

Comfort Ye



Isaiah 40:1–11 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

In the manual: **Come, Follow Me lesson 40, “Comfort Ye My People,” on Gospel Library**

START

The first word God speaks in this part of Isaiah is “Comfort,” and he says it twice.

READ TOGETHER

In chapter 39, Isaiah warned King Hezekiah that Babylon would one day carry away his treasures and his descendants. Chapter 40 is written for the people who would live through that loss.

ISAIAH 40:1–5

¹Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. ²Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins. ³The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: ⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

ISAIAH 40:11

¹¹He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

WHAT IT TEACHES

In Hebrew, “speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem” reads *speak to the heart of Jerusalem*. It is the way you talk to someone you love when they are hurting.

Then a voice calls for a highway through the desert, with every valley raised and every hill brought low, so the Lord can come to his people. All four Gospels say John the Baptist was that voice, preparing the way for Jesus. The comfort in Isaiah 40 is Jesus Christ himself, the Shepherd in verse 11 who carries the lambs close to his chest and walks slowly with the mothers.

Verse 4 also shows our part. When we repent, we lift up what is low in us and bring down our pride, and the road is ready for him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Think of a time someone comforted you and it helped. What did they do, and who could we do that for this week?

TAKE TO CHURCH

When his people are hurting, the Lord’s first word is “comfort,” and Jesus Christ is the one who brings it.

Renew Their Strength



Isaiah 40:12–31 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

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START

Isaiah spends most of a chapter showing how great God is. Then he says all that power is for people who are tired.

READ TOGETHER

In verses 12 to 26, God measures the oceans in the hollow of his hand and treats whole nations like a drop in a bucket. In verse 27, Isaiah turns to people who feel God has lost track of them.

ISAIAH 40:22–23

²² It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: ²³ That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

ISAIAH 40:28–31

²⁸ Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. ²⁹ He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. ³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: ³¹ But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

WHAT IT TEACHES

From where God sits, the people of the earth look like grasshoppers, and the strongest rulers come to

nothing. Anyone who seems powerful in your life is small next to him.

That same God “giveth power to the faint.” Look at the order in verse 31. The eagle soars first, then the runner runs, and last comes the walker who keeps walking and does not faint. Walking is the slowest of the three. It is also the promise most of us need on an ordinary Tuesday, strength to keep going.

The Hebrew word translated “wait” also means to hope, to look for something you expect to come. Waiting on the Lord means trusting him while the strength comes.

Elder Robert D. Hales taught that “the purpose of our life on earth is to grow, develop, and be strengthened through our own experiences.”

Elder Robert D. Hales, “Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done,” General conference, October 2011

TALK ABOUT IT

Which do you need most right now, strength to run or strength to keep walking? What would waiting on the Lord look like for you this week?

TAKE TO CHURCH

God’s power rules the nations, and he gives it to people who are tired.

A Bruised Reed



Isaiah 42:1–4; 43:10 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

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START

Isaiah describes a servant of God so gentle that he will not snap a cracked reed or put out a lamp wick that is barely smoking.

READ TOGETHER

Isaiah calls this person “my servant.” Matthew quotes these verses and says they describe Jesus (Matthew 12:17–21).

ISAIAH 42:1–4

¹Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ²He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. ³A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. ⁴He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

ISAIAH 43:10

¹⁰Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

WHAT IT TEACHES

A reed with a crack in it is no good for building, and a wick that only smokes gives no light. Most people would toss both. The Lord’s servant keeps them and works with them. That is how Jesus treats people who are hurt or worn out. Verse 2 adds that he does this without shouting in the street.

In chapter 43 the Lord gives us the same title: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen.” A witness tells what they have seen. We serve him when we treat hurting people the way he has treated us.

TALK ABOUT IT

When has someone been gentle with you when you felt like a bruised reed? Who could you treat that way this week?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Jesus keeps and heals what is bruised, and his servants do the same.

Called by Name



Isaiah 43:1–2; 44:3–4 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

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START

Before God makes a single promise in Isaiah 43, he says, “I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.”

READ TOGETHER

Israel was facing exile, a disaster that would feel like being swept away. The Lord answers with two kinds of water, rivers his people must cross and water poured on dry ground.

ISAIAH 43:1–2

¹But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. ²When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

ISAIAH 44:3–4

³For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: ⁴And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

WHAT IT TEACHES

Verse 2 says “when” twice. The Lord expects his people to pass through deep water and through fire, and he promises to be with them in both.

