

Week 26

June 25 - July 1

2 Kings 15:30-31; 16:10-20; 17:1-18:12; 2 Chronicles 28:16-31:21; Isaiah 1-5; 12-17, 28; Hosea 1-14

Faithfulness is the theme of the week. We will see illustrations of God's faithfulness to us and the people's faithfulness to Him. We will also read vivid real-life examples of what it means to be unfaithful. We will see what God thinks of being unfaithful, and we will also see how He responds to it (believe it or not, faithfully—both in love and judgment).

June 25th

2 Kings 15:30-31; 16:10-18; 17:1-4; 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 28:16-25; 29:1-2;
Isaiah 12:1-6; 17:1-14; Hosea 1:1-2:13. "Faithful Expressions"

Isaiah 12 describes songs of praise sung on a specific day (vv. 1, 4), the day when the Messiah rules the earth. Obviously, we look forward to that day with great anticipation and we will no doubt sing God's praises, but what about days other than that? Do we have as many reasons to praise the Lord now as we would then?

Isaiah describes the Lord as One who provides comfort and salvation, the source of my strength and the reason for my song, and the One who "has done wonderful things". What has the Lord done for you? Do you faithfully recognize each of God's blessings?

But Isaiah didn't leave it there. He added another dimension to it. He said that if we feel that way about the Lord, we should thank Him, praise His name, "tell the world what He has done" and "make known His praise around the world."

Why wait until then? Practice praising Him now. Express your gratitude daily. Tell others of the greatness of God.

June 26th

Hosea 2:14-8:14. "Faithful Love"

I performed a wedding ceremony a few weeks ago and not once were there promises of unfaithfulness. In fact, I've never been to a wedding where a couple vowed to be unfaithful. Yet Hosea knew his wife, Gomer, would be unfaithful. God had told the prophet this and had told him why. Hosea's life was a living love story and illustration of Israel's love story with their God.

Hosea's letter is addressed to Israel as it describes their sin and rejection of God. They turned from Him and vowed devotion to idols. They committed spiritual adultery.

Hosea was instructed to bring his wife back again from her unfaithfulness and love her. And the next sentence tells us how God does the same; "For the LORD still loves Israel even though the people have turned to other gods, offering them choice gifts" (3:1).

God is never unfaithful to us. He never trades in His love for us on someone or something else. He will never go back on His promises or change His mind, His intentions or His plans.

June 27th

Hosea 9-14. "Faithful Always"

Under Nevada state law, any county with a population of fewer than 700,000 is allowed to legalize prostitution in brothels if it so chooses (which all rural counties have had at least one legal brothel in operation at one point or another). Escort services offering sexual entertainment consume 140 pages of the Las Vegas yellow pages.

It's disturbing to even talk about prostitution. It's sad that we can pervert and degrade everything down for financial gain, and worse, justify legalizing it.

In a harsh comparison Hosea announced that Israel had been untrue to their God, "hiring themselves out like prostitutes, offering sacrifices to other gods" (9:1). In a more PC fashion, we may prefer to say "they were unfaithful," but that does not depict the severity of God's perspective. Considering the way Hosea and God describe it may help us understand the seriousness and danger in being unfaithful. "As you cannot take a day off morally and remain moral, neither can you take a day off spiritually and remain spiritual. God wants you to be entirely His, and it requires paying close attention to keep yourself fit" (Oswald Chambers).

June 28th

2 Kings 17:5-41; 18:9-12; Isaiah 1:1-20; 28:1-29. "Faithful Treatment"

Isaiah 28 closes with a wonderful poetic parable. The parable describes how a farmer deals uniquely with each crop. The farmer knows what each of his various sections of land will produce the most of a specific crop. He knows what tools will prepare the land the best. He knows what each crop will require in order to produce the highest yield.

It is apparent that this passage is dealing with discipline that Israel is about to receive. Israel is about to receive God's punishment for centuries of ignoring His rules and refusing to serve Him alone. Yet, in the parable lies the beauty of God's compassion. God's actions "will be as measured and as well-timed as a farmer's." God will take into account the vulnerability and character of Israel. He will deal with them as He knows best, so that in the end the harvest will be fruitful.

