’s forgiveness, she might still be in the locked bedroom!)

Nothing could be further from the truth. But on the other side of the coin, Solomon’s response to his lover’s request for forgiveness is equally noteworthy. It would have been easy to take advantage of the apologizing partner and make her suffer through a series of “I told you so’s.” But look at Solomon’s response in 6:4–10. He compliments her beauty and dignity, praises her hair and bright smile, and sets her apart as the one and only woman for him. In short, he reassures her of his forgiveness and continuing love.

What a pattern for forgiving and being forgiven in family disputes! Have you wronged your mate (or parent or child) through something you have said or done? Then take the initiative in asking for forgiveness. Remember, “Love means wanting to say you’re sorry, and in God’s strength, doing it.”

**INSIGHT** Potent Lessons from a Moving Love Story

Apart from its historical significance, the Song of Songs pictures for the reader the strength of Christ’s love (8:6-7); His delight in hearing and answering prayer (8:13); and the danger of failing to respond immediately to His knocking (5:2-6).

# Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah, the “mother lode of Hebrew prophecy,” sets forth a lifetime of preaching by the statesman and prophet for whom it is named. In the first 39 chapters, the prophet stresses righteousness, holiness, and the justice of God, announcing His terrible judgment upon a world stained scarlet with sin (1:18). But the last 27 chapters portray God’s glory, compassion, and undeserved favor. Messiah will come as a Savior to bear a cross, as a Sovereign to wear a crown.

FOCUS	JUDGMENT IS COMING				GLORY WILL FOLLOW									
DIVISIONS	Judgment on Judah		Judgment on Judah’s Neighbors		Judgment on All the Earth		Historical Interlude		Deliverance of God’s People		Deliverer for God’s People		Future of God’s Delivered People	
	1	12	13	27	28	35	36	39	40	48	49	57	58	66
TOPICS	Visions		Burdens		Woes		Wars		Worship					
	Sermons of Condemnation				Parenthesis		Sermons of Comfort							
PLACE	Judah and Her Neighbors							Israel and the World						
TIME	About 60 Years (740–680 B.C.)							Thousands of Years						

# Judah's Indictment

*Key Passage: Isaiah 1*

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Judah's Indictment	Jehovah's Mountain	Judah's Judgment	Jehovah's Branch
"Hear!"	House	Holocaust	Holiness

**OVERVIEW** A crisis exists in the nation of Judah. Wickedness has permeated deep into every fiber of the social, political, and spiritual life of the country—a condition that God finds intolerable. Divine indictment falls from the lips of His prophet Isaiah. Unless repentance sweeps the nation, God will reduce His people to ruin. Famine and pestilence will replace feasting and pleasure to show that the Holy One of Israel still rules in Zion. King and commoner, priest and prophet—no one will be safe when the terrifying day of God's wrath descends upon His people.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** What do these three cities all have in common: Pompeii, Hiroshima, and Sodom? They are all sites of historic disasters. Pompeii was destroyed in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius; Hiroshima was destroyed by an atom bomb in World War II; and Sodom was destroyed by heavenly fire and brimstone in the days of Abraham.

*Just because  
you are  
“without  
honor in your  
own country”  
doesn't  
necessarily  
mean you are  
a prophet.*

Now add to that list the name of Judah. Until the days of the prophet Isaiah, Sodom stood alone as the universal symbol of depravity and shameful disgrace. If your nation was compared to Sodom, you had sunk as low as you could possibly go morally, spiritually, and socially (1:9). But now in God's eyes, Judah had replaced Sodom as the object of scorn and ridicule (1:10). And Judah's judgment would be even more severe because Judah's privilege had been even more significant.

Opportunity brings responsibility—in Judah's day and in yours. Make a list of the religious freedoms you enjoy today: freedom to pray, to memorize Scripture, to share your faith without fear of physical harm. If judgment fell today in proportion to your use (or abuse) of those privileges, what might happen? And what can you do today to see that it doesn't?

**INSIGHT** *From the Tragic to the Trivial (1:21-23)*

In Isaiah's funeral dirge over Jerusalem, the prophet shows that every aspect of city life has been affected by the nation's spiritual revolt: justice, morals, money, and even the quality of the beer.



