

PROVERBS

King 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 1	Companions of Wisdom 4 5	Conduct of Wisdom 9 10	Contrast of Wisdom with Folly 13 14	Choices of Wisdom 17 18	Counsel of Wisdom 21 22	Collection of Wise Sayings 24 25 29 30	Counsel Regarding Women 31
Topics	Definition	Explanation			Exhortation		Appendix	
Place		Solomon					Agur & Lemuel	
Time		Judah					Unknown	
		About 950–700 B.C.						

Proverbs 1-4
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 1:1-2:6



Overview: What 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 sets forth his purpose and theme in writing: "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the

instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity" (1:2-3). But 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.

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

A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew.



Your Daily Walk: A piano virtuoso, hearing his 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 individuals 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

Thursday

July

2



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 awesome price tag for such temporary pleasures. Fidelity, not immorality, is the path of true happiness for the man who will “rejoice with the wife of [his] youth” (5:18).

*Proverbs 5–9
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 6, 9*

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
Wisdom's Warnings Against . . .			Wisdom's Wealth	Wisdom's Welcome
Sexual Sin	Sloth	Seduction		
"Be Wary!"			"Be Wise!"	



Your Daily Walk: If you could take one lesson you learned from your father or grandfather 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; 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 huddle with your family (or a Christian friend) to discuss how Solomon's counsel can guide your conduct around members of the opposite sex.

Life in worldly pleasure is life in appearance only.



Insight: When Is a Wise Man Not a Wise Man?

Answer: When he says he is wise enough to stop learning: If you “give instruction to a wise man, . . . he will be yet wiser” (9:9).

Conduct of Wisdom

3 Friday
July

Proverbs 10–13
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 10



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 which demand wise actions and reactions: speech, stewardship, friendships, business ethics, and family relationships. In each case Solomon’s words guide you into God-honoring paths.

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

A prudent question is one-half of wisdom.



Your Daily Walk: The first nine chapters of Proverbs ask and answer the question, “Who pleases the Lord?” How would you answer that question? (Hint: Look at 3:12.)

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.

Here is just a sampling. Next to each proverb, jot down a corresponding situation in your life that could benefit from your putting the proverb to work.

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight” (11:1). _____

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise” (12:15). _____

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes [early]” (13:24). _____



Insight: A Stick to Lean On and Learn By

In Bible 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 sceptre of authority (Exodus 4:20).

Contrast of Wisdom with Folly

Sat.–Sun.

July

4/5



Overview: The first half of today's section (chapters 14–15) consists mostly of antithetic 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 the point of the proverb is emphasized through repetition and expansion. 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 each demonstrate your commitment to make godliness the pattern of your life.

Proverbs 14–17
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 16

Chapter 14	Chapter 15	Chapter 16	Chapter 17
Watch Your Temper	Watch Your Tongue	Watch Your Trails	Watch Your Thoughts
Wise Ways . . . Wicked Ways			



Your Daily Walk: What do the first seven verses of Proverbs 16 have in common? (Read the section several times until you find an element that is common to all seven verses.)

Did you find it? All those verses contain the name “LORD” (Jehovah). In fact, “LORD” occurs more than 20 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 strong confidence (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. When you've finished, you should be an expert at 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 by Isaiah. Each sets forth 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 Solomon, and Isaiah remain part of God's blueprint for victorious Christian living every inch of the way!

<i>Proverbs</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	<i>Song of Solomon</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
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***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

Monday

July

6



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. As you read each chapter (or the Heart of the Passage), jot down the references in the appropriate column of this devotional guide for future study.

*Proverbs 18–21
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 21*

Chapter 18	Chapter 19	Chapter 20	Chapter 21
Loose Lips	"The just man walketh in his integrity" (20:7). Senseless Sons		Wicked Wealth
"The just man walketh in his integrity" (20:7).			



Your Daily Walk: Eight Timely Topics in Proverbs

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

Christian obedience is to be the response to our acceptance, not the reason for it.

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 three questions: What will I begin to do? How will I begin to do it? When will I begin to do it?



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 passages testify to mankind's continuing inability to tame the tongue.

Counsel of Wisdom

7

Tuesday

July

Proverbs 22–24
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 23



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 *doing* the truth. The issue is not how many proverbs you know in your head, but how many proverbs you apply in your heart. “Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge” (22:17)—wise words in any generation!

Chapter 22	Chapter 23	Chapter 24
Injustice	The Folly of . . . Indulgence	Indifference
“Let not thine heart envy sinners” (23:17).		

