

Lessons from Isaiah

1. God delights in restoration

Do you ever feel like your life is a desert wasteland and you've forgotten what rain feels like? Do you feel all prickles and prune-like? Do you keep looking back instead of facing forward because the past seems so much better than the desert-like existence you're living in? Yes, I've been there. I've wanted to go back more than I've wanted to go forward. But God doesn't go back. He longs for new in our hearts, in our minds, and in our lives. He calls us forward. Our relationship with Him should be marked by new experiences, new revelations, and new hearts.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland," Isaiah 43:18-19.

2. God shows compassion

I remember a time in my life when I felt like I had lived a thousand lifetimes. Life exhausted me. The pressure to perform crushed me. The orphan-like feeling never left me and hopelessness ruled the day. Isaiah 40:28-31 draws us to God's compassion for us.

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom," Isaiah 40:28,

You don't have to figure everything out or carry your burdens alone. Live for a God who's never exhausted, and has strength that you can tap into when you wait on Him. What does waiting look like? It's a releasing of control, and a relaxing into the gentle arms of God. It's trusting Him and believing that He never leaves nor forsakes and always, always makes a way. God delights in giving us His strength because of His compassion for us.

3. God gives us new names

He redeems you and gives you a new name. You will be called Holy, Redeemed, Sought Out, and Not Forsaken. Consider what your new names might mean for you. You are no longer bound by your sin, but called Holy and Righteous. You've been redeemed, bought with a ransom, and He is your reward. You are Sought Out: rejection has no power over you. You, who walk into a room seeking to blend in, are singled out and welcomed by the Father's loving arms. Your desperate aloneness has been traded for the constant presence of a Holy God.

"They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted," Isaiah 62:12.

4. God saves us

Fear can be a constant companion that steals our song. We may be losing the inward battle between hope and hopelessness, but God is our salvation. In Him we can put our trust, for He is worthy of it; He is our song because He saves us. God is an infinite well of hope, joy, peace, and salvation. Draw from it each and every day. Take your bucket, dump out the trash and then dip it into God's well. Humbly come to Him,

recognizing that you are incapable of affecting lasting change in your own heart and let Him fill you up with what you need. He saves. He rescues and He redeems.

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense ; he has become my salvation," Isaiah 12:2.

5. God is our Redeemer

God calls your name with love. Your name may have been spoken with hatred or disgust or condemnation, but it is precious to Him. He declares you are His. My middle name was mostly used in anger so I learned to hate my it, and in turn, my identity became skewed. But God calls us His. I imagine Him using our names with gentleness and kindness and when we tune our ears to His sweet voice, our trust in Him grows as He leads us through the rivers, the high waters, and the flames. Listen for His voice calling you redeemed and His own. There's comfort there. Learn to listen for it as He leads you.

"But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze," Isaiah 43:1-2.

6. God is a Guide

God is a shepherd. He cares for us and gathers us to His heart. He desires relationship with us. A shepherd lives with His flock and His flock trusts Him to provide green pastures and safe waters. Sometimes we have to traverse over mountain paths and steep ravines in order to make it to the next pasture. The shepherd gathers those of us who are wounded or weak and carries us so close that we can hear the way His heart beats for us. He leads us, not with a whip, but with His voice. Learn His voice so that you can hear Him whispering in your ear to turn right or left or stop or back up.

"He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young," Isaiah 40:11.

7. God comforts

Have you felt as though you were beyond forgiveness and that you might as well continue down the road you don't want to be on? Regret can lead us further into sin or it can lead us into God. So often we don't feel worthy of God's forgiveness and comfort, but we must remember that God doesn't treat us as we treat others. God sees what you've done, but He says He will heal your hurts and wounds. God will lead you in right ways that please Him, not your skewed ways that continue to mess up your life, but in the ways that bring peace to your relationships with God, yourself, and others.

"I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners," Isaiah 57:18.

8. God is Holy

There's no other way around it: our unholiness and God's holiness cannot coexist. But because God desired relationship with His people, He created the Old Testament law

not to punish His people, but to make a way for them to be in relationship with Him. But no matter how many laws the people had to follow, it couldn't erase their unholy heart condition. Hearts cannot be made holy without God's intervention, and so He did. The chasm between our hearts could only be breached by one final, perfect for all, sacrifice: Jesus, God's son.

For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. - Isaiah 57:15

9. God reveals Jesus

The whole book of Isaiah is about salvation. But before the promise of connection to God's heart is revealed, we receive a whole lot of indictment against our behavior. And if you look deep into your heart, you'll see that it's true. I know the darkest corners of my heart. I know what I'm capable of, and having it listed out in the book of Isaiah in black and white drives a dagger through my heart. But when I keep reading, I see the promise of salvation. To hear that God's heart for me is one of love, and that He makes a way into His presence through Jesus is enough to heal the wound the dagger made. Indictments. And then freedom. We are saved because God loves His people, not because He doesn't. He extended His heart to us and made a way for us to know Him through His son Jesus.

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD— and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears," Isaiah 11:1-3.

10. God is trustworthy

Trust seems in short supply these days. Is the stranger across from you foe or friend? Is the neighbour a paedophile? We teach our children to be aware of strangers. Mistrust is the order of the day. Shootings. Hatred. Suspicion. Is it any wonder that trusting God can be so difficult? But He is the most trustworthy one we will ever encounter. He is constant and consistent. His love never fails and He faithfully pursues. He longs for us to accept His offering of love. Let's say yes together. Let's try trusting God.

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. 4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal," Isaiah 26:3-4.

Isaiah paints a beautiful picture of God's heart. He is worthy of trust, full of revelation, and holy. He comforts, guides, redeems, renames, and saves us. Do you know this God? Or is your interpretation of God filled with mistrust, judgement, and confusion? Read Isaiah with new eyes. Ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart so that you may see God the way He longs to be seen. He loves you. He calls you to holiness, and He provides a way to His heart through the death and resurrection of Jesus.