# Judah's Immanuel

*Key Passage: Isaiah 6–7*

CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6	CHAPTER 7
Song of the Vineyard	Sending of Isaiah	Sign of Immanuel
Condemnation	Commission	Coming

**OVERVIEW** Isaiah's national call for repentance is so urgent that even his personal call and commission to the prophetic office must wait until chapter 6. Isaiah's "Woe" (I am sinful, v. 5) is met by God's holiness (I am holy, v. 7), resulting in Isaiah's "Here am I. Send me" (I am available, v. 8) and God's "Go" (I want to use you, v. 9). The task set before Isaiah is an unenviable one, for God promises from the start that the people will be spiritually deaf and nearsighted. But armed with confidence in his Immanuel, Isaiah begins to declare harsh words from on high in the courts and palaces of Judah.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** It is not so much what God can do through you as it is what you will allow God to do to you that determines the measure of your effectiveness for Him.

God had a message for Isaiah to deliver—a message of holiness and judgment, a message of hope in the midst of heartache. But before His prophet could carry the message, Isaiah first had to carry the burden. He had to come to grips with his own sinful condition—his own waywardness and spiritual lukewarmness—before he could confront an entire nation suffering from the same tragic conditions. Before Isaiah could stand toe-to-toe with the king of Judah, he first had to kneel before the King of the universe. With a rekindled sense of God's awesome holiness and grandeur, Isaiah had no trouble volunteering for the Lord's service.

Are you trying to serve God before you have seen Him? Take a tip from Isaiah: Make no appeal till first you kneel, for that's the way to serve with zeal. After you have walked with God today, share with at least one other person how he or she can walk with Him too.

**INSIGHT** *An Object Lesson in the Palace (6:1)*

Isaiah received his call "in the year that King Uzziah died." Thus, his call is linked with the king's death, a premature death from leprosy for flouting God's holiness—the very condition that would bring about the death of the nation as well.

*God is not seeking those with the ability to do everything; He is seeking those with the willingness to do anything.*

# Judah's Prince of Peace

*Key Passage: Isaiah 8–9*

CHAPTERS 8-9	CHAPTER 10	CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12
A Coming Child	A Coming Calamity	A Coming Branch	A Cause for Praise
Prince of Peace	Army of Assyria	Righteous Rod	Holy One

**OVERVIEW** Isaiah's family life becomes an eloquent testimony to the trustworthiness of his prophecies (8:18). His firstborn son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, acts as a constant reminder of the Assyrian threat upon Jerusalem (8:1-4). But in the face of "distress and darkness and fearful gloom" (8:22), Isaiah proclaims a note of hope: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light" (9:2). There is coming a Child whose names instill hope and confidence: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Though shadows of judgment darken the horizon, the redeemed ones can sing His praises for the ultimate victory is sure.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** No more tragic summary of a general's life could ever be penned than this: "He won the battle but lost the war." In war, as in the Christian life, the ultimate outcome depends not on who wins every battle but rather on who wins the final battle. One setback does not mean the war has been lost.

As Isaiah looked at the prophetic horizon, he saw defeat and destruction for his nation. The battle would be lost. Judah would fall because of her pride and wickedness. But the war would not be lost. Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the Righteous Branch of Jesse, would come to turn seeming defeat into victory.

Think about the prophetic future of your nation and then list the trends you observe spiritually, morally, and politically. Looks pretty bleak, doesn't it? Now across your list write the last half of 12:6: "great is the Holy One of Israel among you." As in Isaiah's day, the future is as bright as the promises of God.

**INSIGHT** *The Open Road*  
Mentioned in Isaiah 9:1, the Via Maris ("the Way of the Sea") originated in Egypt and followed the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea north. It turned inland across the Carmel Ridge at Megiddo, passed through the Valley of Jezreel, and continued to Damascus, giving both armies and caravans access to the great empires of the ancient world.

*Security is not the absence of danger but the presence of God no matter what the danger.*

# Judgment on Babylon and Moab

*Key Passage: Isaiah 13*

CHAPTER 13	CHAPTER 14	CHAPTER 15	CHAPTER 16
The Fall of Babylon		The Fall of Moab	
Predicted	Celebrated	Predicted	Celebrated
Babylon's Gloom		Moab's	

**OVERVIEW** God's kingdom is worldwide, and so is His judgment. Moving out from the borders of his nation, Isaiah aims his verbal missiles at Judah's pagan neighbors for their interference in God's program of righteousness. A hundred years before Babylon's rise to prominence, Isaiah predicts that empire's role first as oppressor, then as oppressed. The same judgment awaits Assyria, Philistia, and Moab—enemies that would be broken in their apparent moments of victory.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** In baseball, if a batter connects for a hit only three times in ten, he is called a good hitter. How often did an Old Testament prophet have to "connect" with his prophecies in order to be called a good prophet (see Deuteronomy 18:20-22)?