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



Your Daily Walk: Here is a scene repeated countless times in the average Christian home. The names have been changed to protect the guilty.

Father: “Son, please do what I told you.”

Son: “Why, Dad?”

Father: “Because I told you so, 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 “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. 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 so” rather than take the time to explain your convictions to your children? Carve out some time to do precisely that today. Your children will respect you all the more for it.



Insight: Striking a Balance in Your Child Discipline

While corporal punishment is Biblical (23:13–14), there is also a balance to be maintained. A better translation of 19:18 would read, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, but set not thy soul upon slaying him.” Firm but gracious discipline should characterize the home—the proverbial iron hand in a velvet glove!

Collection of Wise Sayings

Wednesday

July

8



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).

Proverbs 25–29
Heart of the 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
"Honor shall uphold the humble in spirit" (29:23).			



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:

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ 1. "A word fitly spoken is like . . ." | a. ". . . a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow" (25:18). |
| _____ 2. "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is . . ." | b. ". . . one that taketh a dog by the ears" (26:17). |
| _____ 3. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is . . ." | c. ". . . good news from a far country" (25:25). |
| _____ 4. "Faithful are . . ." | d. ". . . apples of gold in pictures of silver" (25:11). |
| _____ 5. "He that . . . meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like . . ." | e. ". . . the wounds of a friend" (27:6). |

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

Now pick one of the proverbs you have just completed and put it to work in your everyday life. Is there an overdue letter of "good news from a far country" that you need to send . . . a "word fitly spoken" that you need to speak . . . or a matter of "false witness" 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; *laziness* in 26:13–16.) How many groups can you find?

Counsel Regarding Women

9 *Thursday*
July

Proverbs 30-31
Heart of the Passage:
Proverbs 31



Overview: It may surprise you to learn that not all of Proverbs was written by King Solomon. In fact, chapter 30 begins, “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh . . . unto Ithiel and Ucal.” None of these individuals is found anywhere else in the Bible, but the words of Agur live on in the time-

less truths he shares. You might think of it as “Wisdom in Two’s, Three’s and Four’s.” Agur describes four things that are insatiable (15-16); four that are startling (18-19); four that are insufferable (two from each sex! 21-23); four that are small and yet extremely wise (24-28); and four that are stately (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 will find a description of a virtuous woman that honors the dignity of womanhood. A godly wife is a rare treasure indeed!

Chapter 30			Chapter 31							
God's Flawless Word	6	7	God's Fourfold Wisdom	33	1	A Wise Mother	9	10	A Virtuous Wife	31
Sayings of Agur					Sayings of Lemuel					

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



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 that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (31:30).

Then, just to show it can be done, Lemuel writes 22 verses (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 or mother. 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, why not invite the woman in your life out for a special dinner and present her with your “Scroll of Praise.” She’s earned it!



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.

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 (3) Work (4) Money (5) Fame (6)				Lessons on Practical Wisdom		Observations on Wisdom and Folly		The Source of Real Meaning in Life		
	1	2	3		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Topics	Meaning Explored					Meaning Explained						
	"Vanity 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

10

Friday

July

Ecclesiastes 1-6

Heart of the Passage:

Ecclesiastes 1-2



Overview: Making sense out of life is not always easy. This is the problem facing the Preacher 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

Preacher 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.

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

The answer to the question, "What is the purpose of life?" is not a What but a Who.



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 it is that caused you to select them over other possible candidates. Is it their money . . . intelligence . . . position . . . possessions?

If any Old Testament character was ever a candidate for success, Solomon was the one! Blessed with wisdom, wealth, status, power, and prestige, he had everything a man could want—or did he? Look at his evaluation of it all: "Pleasure . . . is vanity . . . laughter . . . is mad . . . silver and gold . . . wisdom . . . the labor that I had labored to do . . . all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit 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 now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not" (12:1). There's no better advice for anyone at any age!

The Meaning of Life Explained



Overview: Up to this point the Preacher 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 turns to vanity, fear God (7:18). When God's ways seem unsearchable or uncertain, fear God (8:12-13). When all is said and done, fear God (12:13), for this is the whole duty of man.

Sat.-Sun. **11/12**
July

Ecclesiastes 7-12
Heart of the Passage:
Ecclesiastes 7, 9, 12

Chapter 7	Chapters 8-10	Chapters 11-12
Wisdom Amidst Wickedness	Purpose Amidst Perplexity	Worship from the Womb to the Tomb
The Explanation of Life's Meaning		



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 Him 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 Preacher 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?

