



## Fall 2020 | CSB



ple is enumerated in terms of  
te worship was part of fertil-  
sacred **gardens** and trees. Such  
in Deut. 12:2; Jer. 3:9; and  
are often associated with the  
a goddess like Asherah [17:8].

the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 7:16-26) where, because of the plunder from the city of Jericho, Israel was defeated at the city of Ai. In the place of a restored remnant, Achor was a peaceful place. See Hos. 2:15 for a similar use of "Achor" in a positive prophetic context. Since

A P P L Y

# Isaiah

LifeWay | Adults

# JESUS

Seven centuries before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah described Him in detail. Isaiah wrote about one who would be “despised and rejected by men” (Isa. 53:3), “pierced because of our rebellion,” and “crushed because of our iniquities” (v. 5). The one of whom Isaiah prophesied would die not as a martyr but as our substitute, “for the iniquity of us all” (v. 6). In other words, He would suffer the punishment that we deserve for our sins and suffer judgment in our place. He would do so willingly to provide the way of salvation for sinful people.

Jesus was no afterthought of God nor a “Plan B.” God made a plan for our salvation even before the foundation of the world and predicted it clearly through the prophet Isaiah. This salvation, however, is not automatic. Only the one who “calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

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After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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Daily Discipleship Guide  
Fall 2020  
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# FROM THE TEAM LEADER

In Acts 8, we find Philip's encounter with an Ethiopian official. As Philip approached the official, he heard the man reading from Isaiah, so Philip asked the official if he understood what he was reading. The official replied that he needed a guide.

Isaiah had told many years before of One who would be pierced and crushed for our sin so that we could be healed by His wounds (Isa. 53:5). The healing would be required because of sin. Isaiah pointed to a coming judgment against the Israelites because of that sin and the salvation God would provide to those who repented. That repentance would not come until after the Israelites were led away as captives. The exile was more than judgment; it was purposeful discipline designed to help people understand their need for God. That realization would lead to repentance and a restored relationship with God.

The Book of Isaiah is filled with insights about the nature of God and our relationship with Him. Part of this relationship includes the promise of God reconciling His people to Himself. The message of Isaiah continues to be echoed today. We are sinners facing sure judgment. The sovereign God disciplines us with a view toward repentance and relationship with Him through faith in His Son.

As we study the Book of Isaiah, we pray that each of us will discover the truth found by the Ethiopian official: we are sinners in need of God's forgiveness which is found only through the sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son.

Humbly,

**Dwayne McCrary**



# BIBLE READING PLAN

## SEPTEMBER

- ☐ 1. Isaiah 1:1-15
- ☐ 2. Isaiah 1:16-31
- ☐ 3. Isaiah 2:1-11
- ☐ 4. Isaiah 2:12-22
- ☐ 5. Isaiah 3:1-15
- ☐ 6. Isaiah 3:16-26
- ☐ 7. Isaiah 4:1-5:7
- ☐ 8. Isaiah 5:8-30
- ☐ 9. Isaiah 6:1-13
- ☐ 10. Isaiah 7:1-19
- ☐ 11. Isaiah 7:20-8:10
- ☐ 12. Isaiah 8:11-22
- ☐ 13. Isaiah 9:1-21
- ☐ 14. Isaiah 10:1-19
- ☐ 15. Isaiah 10:20-34
- ☐ 16. Isaiah 11:1-16
- ☐ 17. Isaiah 12:1-6
- ☐ 18. Isaiah 13:1-22
- ☐ 19. Isaiah 14:1-23
- ☐ 20. Isaiah 14:24-32
- ☐ 21. Isaiah 15:1-9
- ☐ 22. Isaiah 16:1-14
- ☐ 23. Isaiah 17:1-14
- ☐ 24. Isaiah 18:1-7
- ☐ 25. Isaiah 19:1-15
- ☐ 26. Isaiah 19:16-20:6
- ☐ 27. Isaiah 21:1-17
- ☐ 28. Isaiah 22:1-14
- ☐ 29. Isaiah 22:15-25
- ☐ 30. Isaiah 23:1-18