Isaiah devoted all of chapter 13 to the "Rise and Fall of the Babylonian Empire." How was his prophetic batting average?

Isaiah predicted that Babylon's destruction would come from a far country, not a neighboring power (v. 5). Babylon fell in 539 B.C. to a warring people living 350 miles east of Babylon.

Isaiah predicted the name of that conquering nation: Media (v. 17), a fact that history confirms.

Isaiah predicted permanent extinction for Babylon (vv. 19-22). The site has been deserted since the 4th century B.C.

Isaiah predicted even the nomadic Arabians would avoid once-mighty Babylon (v. 20). The desolate site has been regarded with superstitious dread by Arabian bedouins ever since.

If Isaiah's God-given prophecies are that trustworthy, what does that tell you about Isaiah's God? Take one of your burdens to the Lord right now and leave it there. You'll be glad you did.

*Truth is  
never cheap,  
but the  
righteous  
can always  
afford it.*

## **INSIGHT** Burdens, Burdens Everywhere

Chapters 13-23 contain a long list of burdens—oracles of divine judgment upon offending nations. As such they form a fitting interlude between Isaiah's predictions of Assyrian invasion (chapters 1-12) and the onset of that invasion (chapters 28-39).

# Judgment on Ethiopia and Egypt

*Key Passage: Isaiah 17, 19*

CHAPTER 17	CHAPTER 18	CHAPTERS 19-20
Doom for Damascus	Threshing for Ethiopia	Infamy of Egypt
Judgment on Judah's Neighbors		

**OVERVIEW** Damascus, Ethiopia, and Egypt next feel the chastening strokes from Isaiah’s prophetic pen. The glory of Damascus would be removed, leaving behind leanness of body and soul. But a handful would repent and, like the last gleanings from an olive tree, provide hope for a future harvest. Ethiopia’s people would be pruned away like branches and would fall in battle. But one day they would come to Zion and pay homage to God, acknowledging Him as their Sovereign. Egypt would experience civil war, economic ruin, and spiritual poverty, showing the bankruptcy of Egypt’s false gods.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** With the help of an atlas or map of the world, answer the following questions:

1. Can you locate Babylon? Why not? (13:19-20)
2. Can you locate Moab? Why not? (15:1)
3. Can you locate Ethiopia? Why? (18:1, 5, 7)
4. Can you locate Egypt? Why? (19:1, 4, 16, 24)

God is not merely in the business of casting down nations; He also sustains them, chastens them, purifies them, and prepares them for the worldwide role He has for them to play.

To say that God chastens and purifies Ethiopia or Egypt or Australia or America is to say that God chastens and purifies Ethiopians, Egyptians, Australians, and Americans. The process is seldom pleasant, but it is always beneficial.

Think of your life as if it were a tree. Have you been drawing deeply from the nutrients of God’s Word? Are there “branches” of your life that need pruning? If Isaiah began a chapter, “An oracle concerning you,” how would it read? Take the words of 17:7 and let them guide you to the response God desires from you right now.

**INSIGHT** A Noisy Shadow (18:1)

Ethiopia is literally a land “of whirring wings.” The Hebrew term is similar to the word *tsetse*, imitating the sound of buzzing insects.

*Every wrathful judgment of God in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation.*

# Judgment on Jerusalem and Tyre

*Key Passage: Isaiah 21*

CHAPTER 21	CHAPTER 22	CHAPTER 23
	Judgment Promised for the	
Desert by the Sea	Valley of Vision	Inhabitants of the Isle
Babylon	Jerusalem	Tyre

**OVERVIEW** Even in the midst of declaring prophecies of doom and destruction, Isaiah's heart breaks for the guilty nations involved. Babylon, "the Desert by the Sea," will be crushed by Media, causing Isaiah heartache and dismay. Doomed men are never a pretty picture and, for Isaiah, Babylon has become more than simply a vision of death row. The same holds true for Jerusalem. Though her coming judgment is richly deserved, Isaiah finds it difficult to divorce himself from the grim fate of his countrymen. The prophet can draw meager comfort from God's promise that the coming judgment will not happen during Isaiah's lifetime (22:14).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** For the next 60 seconds, go to the nearest window and count the number of people you see from your vantage point. Now ask yourself this question: "How many of those people do I really care about?"