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

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 Preacher 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 come through knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ (John 10:10; 17:3). Thoughtfully read those two verses several times. Then tell God the desire of your heart. He is there 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!

Extolling Marital Love

13

Monday

July

Song of Solomon 1-8
Heart of the Passage:
Song of Solomon 1, 3, 6



Overview: Song of Solomon 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.

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	

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



Your Daily Walk: True or False: "Love means never having to say you're sorry."

Modern-day balladeers seem to imply by that statement that apologizing is out of vogue when true love exists. (If the Shulamite had followed that ill-guided advice instead of seeking her lover's forgiveness, she might still be in the locked bedroom!)

Nothing could be farther 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 Solomon pictures for the reader the strength of Christ's love (8:7), 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 “motherlode 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 and 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		Sermons of Condemnation		Parenthesis		Worship		Sermons of Comfort			
Place	Judah and Her Neighbors				Israel and the World									
Time	About 40 Years (722–681 B.C.)				Thousands of Years									

Judah's Indictment

14

Tuesday

July

Isaiah 1-4

Heart of the Passage:

Isaiah 1



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 which 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.

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

Just because you are "without honor in your own country," doesn't necessarily mean you are a prophet!



Your Daily Walk: What do these three cities all have in common: Pompeii, Hiroshima, and Sodom?

Answer: 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.

Now add to that list the name of Judah. Up 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 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 be doing today to see that it does not?



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 wine!

Judah's Immanuel

Wednesday

July

15



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 "Lo" (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.

Isaiah 5-7
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 6-7

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



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 had to first 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 had to first 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.

God is not so much seeking those with the ability to do everything, as He is those with the willingness to do anything.



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 by leprosy for flouting God's holiness—the very condition that would bring about the death of the nation as well.

Judah's Prince of Peace

16

Thursday

July

Isaiah 8-12

Heart of the Passage:

Isaiah 8-9



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 "trouble and darkness . . . [and] anguish" (8:22), Isaiah proclaims a note of hope. "The

people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (9:2). There is coming a Child whose very 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 already assured!

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

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



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 in the midst of thee." As in Isaiah's day, the future is as bright as the promises of God.



Insight: The Open Road

In Bible times the most important international highway was the *Via Maris* ("the Way of the Sea"). Mentioned in Isaiah 9:1, 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.

Judgment on Babylon and Moab

Friday

July

17



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 her 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.

Isaiah 13–16
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 13

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



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 (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)?

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

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 which 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!



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

18/19

Sat.–Sun.

July

Isaiah 17–20

Heart of the Passage:

Isaiah 17, 19



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.

Chapter 17	Chapter 18	Chapters 19–20
Doom for Damascus	Threshing for Ethiopia	Infamy for Egypt
Judgment on Judah’s Neighbors		

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



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

Judgment on Jerusalem and Tyre

Monday

July

20



Overview: Even in the midst of declaring prophecies of doom and destruction, Isaiah's heart breaks for the guilty nations involved. Babylon, "the desert of the sea," will be mercilessly crushed by Media, causing the prophet both 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 judgment will be stayed during Isaiah's lifetime (22:14).

Isaiah 21-23
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 21

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



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 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 disbelief.

Judgment Turned to Jubilation

21 Tuesday
July

Isaiah 24–27
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 26–27



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 have something truly worth singing about: refuge, deliverance, and ultimate triumph in the Holy One of Israel. Is that the song of your lips today?

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

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



Your Daily Walk: The dictionary defines *crisis* as “the turning point for better or worse in an acute disease or time of distress.” Using that definition, find a newspaper or 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 Fat Things? The “fat things” Isaiah refers to in 25:6 are choice dishes prepared with olive oil and bone marrow—the most desirable items of food to the Near Eastern palate.

Woe on Israel and Judah

Wednesday

July

22



Overview: Like lightning crackling in the distance, Isaiah's prophecies begin to focus on the ominous approach of the Assyrian armies. Ephraim (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 shall 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.

Isaiah 28-30
Heart of the 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



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, "Don't put your trust in the armies of Egypt, for they will fail you. Put your trust in the Lord of hosts, for He will never fail you nor forsake you." 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 untrustworthy objects and people. What needs to change in order to make God the One you lean upon?



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 listener's ears.