## OCTOBER

- ☐ 1. Isaiah 24:1-15
- ☐ 2. Isaiah 24:16-23
- ☐ 3. Isaiah 25:1-12
- ☐ 4. Isaiah 26:1-13
- ☐ 5. Isaiah 26:14-21
- ☐ 6. Isaiah 27:1-13
- ☐ 7. Isaiah 28:1-13
- ☐ 8. Isaiah 28:14-29
- ☐ 9. Isaiah 29:1-14
- ☐ 10. Isaiah 29:15-24
- ☐ 11. Isaiah 30:1-17
- ☐ 12. Isaiah 30:18-33
- ☐ 13. Isaiah 31:1-9
- ☐ 14. Isaiah 32:1-20
- ☐ 15. Isaiah 33:1-16
- ☐ 16. Isaiah 33:17-24
- ☐ 17. Isaiah 34:1-17
- ☐ 18. Isaiah 35:1-10
- ☐ 19. Isaiah 36:1-22
- ☐ 20. Isaiah 37:1-20
- ☐ 21. Isaiah 37:21-38
- ☐ 22. Isaiah 38:1-14
- ☐ 23. Isaiah 38:15-22
- ☐ 24. Isaiah 39:1-8
- ☐ 25. Isaiah 40:1-17
- ☐ 26. Isaiah 40:18-31
- ☐ 27. Isaiah 41:1-10
- ☐ 28. Isaiah 41:11-29
- ☐ 29. Isaiah 42:1-13
- ☐ 30. Isaiah 42:14-25
- ☐ 31. Isaiah 43:1-13

## NOVEMBER

- ☐ 1. Isaiah 43:14-28
- ☐ 2. Isaiah 44:1-20
- ☐ 3. Isaiah 44:21-28
- ☐ 4. Isaiah 45:1-13
- ☐ 5. Isaiah 45:14-25
- ☐ 6. Isaiah 46:1-13
- ☐ 7. Isaiah 47:1-15
- ☐ 8. Isaiah 48:1-22
- ☐ 9. Isaiah 49:1-13
- ☐ 10. Isaiah 49:14-26
- ☐ 11. Isaiah 50:1-11
- ☐ 12. Isaiah 51:1-11
- ☐ 13. Isaiah 51:12-23
- ☐ 14. Isaiah 52:1-15
- ☐ 15. Isaiah 53:1-12
- ☐ 16. Isaiah 54:1-17
- ☐ 17. Isaiah 55:1-13
- ☐ 18. Isaiah 56:1-12
- ☐ 19. Isaiah 57:1-21
- ☐ 20. Isaiah 58:1-14
- ☐ 21. Isaiah 59:1-21
- ☐ 22. Isaiah 60:1-22
- ☐ 23. Isaiah 61:1-11
- ☐ 24. Isaiah 62:1-12
- ☐ 25. Isaiah 63:1-19
- ☐ 26. Isaiah 64:1-12
- ☐ 27. Isaiah 65:1-16
- ☐ 28. Isaiah 65:17-25
- ☐ 29. Isaiah 66:1-13
- ☐ 30. Isaiah 66:14-24

# MEMORY VERSES

## **Session 1:**

“‘Come, let us settle this,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are crimson red, they will be like wool.’” — Isaiah 1:18

## **Session 2:**

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking: Who should I send? Who will go for us? I said: Here I am. Send me.” — Isaiah 6:8

## **Session 3:**

“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.”  
— Isaiah 7:14

## **Session 4:**

“The Lord of Armies has sworn: As I have purposed, so it will be; as I have planned it, so it will happen.” — Isaiah 14:24

## **Session 5:**

“He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove his people’s disgrace from the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken.”  
— Isaiah 25:8

## **Session 6:**

“Therefore the Lord is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the Lord is a just God. All who wait patiently for him are happy.”  
— Isaiah 30:18

## **Session 7:**

“I will defend this city and rescue it for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.”  
— Isaiah 37:35

## **Session 8:**

“But those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.”  
— Isaiah 40:31

## **Session 9:**

“I will be the same until your old age, and I will bear you up when you turn gray. I have made you, and I will carry you; I will bear and rescue you.” — Isaiah 46:4

## **Session 10:**

“Shout for joy, you heavens! Earth, rejoice! Mountains break into joyful shouts! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.”  
— Isaiah 49:13

## **Session 11:**

“But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.”  
— Isaiah 53:5

## **Session 12:**

“The Lord will always lead you, satisfy you in a parched land, and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring whose water never runs dry.” — Isaiah 58:11

## **Session 13:**

“For I will create a new heaven and a new earth; the past events will not be remembered or come to mind.”  
— Isaiah 65:17

# INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

Isaiah, whose name means, “the Lord saves,” lived and ministered in Jerusalem from about 740–700 BC. According to Jewish tradition, Isaiah’s father, Amoz, was the brother of King Amaziah, who ruled Judah from 821–767 BC. If so, the prophet would have been King Uzziah’s cousin. New Testament writers attribute the authorship of the Book of Isaiah to one person: Isaiah. (See John 12:37-41.)