The faceless crowd has become a common and accepted part of life on this planet. It is often so easy to become calloused, indifferent, and unmoved by the lost condition of those around you. Isaiah knew that one of the best ways to develop a passion for souls is to ponder the destiny of lost men and women. Where are they going? And what awaits them there if no one cares enough to confront them with God's love and their own lostness?

The thought of judgment coming upon his countrymen caused Isaiah to bow in prayer and then to move into action. What about you? Go back to the window for another minute, this time to pray for those you count. You cannot reach them all, but can you reach one today? Ask God to give you boldness and a door of opportunity to do precisely that.

## **INSIGHT** God's Plan and Purpose

At least four purposes were served by prophets such as Isaiah: They pointed out the people's immoral condition; they called the nation back to the law of Moses; they warned of coming judgment; and they predicted the coming of the Messiah.

*More  
spiritual  
failure is due  
to laziness  
than to  
unbelief.*

# Judgment Turned to Jubilation

*Key Passage: Isaiah 26–27*

CHAPTER 24	CHAPTERS 25-26	CHAPTER 27
Punishment for the People	Praise for the Lord	Preservation for God's People
Day of the Lord	Devotion	Deliverance

**OVERVIEW** For the last 11 chapters, Isaiah has been looking at his world through a magnifying glass, targeting devastating judgments for specific nations. But in today's section, he steps back to survey the prophetic landscape with a telescope, and what he sees causes him to respond in jubilation. Earth and heaven alike experience God's sifting judgment. The redeemed ones, vindicated at last, break forth in spontaneous song, exalting the Lord of the universe. Though often downcast and downtrodden, the people of God now truly have something worth singing about: refuge, deliverance, and ultimate triumph in the Holy One of Israel. Is that the song on your lips today?

**YOUR DAILY WALK** The dictionary defines *crisis* as “the turning point for better or worse in an acute disease or time of distress.” Using this definition, find a news magazine and circle the headlines of at least 10 crises in the world today.

Isaiah 24-27 has been called “Isaiah’s Apocalypse,” for in it you will read of the ultimate downfall of earthly enemies, angelic hosts (24:21), and even death itself (25:8). The theme of the section is judgment, but permeating nearly every paragraph is a note of joy: singing by the remnant of God’s people (24:14-16); gladness for God’s greatness (chapter 25); and praise for the praiseworthy God of Zion (chapter 26). Truly God’s people are blessed, even in times of crisis.

What is your attitude as you face the crises of today? Is your countenance as glum as the news? Or can you smile and sing in the midst of the storm, knowing Who allows the winds to blow? Place the words “Smile—You have something to smile about!” in a prominent place. Let them remind you as you face each new challenge today that the victory is already assured.

**INSIGHT** *What Do You Get at a Feast of Rich Food?*

The “rich food” Isaiah refers to in 25:6 are choice dishes prepared with olive oil and bone marrow—the most desirable items of food to the ancient Near Eastern palate.

*Think of a crisis as the time when you discover all that C(h)ris(t) is.*

# Woe on Israel and Judah

## Key Passage: Isaiah 28

CHAPTER 28	CHAPTER 29	CHAPTER 30
Condemnation on Israel	Condemnation on Judah	Cause for Condemnation
"Woe to Ephraim!"	"Woe to Ariel!"	Woeful Rebellion

**OVERVIEW** Like lightning crackling in the distance, Isaiah's prophecies begin to focus on the ominous approach of the Assyrian armies. Ephraim (the northern kingdom) reels like a drunkard, oblivious to the danger and falsely confident in the armies of Egypt to deliver her in time of trouble. But there will be no such deliverance. Ariel (Jerusalem, symbol of the southern kingdom) stands next in line for judgment if her citizens follow Ephraim's sorry example by relying upon Egypt for protection.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Place a check (✓) next to each of the following calamities you have experienced in your lifetime:

- \_\_\_ Sat in a chair that collapsed under your weight.
- \_\_\_ Had a flat tire on a busy street.
- \_\_\_ Loaned something of value and had it lost or damaged.
- \_\_\_ Set the alarm clock for 6 a.m., and it rang at 8 a.m.

What do these traumas in everyday life have in common? They are all examples of misplaced confidence. You put your trust in an object (such as a chair or a tire or an alarm clock) and it let you down. Or you relied on another person who failed you.