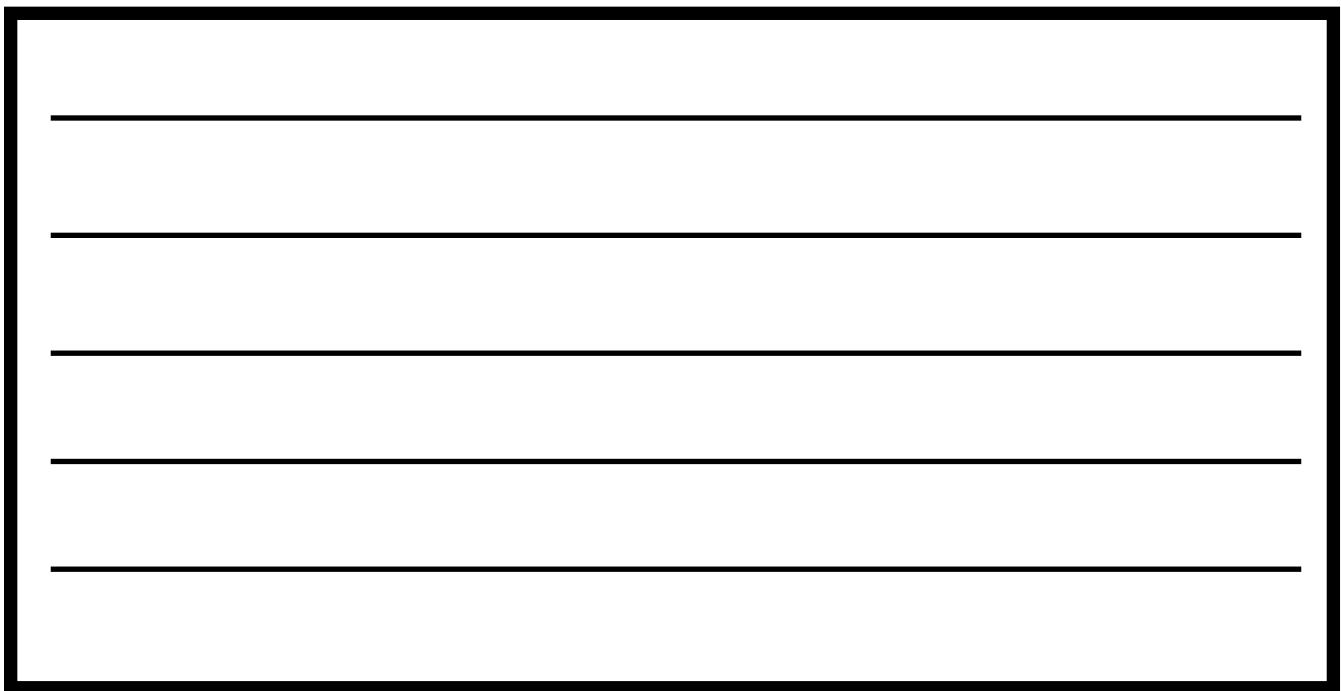
God does the same for us. He knows what we need and what we can handle. He knows how far He will need to stretch us in order to make us the most fruitful in the end.

June 29th

Isaiah 1:21-5:30. "Faithful Judgment"

"God is a judge who is perfectly fair" (Psalm 7:11a).

Today's passage testifies repeatedly of God's coming judgment. Israel and Judah were to be dealt with according to their disobedience. There are actually four things to remember as you read this passage. Number one, the judgment is warranted by the accused. Israel rejected God and everything He asked of them. Number two, the judgment is fitting to the offense. Because of Israel's rejection of God, it is appropriate that He let that choice take its course (see Rom. 1:21-32). Number three, the Judge is righteous and fair. Who are we to question the decisions and judgment of God? We all know about rules when we play a game. Rules make playing the game more enjoyable and practical. It would not make sense without them. Why do we balk at God's rules? Number four, the judgment is coming. Beyond the judgments Israel endured there is a final judgment for all people, and the duration of that sentence will be eternal. Choose wisely for there are but two options; Heaven or Hell.



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June 30th

2 Kings 16:19-20; 2 Chronicles 28:26-27; Isaiah 13-16. "Faithful Prophecies"

It is amazing to read through the passage in Isaiah as it describes the fall of Babylon and to remember that this was written a century before Babylon even became a world power. Assyria was the world power in the time of Isaiah, and Babylon is just a small part of that empire. Isaiah predicts that it will not only become a world power (which it did), but that it will also fall in such a way that it will remain desolate and uninhabited. Saddam Hussein tried for years to restore Babylon and make himself "the Nebuchadnezzar replacement".

And the prophecies didn't stop there. Isaiah continues in chapters 44 and 45 to prophesy by name who it was who would overthrow Babylon. Cyrus united the Medes and Persians and overthrew Babylon about a century after their reign as the world power.

The Medo-Persian Empire remained the world power until the Roman Empire overthrew them, which was also prophesied (very detailed in the book of Daniel).

Moral: The Bible is 100% true 100% of the time.

July 1st

2 Chronicles 29:3-31:21. "Faithful Reform"

Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, was a wicked king, as was Hezekiah's son, Manasseh. However, Hezekiah "did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight" (29:2). Hezekiah promoted reform in Judah as had not been witnessed in years. He developed a powerful prayer life and interceded for his people. He instituted civil and religious reform. He contributed generously to God's work. He aggressively removed evil influences from his life and from Judah. He reformed worship in the lives of the people. He reintroduced Passover, and rededicated the Temple.

Often our passion to reform is more in line with a failing resolution. The element missing is the heart. Reform works when the heart propels it. If our heart isn't in it, it won't last. This is confirmed by the statement at the end of chapter 31; "In all that he did in the service of the Temple of God and in his efforts to follow the law and the commands, Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful" (v. 21). As you commit to serve, obey, and grow in the Lord, make sure your heart is in it.

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

List reasons you have to praise God.

How do you do at remembering these blessings daily?

How do you do at sharing/expressing these blessings to others?

God faithfully loves Israel and the church beyond our ability to comprehend. "And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her" (Eph. 5:25). Use this opportunity to recommit your faithful love and devotion to your spouse. Perhaps even consider what damage unfaithfulness can cause.

Read Isaiah 1:21 and Hosea 9:1... List specific ways a people can "prostitute" themselves before God.

From the June 28th devotional: What comfort do you find in knowing God deals uniquely with you?

Have you ever questioned the judgment of God? Why or why not.

What difference does it make that Biblical prophecies are fulfilled? Would it truly make a difference if only 1 out of 10 was incorrect?

What does "reform" mean to you personally?