Some modern scholars, however, have argued there were at least two writers. These scholars appeal to differences in style and emphasis between chapters 1–39 and 40–60, along with the varying perspectives from both the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods. Much of their issue with an eighth century prophet is their presupposition that predictive prophecy is impossible. They believe it impossible for an eighth-century prophet to predict the rise and fall of Babylon or to know the name of Cyrus over one hundred and fifty years before he lived. However, a major theme of Isaiah is God’s ability to know the future, reveal it through His prophets, and bring it to pass.

Isaiah’s public ministry occurred during the expansion of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians threatened Israel and Syria, so these kingdoms organized a coalition to stand against Assyria. When they tried to enlist Judah to join the coalition, Judah refused. Therefore, Israel and Syria invaded Judah. Upon Judah’s appeal for help, the Assyrians conquered Syria and subjugated

Israel. When Sennacherib became king of Assyria, Hezekiah of Judah withheld tribute to Assyria. Sennacherib invaded Judah, but in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, the Lord Himself defeated the invaders. Nevertheless, Hezekiah’s pride led to an ominous prophecy that dominates the second part of the book: the Babylonian invasion and exile. However, Isaiah also foretold Babylon’s defeat and Judah’s return home.

## **The themes of the Book of Isaiah include:**

- God is the holy one of Israel, and Israel is His holy people who worship in Jerusalem, God’s holy city.
- God is incomparable; no one is like Him.
- The Servant of the Lord will bring salvation to Israel and the nations. He will establish justice, righteousness, and peace.
- The trustworthiness of God and the unreliability of all others;
- The demise of the wicked but hope and deliverance for the faithful; Isaiah’s message warns people of God’s judgment and exhorts them to trust in His salvation.



# OUTLINE OF ISAIAH

- I.** Rebuke and Promise from the Lord (1:1–6:13)
- II.** The Promise of Immanuel (7:1–12:6)
- III.** Coming Judgment upon the Nations (13:1–23:18)
- IV.** First Cycle of General Judgment and Promise (24:1–27:13)
- V.** Woes upon the Unbelievers of Israel (28:1–33:24)
- VI.** Second Cycle of General Judgment and Promise (34:1–39:8)
- VII.** The Greatness of God (40:1–48:22)
- VIII.** Peace Brought by the Servant-Messiah (49:1–57:21)
- IX.** The Program of Peace (58:1–66:24)



## ON THE COVER

Miniature column base in the form of a human-headed winged animal, probably a part of a piece of furniture; Assyrian, 7th century BC, from Nineveh. The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of winged, angelic beings (seraphim) attending God's throne and offering praises to Him (Isa. 6:2).



# USING THE **DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE**


Follower. Adherent. Loyalist. Attached. Allegiant. Zealous. Disciple. Jesus' call is the same to all people: to follow Him as a disciple. He expects more than a courteous nod. He deserves more than intellectual agreement. He calls us to be disciples—growing disciples. How do we do that?

In Brad Waggoner's *Shape of Faith to Come* (2008), he identified the discipline of “daily Bible engagement” as the number-one predictor of a person's spiritual growth. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Should we be any different when it comes to our spiritual training? The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, but they must not replace God's Word. *Engagement* implies participating in the act of reading, studying, and reflecting. Engagement is active, requiring us to do something.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you grow as a disciple. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first five pages of each session help the group leader introduce a Bible passage and move you toward acting on the truths discovered.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the **Talk It Out** section at the end of each session to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word. Use the Daily Discipleship Guide to move forward in your spiritual growth.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook in the *Explore the Bible APP* (available through GooglePlay and the iTunes Store) or at LifeWay.com.



## **Getting the most from Talk It Out**

Talk It Out, found at the end of each session, supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, build up, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section provides a few directed questions based on the previous group experience and daily Bible engagement suggestions to start the weekly conversation.