Isaiah warned both Ephraim and Ariel not to trust in the armies of Egypt, for they will fail. He told them to trust in the Lord for He will never fail. Heedless of the prophet's warnings, the nations misplaced their trust—and felt the sting of God's discipline.

Are you in danger of doing the same? See if you can complete this sentence in 10 different ways: "Today, I am trusting God for . . ." If you have difficulty coming up with 10, perhaps a good deal of your trust is in objects and people. What needs to change in order to make God the One you lean upon?

*The person caught up with this world is not ready for the next one.*

### INSIGHT Feeling the Full Force of Judgment (28:19-20)

The coming judgment upon Jerusalem would be so severe that beds and blankets would run out, and even the news of what God was doing would bring sheer terror to the listeners' ears.

# Wait for the Coming King

*Key Passage: Isaiah 33*

CHAPTER 31	CHAPTERS 32-33	CHAPTER 34	CHAPTER 35
Watch Out for Egypt	Watch for the King	Wait for the Coming Judgment . . . Expectantly	Joyfully
Look Out!	Look Up!	Shape Up!	Sing Out!

**OVERVIEW** As Isaiah continues to study the prophetic horizon, he sees more than coming calamity. True, the prospects are not pleasant for the rebellious people of God. But there is also a coming King who will bring peace like a river, freedom for the captives, justice for those suffering oppression, and judgment upon heaven and earth. In the light of His sure coming, the people of God are urged to watch and wait patiently, expectantly, and purposefully. Their redemption is nigh!

*Praise is not giving God vain compliments; it is a child's uninhibited hug for his Father.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Picture this scene: You quietly enter your church and wait for the prelude to the worship service to begin. But to your surprise, a brass band bursts through the doors playing a rousing march.

The prelude sets the mood for what is to follow. A good prelude does not draw attention to itself, but rather prepares the listener for what is to come. In the same way, Isaiah's prelude of pain (chapters 31-35) prepares the people of God for the consolation that follows (chapters 40-66). The Lord is both Sovereign and Savior. Those who deny His strength will have difficulty accepting His salvation.

Can you think of a way that each of the following attributes of God acts as a prelude to what He wants to do in your life?

God's creative power (Psalm 19:1-3) prepares me to learn that \_\_\_\_\_.

God's infinite knowledge (Psalm 139:1-6) gives me the confidence that \_\_\_\_\_.

God's perfect holiness (Isaiah 1:18) warns me of the importance of \_\_\_\_\_.

**INSIGHT** *Don't Bet on the Horses*

In biblical times horses were owned only by the rich. The average Hebrew used the more sturdy donkey or ox for travel and plowing. In general, the horse was a "weapon" of war and represented military power. For this reason God repeatedly warned the Israelites not to place their confidence in nations with horses and chariots (Isaiah 31:1), but rather in Him alone.



## Historical Interlude—Hezekiah

*Key Passage: Isaiah 36–37*

CHAPTER 36	CHAPTER 37	CHAPTER 38	CHAPTER 39
Assyria's Invasion	Isaiah's Instruction	Hezekiah's Illness	Babylon's Introduction
Assyria's Influence Wanes		Babylon's Influence Begins	

**OVERVIEW** Isaiah the prophet becomes Isaiah the historian during chapters 36–39. Two major historical events dominate the narrative: the attempted invasion of Judah by the Assyrian army in 701 B.C., and the critical illness that threatened King Hezekiah's life. The taunts of the Assyrian invaders are turned into cries of anguish and retreat as 185,000 die at the hand of the angel of the Lord—a direct answer to Hezekiah's specific prayer. God answers another of Hezekiah's prayers by extending his life 15 years. But by using those extra years for selfish pursuits rather than for God's purposes, Hezekiah seals the fate of his nation. The stage is set for Babylon to conquer and carry off the people of Judah, bringing down the curtain on God's judgment.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** No one likes to be ridiculed for taking a stand. But as the apostle Paul warned young Timothy, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). As a Christian called upon to stand for God in a godless world, you may find yourself asked to swallow the bitter pill of ridicule—and to swallow it regularly.

It happened to Hezekiah and his countrymen. Jeered by the Assyrian hordes and belittled for their faith in God, the people of Judah had the last laugh. Through it all they learned that ridicule means little when you know the great God of heaven.

Has the thought of ridicule or verbal abuse stopped you from taking a stand for God? Have you avoided suggesting an office Bible study or evangelistic house party in your neighborhood because of the fear of what others might say? Take a tip from Hezekiah: You're on the winning team!