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

Wait for the Coming King

23

Thursday

July

Isaiah 31–35

Heart of the Passage:

Isaiah 33



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!

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!

Praise is not a vain compliment, but the uninhibited bug of a child for his father.



Your Daily Walk: Picture this scene. It is Sunday morning. You quietly enter your church and wait for the prelude to begin. But to your surprise, a brass band bursts through the doors playing “Stars and Stripes Forever.”

The prelude sets the mood for what is to follow. A good prelude does not draw attention to itself (as does our humorous illustration), 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 Bible 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

Friday

24

July



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.

Isaiah 36–39
Heart of the 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	



Your Daily Walk: All those who like to be ridiculed, please stand up. That is one invitation you would probably just as soon ignore! After all, no one likes to be mocked or ridiculed for taking a stand. But as Paul warned young Timothy, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (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 plague 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

25/26

Sat.—Sun.

July

Isaiah 40–43
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 40, 42



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 mankind. 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 ye, comfort ye my people," saith your God" (40:1).

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

God loves
His people
when He
strikes
them as
well as
when He
strokes
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 ye" after 39 chapters of judgment would seem ludicrous—unless you recall *who* is providing the comfort! Type or print 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 balance of the book (40:1-2; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 57:6; 61:2; 66:13).

Impotent Idols and Omnipotent God

Monday

27

July

Isaiah 44-48
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 44-45



Overview: In an amazing collection of specific prophecies, Isaiah foretells the 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 none else; 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?

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	



Your Daily Walk: Idolatry is such a harsh sounding word.

It's a good thing God's people today don't struggle with idolatry—or do they?

What really is idolatry? 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	_____ing

(You fill in the blank on 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!



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 Israel (41:8-9), or the Messiah (49:5-6)?

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

Sufferer for God's People

28

Tuesday

July

Isaiah 49–51
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 51



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 will 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 is near" (51:5).

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

Service
can never
become
slavery to
one who
loves.



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. (Think of it as writing your personal servant's job description.) 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 mankind, He chose instead to come as the Suffering Servant, allowing people to smite 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 nine-chapter "sections of solace": 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).

Suffering on Behalf of God's People

Wednesday

July

29



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 visage was so marred more than any man” (52:14).

“He was wounded . . . he was bruised . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (53:5).

“The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:6).

“He was cut off out of the land of the living” (53:8).

“It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. He hath poured out his soul unto death: . . . he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many” (53:10, 12).

Isaiah 52–57
Heart of the 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	



Your Daily Walk: The passage you will read today 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 soul an offering for sin” (53:10), to bear “the sin of many” (53:12).

Invitation: He stands ready to provide mercy and forgiveness for all who will respond. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye 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 Groan and Glory

30

Thursday

July

Isaiah 58–62
Heart of the Passage:
Isaiah 59–60



Overview: As Isaiah looks at his contemporary 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 summer 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, “violence shall no more be heard” (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.

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	

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



Your Daily Walk: Have you ever built a bridge? (Probably not.) Have you ever built a *spiritual* bridge? (Hopefully so.) The priest in the Old Testament was instructed to do precisely that: build a bridge between holy God and sinful humankind. 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 “that diligently 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 5:13-14; 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 in the life of another.

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!

Judah's Glorious Future

Friday

31

July



Overview: In the light of present calamity and coming glory, there can only be one fitting response from God's people: repentance for their pride and rebellion. "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (64:8). The twin themes that have dominated Isaiah's message—condemnation and consolation—appear again in the concluding verses: "The hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants [consolation], and his indignation toward his enemies [condemnation]" (66:14). Therefore, "Let the LORD be glorified" (66:5).

Isaiah 63–66
Heart of the 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 Jehovah		Jehovah Speaks to Judah	



Your Daily Walk: Congratulations! You have just completed reading the 37,044 words of the Book of Isaiah (if you read it in the King James Version), making it the fifth longest book in the Bible. (Can you guess which books are longer?) 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 God 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 Solomon* 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.



Insight: Every Nation and Tongue
 Isaiah 66:18-19 depicts people streaming into a new Jerusalem from Tarshish (Spain), Put and Lud (Africa), Tubal (Anatolia), and Javan (Greece). God has a place in His new world for people from all nations.

From the errors of others, a wise man corrects his own.

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 recessed 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. But 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:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6, New King James Version).

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? He said:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47, New King James Version).

Are you listening?

If you accept Christ's invitation to new life this month, please let us know. It would be a joy to hear from you.