### **These groups are made up of three to four people...**

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

### **...Who meet weekly...**

- Life happens weekly, so meeting weekly is important.
- There is nothing like sitting across from friends over coffee, a meal, or dessert.
- In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet using technology that allows for video conferencing.
- You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.

### **...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.**

- Review the questions in Talk It Out.
- You may focus on one question more than others.
- Include time to pray for each other.

# God Confronts

God confronts His people about the consequences of their actions.

ISAIAH 1:10-20



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...made sinners, so by the  
...many be made righteou

...and entails either that Adam was  
...ace and acted on behalf of us all, o  
...riminal head of the race and we were so

5:13-14 These verses support the second  
for verse 12 (see note there). Sin "reigns"  
manity before the giving of the law ever  
sinned in the way Adam sinned. Adam's  
deliberate act that plunged the human  
and spiritual death. All humans, incl  
ants and young children who are incap  
and wrong and thus are not deliberate  
death's domain. All people now are b  
(Eph. 2:1-3). Adam's sin had this broad  
was a type (Gk *typos*) or prefiguration of  
was to come, and represented all of hum  
would do on the cross.

5:15-16 The works of Adam and Jesus  
but drastically different effect. One of  
manity into ruin, but God gave the gift t  
cation in spite of our many sins. What t



**When have you ever taken a relationship for granted? How did it affect the relationship? Were you able to do anything to get the relationship back on track?**

Paying bills, going to the grocery store, getting the car serviced—our days are filled with mundane tasks that we carry out on automatic pilot without much thought. Sometimes, church and devotions fall into a repetitive rut. Even relationships can become stale and fade into the background of routine. As a result, the failure of a relationship can catch us off guard.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Isaiah 1:1–4:6 lays the groundwork for Isaiah's entire message. Here, Isaiah contrasted the sin and rebellion of Judah in his day to their future of blessedness and holiness in the last days. After briefly mentioning the kings who reigned during his ministry, Isaiah described Judah's sinful ways like a prosecuting attorney with overwhelming evidence. We see a picture of a people who had abandoned God. Though God had raised them, provided for them, and cared for them in every way as a loving father would his children, with ingratitude they rebelled against Him (Isa. 1:2). They were worse than oxen or donkeys who at least know who feeds them (1:3).

God was using loving discipline to draw His people back to Himself, yet they stubbornly refused to return (1:5-9). Instead of trusting in the Lord, the people of Judah placed their trust in material things, military heroes, renowned leaders, and spiritual gurus. Therefore, God would remove their false sources of security so they might recognize their futility (3:1-3). Young and old, male and female, all would bear the consequences of their arrogant sin (3:5-26).

Such is the case with us. God never abandons His children but lovingly confronts us and, if need be, disciplines us so we will return to Him. Whatever God does to bring us to Himself is an act of loving kindness, no matter how difficult His discipline may seem.

The good news is that God's announcement of judgment was not His only message. Even though His people's present situation was dreadful, their future was bright. God was going to once again establish His temple, people from every nation would stream to it to worship the Lord and receive His instruction, and there would be peace (2:1-4). On that day, the Branch of the LORD, Jesus Christ, will be beautiful and glorious among them, the people of God will be called holy, and their names will be written in the book of life because the Lord has washed away their sin (4:1-6).

# ISAIAH 1:10-20

**10** Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of **Sodom** **A**! Listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! **11** “What are all your sacrifices to me?” asks the LORD. “I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; I have no desire for the blood of bulls, lambs, or male goats. **12** When you come to appear before me, who requires this from you—this trampling of my courts? **13** Stop bringing useless offerings. Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons and Sabbaths, and the calling of solemn assemblies—I cannot stand iniquity with a festival. **14** I hate your New Moons and prescribed festivals. They have become a **burden** **B** to me; I am tired of putting up with them. **15** When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look at you; even if you offer countless prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. **16** “Wash yourselves. **Cleanse** **C** yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from my sight. Stop doing evil. **17** **Learn** **D** to do what is good. **Pursue** **E** justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow’s cause. **18** “Come, let us settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are crimson red, they will be like wool. **19** If you are **willing** **F** and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land. **20** But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

## Passage Outline

Empty Rituals  
(Isa. 1:10-15)