### **INSIGHT** Rats, Foiled Again!

Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian, cites instances of mice infestations in Assyria. Perhaps the deadly overnight destruction brought by the angel of the Lord was bubonic, and thus ironic.

*Suffering  
for Christ's  
sake is to be  
viewed as a  
privilege.*

# Comfort for God's People

*Key Passage: Isaiah 40, 42*

CHAPTER 40	CHAPTER 41	CHAPTER 42	CHAPTER 43
Comfort for God's People	Case Against God's Rival	Servant of God's People	Savior of God's People
Israel	Idols	Israel's Holy One	

**OVERVIEW** The Book of Isaiah has been likened to a miniature Bible, its 66 chapters paralleling the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah, like the 39 books of the Old Testament, proclaim judgment upon sinful humanity. God's patience is great, but He will not allow persistent sin to go unpunished. Beginning with today's section, the final 27 chapters of Isaiah, like the 27 books of the New Testament, proclaim a message of comfort and hope. The Messiah is coming to be the Savior of sinful people. Therefore, "'Comfort, comfort my people,' says your God" (40:1).

*God loves His people when He disciplines them as well as when He hugs them.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** What would need to happen for you to feel totally comfortable? What would need to change about your finances, your job security, your relationships with other people, your health, your appearance, or your academic performance before you would be able to relax and feel totally at ease without a worry in the world?

"I'd have to have all my bills paid." But what about the new ones that will certainly arrive tomorrow? "I'd have to have a fortune in the bank." But what if the bank went bankrupt and you lost it all? "I'd have to enjoy perfect health." But what if you were in an accident and lost your ability to work?

The measure of your comfort will always be the measure of your confidence in God. For Isaiah to declare "Comfort" after 39 chapters of judgment would seem ludicrous—unless you recall Who is providing the comfort. Write the first five verses of chapter 40 on a notecard, and put it under your pillow tonight. When you wake up tomorrow, let it be the first comforting thought of your day. God will go before you all day—so relax and enjoy His presence.

**INSIGHT** *The Thoroughly Comfortable Chapters (40-66)* Though the idea of comfort is found only twice in the first 39 chapters (12:1; 22:4), you will find it numerous times in the rest of the book (40:1-2; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 57:18; 61:2; 66:13).

# Impotent Idols and Omnipotent God

*Key Passage: Isaiah 44–45*

CHAPTER 44	CHAPTER 45	CHAPTER 46	CHAPTER 47	CHAPTER 48
Folly of Idols	Greatness of God	Frailty of Idols	Babylon's Demise	Israel's Deliverance
Impotent Idols			Omnipotent God	

**OVERVIEW** In an amazing collection of specific prophecies, Isaiah foretells which agent of comfort God will use in delivering His people (Cyrus, king of Persia), and the means of comfort God will employ (destruction of idolatrous Babylon). Isaiah taunts those who would put their trust in mere images of stone or wood. From the same piece of wood, a workman fashions gods to be worshiped and logs to be burned (chapter 44). By contrast, the God of Israel writes history in advance, predicting kings by name centuries before their birth! Is it any wonder God declares, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me" (46:9)? Is it any wonder God calls forth judgment upon Babylon—or upon anyone who would dare to substitute trees and rocks for the omnipotent Lord of Hosts, the holy One of Israel?

**YOUR DAILY WALK** *Idolatry* is such a harsh sounding word. It's a good thing God's people don't struggle with idolatry today—do they?

What is idolatry, really? One commentator defines it this way: "Idolatry is anything that comes between you and God." Using that definition, an uncomfortably long list of things could potentially fall into the category of becoming idols:

Television	Your sweetheart	Eating
Clothes	Your spouse	Golfing
Your job	Your child	Skiing
Your car	Your ambition	_____

(You fill in the blank of the last one.)

Pick one item from the above list, and ask yourself the question: "Is this thing drawing me toward God or away from Him?" Then do what Isaiah 46:8-9, 12 suggests.

*If it's more  
precious to  
you than  
God, spell  
it I-D-O-L.*

**INSIGHT** *Would the Real Servant Please Stand Up?*

When you find the word *servant* in Isaiah, pay close attention to the context. The word can refer to any of the following four, and you must carefully decide: Is it David (37:35); Isaiah (44:26); the nation of Israel (41:8-9); or the Messiah (49:5-6)?