True Followers  
(Isa. 1:16-17)

Repentance Required  
(Isa. 1:18-20)

## Key Words

- A. Isaiah compared Judah and Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities God had destroyed for their iniquity (Gen. 19:24; Ezek. 16:49-50).
- B. In Deuteronomy 1:12 Moses stated, “How can I bear your troubles, burdens, and disputes by myself?”
- C. To wash oneself from sin (Isa. 4:4).
- D. To teach in the sense of training. In Hosea 10:11, Ephraim was trained like a heifer by a yoke and goad.
- E. The children of Israel went to Moses to “seek” (ESV, NIV, NLT) the Lord’s understanding (Ex. 18:15).
- F. Obedience requires our “consent” (NASB). David wasn’t willing to go with Absalom (2 Sam. 13:25).

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

Isaiah began with a scathing indictment in verse 10. By saying, *you rulers of Sodom and you people of Gomorrah*, Isaiah was communicating how utterly depraved Judah's ways had been and how serious the consequences of such sin were. Verse 9 reveals that were it not for the Lord's mercy, Judah might have been completely wiped out like Sodom and Gomorrah. (See Gen. 19:23-25.) The Lord confronted His people about their sacrifices. He was quite clear about what He thought of their sacrifices: They meant nothing to Him; they added nothing to Him; and they did nothing for Him. When a person comes before the Lord with an insincere heart and selfish motives, it is unacceptable "worship" to God. Acceptable worship involves approaching the Lord on His terms. The Lord emphatically commanded the people to stop bringing their offerings to the temple because they were meaningless and detestable to Him.

**BIBLE SKILL: Compare related passages.** Compare Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. What reasons are given for celebrating the Sabbath in these verses? How are the reasons different and how are they the same? What do these verses reveal about God's desires? How does this compare to what we find in Isaiah 1?

**What are causes and ways believers today may fall into a pattern of unacceptable worship of the Lord? What warnings should we draw from Judah's mistakes?**

Taken together, the three sets of commands signify authentic repentance and true devotion to the Lord. The washing and cleansing of themselves called for sincere repentance so that there no longer would be a disconnect between their hearts and their acts of worship. The authenticity of their repentance would be demonstrated by their actions: turn away from their sinful ways, learn what God's will is, and do it.

**If being devoted to God in faithful obedience does not earn our salvation, then why is it necessary for believers to be faithfully obedient to God?**

**KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation.**

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God (Isa 55:7).

God invited His sinful people to come to Him in repentance and faith. He promised to cleanse them of all their sin. The Lord confronted His people with a choice: either repent, obey, and enjoy God's blessing, or *refuse and rebel* and suffer the consequences.

**How does God take the initiative today to bring people into a relationship with Him? How does His approach today compare with the approach found in Isaiah 1?**



# APPLY THE TEXT

- Relying on religious rituals alone falls short when approaching the holy God.
- God expects His followers to demonstrate righteousness and justice.
- God offers forgiveness to those who repent.

**Ask God to examine your heart and to reveal any sin in your life that might be hindering your worship of Him. What actions do you need to take in response to what God shows you?**

**On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being completed, how would you rate how well you do the nine commands found in verses 16 and 17? What do you need to do to more completely follow these commands?**

**Discuss as a group the difference it should make to believers as they go through their daily routine to remember that our sins are forgiven and have been made “white as snow.” Begin to memorize Isaiah 1:18.**

## Prayer Requests

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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: We must listen to God's instructions.

**Read Isaiah 1:10, underlining the words hear and listen.**

The words *hear* and *listen* both mean “hear and obey.” So the message is straightforward. The people needed to hear and obey the Word of God. Verse 10 contains several personal elements.

*LORD*, often denoted as Yahweh from Hebrew, is God’s personal, covenantal name. Israel was Yahweh’s treasured possession and holy nation, devoted for God’s personal mission of blessing all other nations. God chose Israel to be a conduit of blessing for every people group on the earth.

The expression *our God* emphasizes that while the other nations had a multiplicity of gods, Yahweh was Israel’s God, the one and only God.

The word *instruction* is the Hebrew word *tora*, and even though it is authoritative, it has the idea of affectionate personal instruction, such as what a parent would share with a son or daughter.