# Sufferer for God's People

*Key Passage: Isaiah 51*

CHAPTER 49	CHAPTER 50	CHAPTER 51
Judah's Restoration	Judah's Repentance	Judah's Righteousness
Help in Zion	Healing in Zion	Hearken in Zion

**OVERVIEW** For the people of God, the path of restoration is the path of servanthood and suffering. There is coming One who will pardon iniquity and restore righteousness to Zion. In contrast to the rebellion of Israel, this Servant will come willingly and humbly to offer Himself as a sacrifice for many (50:6). Therefore, the faithful ones are called upon to hearken to God's voice (51:9, 17), for "righteousness draws near" (51:5).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Take a sheet of paper and divide it in half. Now pretend for a moment that you can afford to hire a servant to do all the tasks you normally perform but find unpleasant. On the left side of your paper, list those tasks. On the right side, list the tasks you presently do that you would want to keep for yourself, even if you had a servant.

Chances are, the tasks you listed on the left side are menial and repetitive. They require fitting your schedule to someone else's; they demand time, money, and inconvenience.

The remarkable thing about Isaiah's depiction of the coming Messiah is this: Though Christ could have come with swords flashing and armies marching to impose His righteousness upon humanity, He chose instead to come as the Suffering Servant, allowing people to beat Him and shame Him (50:6), in order to show the full extent of His love. And the Supreme Servant calls all who would follow Him to a similar lifestyle of servanthood, demonstrating God's love in action.

It's easy to be served; it's difficult to serve. But with God's help, even the activities on the left side of your paper can become joy (rather than drudgery) in your life. Thank God for the opportunities He gives you each day to be a servant to others.

**INSIGHT** A Trilogy of Comforting Truths

The final 27 chapters of Isaiah form three 9-chapter "sections of so-lace": The Deliverance of God's People (40-48); The Deliverer of God's People (49-57); and The Glory of God's Delivered People (58-66).

*Service is never slavery to one who loves.*

# Suffering on Behalf of God's People

*Key Passage: Isaiah 52–53*

CHAPTER 52	CHAPTER 53	CHAPTER 54	CHAPTERS 55-56	CHAPTER 57
Exalted Servant	Suffering Servant	Faithful Servant	Redemption by the Servant	Rebuke from the Servant
Providing Redemption			Responding to Redemption	

**OVERVIEW** Nowhere in the pages of the Old Testament will you see a clearer picture of the horrible price of your redemption than in the section you will read today. Meditate upon the many verses that show the anguish your Savior endured in paying the awful price of sin.

"His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man" (52:14).

"He was pierced . . . crushed . . . the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (53:5).

"The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (53:6).

"He was cut off from the land of the living" (53:8).

"It was the LORD's will to crush him. . . He poured out his life unto death . . . he bore the sin of many" (53:10, 12).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Today's passage contains the single most important piece of good news you will ever hear. It can be summarized in just three words: Incarnation, Redemption, Invitation.

Incarnation: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh (53:2-3), becoming all of God in a human body.

Redemption: He came to suffer and die, to make "his life a guilt offering" (53:10), to bear "the sin of many" (53:12).

Invitation: He stands ready to provide mercy and forgiveness for all who will respond. "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters" (55:1).

What have you done with the invitation of the Suffering Servant? Have you ignored it, rejected it, or accepted it? If you have never done so, take Him at His word today. Say yes to the One who died that you might live eternally.

**INSIGHT** A Servant Song in Five Stanzas

Think of 52:13–53:12 as a 15-verse song with five stanzas of three verses each. (Mark them in your Bible.) The Servant Song begins and ends with exaltation (stanzas 1 and 5), moves through rejection (stanzas 2 and 4), and climaxes in agony (stanza 3).

*We cannot  
look at the  
cross and  
still think our  
lives are of  
no account  
to God.*

# Judah's Groans and Glory

*Key Passage: Isaiah 59–60*

CHAPTER 58	CHAPTER 59	CHAPTER 60	CHAPTER 61	CHAPTER 62
Forgotten Fasts	Broken Fellowship	Rebuilt Nation	Rebuilt People	Renewed Fellowship
Judah's Groans		Judah's Glory		

**OVERVIEW** As Isaiah looks at his situation, there is little to commend it. Empty ritual, meaningless fasts, and broken fellowship mark the spiritual life of the nation. But like the first rays of sunlight after a storm, Isaiah catches a glimpse of the glorious future awaiting the people of God. A day is coming when darkness will be swept away, affliction will cease, “no longer will violence be heard in your land” (60:18), and the glad tidings of salvation shall be proclaimed throughout Zion. The desolate land shall be inhabited and prosperous, prompting praise to the ends of the earth that God has not forsaken His people after all. Groaning has indeed given way to glory.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Have you ever built a bridge?