**Why do you think God started this passage with the firm instruction to listen?  
In what areas of your life is God calling you to listen and heed His Word?**

## Day 2: Insincere sacrifices are offensive to God.

**Read Isaiah 1:11-12, noting God’s frustration with their sacrifices.**

Sacrifices were meant to be outward expressions of true commitment to the Lord. God knows what is in the heart of every person, and He knows when a sacrifice is offered insincerely. Outward formality cannot hide degenerate hearts. This verse is reminiscent of 1 Samuel 15:22, “Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.”

The *fat of well-fed cattle* represents offering to God one’s best, and the *blood* represents devotion to God. But it was all a sham. The people were blemished with sin and absent of true devotion to God. It would be like offering a gift to a spouse who knows the one giving the gift is cheating on him or her. Instead of being a blessing, the gift would be offensive because of the infidelity. Similarly, their sacrifices were offensive to God.

**Why didn’t God take pleasure in the Israelites’ sacrifices? How might our sacrifices be offensive to God?**

### **Day 3: True worship is required for God's favor.**

***Read Isaiah 1:13-15, considering how their festivals may have become irreverent.***

The New Moons festival consecrated each new month to the Lord by expressing to Him repentance, devotion, and fellowship. The institution of the *Sabbath* was so important that it was included as the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8-11). Israel was required to cease from all work and rest because the Lord rested on the seventh day of creation. The Sabbath was a sign of the covenant the Lord made with Israel (Ex. 31:12) and reminded the people of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Keeping the Sabbath was meant to provide a designated, focused time to worship the Lord, as David demonstrated in Psalm 92.

Other prescribed festivals included Passover, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. God instituted these holy days as times for Israel to celebrate God's wondrous acts and blessings upon them and to express their gratitude, love, and devotion to Him. Instead, they turned them into something repulsive. The people worshiped the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. (See Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8.)

Consequently, when the people *spread out their hands in prayer*, God would *refuse to look* at them. When the Lord shines His face upon His people and looks at them, it is a way of expressing His favor. To refuse to look at them was His way of saying He was withdrawing His blessing from them.

**What are ways you may fall into a pattern of unacceptable worship of the Lord?  
What warnings should you draw from Judah's mistakes?**

### **Day 4: We demonstrate our love of God through faithful obedience.**

***Read Isaiah 1:16-17, numbering the nine commands listed.***

The Lord gave nine commands for the people to correct their ways and demonstrate they were true followers of God. These commands were not given to secure salvation but to demonstrate the authenticity of their salvation. The first three deal with the inward removal of sin. The second three address outward devotion to Yahweh. The last three pertain to relationships with others, showing how true repentance would affect how they related to others. Instead of being the oppressors, they would oppose oppressors. Also, they would champion the cause of those who could not care for themselves, such as *the fatherless* and *widows*.

**If being devoted to God in faithful obedience does not earn our salvation,  
then why is it necessary for you to be faithfully obedient to God?**

## Day 5: God calls for sincere repentance.

*Read Isaiah 1:18-20, identifying God's request.*

The Lord takes no pleasure in disciplining His children. It is necessary for their correction, but He would rather enjoy them in sweet fellowship. If their sins are *scarlet*, they will be made *white*, non-existent. Here, the Lord made clear that He alone can cleanse us of sin. When He calls us to wash and cleanse ourselves, that washing and cleansing can happen only when we come to Him in sincere repentance (v. 16).

The Lord Jesus Christ graciously and mercifully calls to us: Whosoever will, come to Me, and I forgive you, cleanse you, and give you abundant, eternal life. Reject Me and spend eternity separated from Me. It is a choice every person must make. The Lord offers forgiveness and cleansing to all who repent—to the lost who needs salvation and to believers who seek restored fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:9).

**How does God take the initiative to bring you into a relationship with Him? How does His approach today compare with the approach found in Isaiah 1?**

## TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Isaiah 1, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

**What thoughts come to mind when you hear the words *worthless, burdensome, and meaningless*? What thoughts come to mind when you hear these words as descriptors of worship?**

**When have you seen godly actions being well displayed in a person's life or in a church?**

**Through Isaiah God foretold the outcome of obedience and of rebellion. How can we correlate these outcomes to our daily choices?**



For additional context, read “Isaiah’s Messianic Prophecies,” an archived *Biblical Illustrator* article provided via digital download in the Fall 2020 Explore the Bible Leader Pack.