The priest in the Old Testament was instructed to do precisely that: build a bridge between holy God and sinful humanity. He did it through the offering of endless sacrifices, the blood of animals to cover the sins of a nation.

The nation of Israel was selected by God to be a bridge-builder to surrounding nations, to show by her lifestyle of faith that God rewards those “who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

And the same job description has been passed down to you. As a Christian, you are to be salt in a decaying world, light in the midst of darkness, and a priest bringing people back to God (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:9).

Think of today as a unique opportunity to build a bridge between a lost sinner and his loving God. Perhaps you can't build an entire bridge in a single day, but you can begin that all-important process by your speech, conduct, and genuine concern about the life of another person.

Bridge-building. It's time-consuming, costly—and worth it!

**INSIGHT** *Glory in the Old, Glory in the New*

With one Bible open to Isaiah 60, and another to Revelation 21, see how many similarities you can find between those two glory-filled chapters. There are nearly a dozen.

*Blessed is the influence of one true, loving soul on another.*

## Judah's Glorious Future

*Key Passage: Isaiah 66*

CHAPTER 63	CHAPTER 64	CHAPTER 65	CHAPTER 66
Recalling God's Mercies	Repenting of Pride	Remaking Heaven and Earth	Rejoicing in Jerusalem
Judah Speaks to God		God Speaks to Judah	

**OVERVIEW** In the light of present calamity and coming glory, there can be only one fitting response from God's people: repentance for their pride and rebellion. "LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; we all are the work of Your hands" (64:8). The twin themes that have dominated Isaiah's message—condemnation and consolation—appear again in the concluding verses: "The LORD's power will be revealed to His servants [consolation], but He will show His wrath against His enemies [condemnation]" (66:14). Therefore, "Let the LORD be glorified" (66:5).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Congratulations! You have just completed reading the 1,292 verses of the Book of Isaiah, the fifth longest book in the Bible. As you conclude another month in this devotional guide, pause to consider what you have learned about the great God you worship and serve.

In Proverbs you learned that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, giving you the skill to make decisions that please God and that can keep you on the path He wants you to follow. In Ecclesiastes you learned that life's possessions and pursuits will never fill the void that God alone can fill. In the Song of Songs you learned that your marriage relationship is to be a picture to the world of God's selfless love for you. And in Isaiah you learned that God cannot allow sin to go unpunished. That's why He sent His Son as the Suffering Servant.

Write the above paragraph on a postcard and mail it to yourself. When it arrives, pray those thoughts back to God as your daily commitment to make your choices, pursuits, and relationships pleasing to the Holy One who bought you with His blood.

*From the errors of others, a wise man learns not to make his own.*

### **INSIGHT** Every Nation and Tongue

God has a place in the New Jerusalem for people from all nations and tongues. Isaiah 66:18-20 depicts people streaming to God's holy mountain from "Tarshish, . . . the Libyans and Lydians, . . . Tubal and Greece, and . . . the distant islands."

## THE GOD

# Among Us

As the prophet Isaiah's warnings echoed through the homes and courtyards of Judah, few were listening. What God was saying through His prophet was not what the people wanted to hear. But deep within the warnings and indictments was an astonishing statement: God would one day come to earth.

Eight hundred years later, Jesus announced that He was God in the flesh who had come to pay for the sins of the world. He was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. Again, few were listening.

Yet the life of Jesus Christ fits Isaiah's profile of the "God who would come to earth." The Anointed One would be:

- a descendant of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1);
- miraculously born of a virgin (7:14);
- a miracle-worker (35:5);
- wounded and bruised for us (53:5);

- our sin bearer (53:12);
- rejected by His people (53:3);
- buried in a rich man's tomb (53:9).

The overwhelming evidence points to Jesus as "God among us." He came to bring us into a complete and satisfying relationship with God. Isaiah explains how Jesus would do this:

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Our sins separate us from a holy and righteous God. Christ's death paid for our sins—past, present, and future. He now invites you into a relationship that will last beyond time. Why not trust in Jesus Christ as your only way to heaven?

*If you want to begin a personal relationship with Jesus, call 1-888-NeedHim.*