Chapter 44 uses water a second way. This time it is poured on dry ground, and the Lord says it is his Spirit, poured out on our children. Willows grow fast wherever they find water.

Both promises rest on the first line of chapter 43. The Lord made you, and he has redeemed you. In Isaiah’s day, a redeemer was the relative who paid to set a family member free. He knows your name.

TALK ABOUT IT

What deep water is someone in our family passing through right now? How can we stay with them the way the Lord promises to stay with us?

TAKE TO CHURCH

The Lord knows your name, and he is with you in the deep water.

Half for the Fire



Isaiah 44:9–20; 47:8–10 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

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START

Isaiah tells about a man who cuts down a tree, cooks his dinner over half of it, and bows down to the other half.

READ TOGETHER

In Isaiah’s day, people carved idols from wood and metal and prayed to them. Isaiah tells this story to show how strange it is to worship something you made with your own hands.

ISAIAH 44:16–17

16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

ISAIAH 44:19

19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

WHAT IT TEACHES

The man in this story is busy, warm, and well fed. Verse 19 names his one mistake: “none considereth in his heart.” He never stops long enough to think about what he is bowing to.

Babylon makes the same mistake on a larger scale. In chapter 47 she says, “I am, and none else beside me,” which is almost word for word what God says about himself in chapter 45.

President Spencer W. Kimball wrote about modern idols. “Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn’t also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry.”

President Spencer W. Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” Ensign, June 1976

An idol today might be a phone, money, a team, or what other people think of us. Verse 19 gives the test. Stop and consider what you are trusting to save you.

TALK ABOUT IT

What do people today give their time and trust to, the way the man trusted his carved wood? Which one is hardest for you to keep in its place?

TAKE TO CHURCH

The things we make can warm us and feed us, and only God can save us.

Peace as a River



Isaiah 48:17–18 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

In the manual: **Come, Follow Me lesson 40, “Comfort Ye My People,” on Gospel Library**

General conference begins today. This lesson is short enough to fit between sessions.

START

Today prophets and apostles speak at general conference. Isaiah 48 describes what happens when people listen to the Lord and do what he says.

READ TOGETHER

For years Israel ignored the Lord’s messengers (Isaiah 48:4–8). In verses 17 and 18 he speaks to them as their Redeemer and their teacher.

ISAIAH 48:17–18

¹⁷ Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. ¹⁸ O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

WHAT IT TEACHES

In verse 17 the Lord calls himself the one “which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” His commandments are how he teaches and how he leads.

Verse 18 compares the peace that comes from hearkening to a river. A pond can dry up in a hot summer. A river keeps flowing because it is

fed from upstream. Peace that comes from following the Lord keeps coming through hard weeks, because he is its source.

President Russell M. Nelson pointed out that the first word in the Doctrine and Covenants is hearken. “It means ‘to listen with the intent to obey.’”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Hear Him,” General conference, April 2020

Conference weekend is a good time to practice. Listen for one thing the Lord wants your family to do, and then do it.

TALK ABOUT IT

What is one question or need each of us can bring to conference, so we know what to listen for?

TAKE TO CHURCH

When we listen to the Lord and do what he says, our peace keeps flowing like a river.

Graven on His Palms



Isaiah 48:10; 49:13–16 · This week: Comfort Ye My People, Isaiah 40–49

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Today is the last day of general conference. Use this lesson between sessions or after the last one.

START

In Isaiah 49, Zion says, “The Lord hath forsaken me.” God answers with a question about a mother and her baby.

READ TOGETHER

Chapters 48 and 49 speak to people who have lived through years of exile and wonder whether God still remembers them. In chapter 48, the Lord calls those years a furnace.

ISAIAH 48:10

¹⁰ Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

ISAIAH 49:13–16

¹³ Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. ¹⁴ But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. ¹⁵ Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. ¹⁶ Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

WHAT IT TEACHES

A refiner puts metal in the fire to burn away what does not belong in it, and he watches the fire the whole time. The Lord says he chose his people in

that furnace. He was with them through the hardest years of their lives.

Zion’s cry in verse 14 is what many people feel in hard times. God answers with a picture of a mother nursing her baby, the person least likely to forget.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described Isaiah’s question this way. “How absurd, he implies, though not as absurd as thinking Christ will ever forget us.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “Behold Thy Mother,” General conference, October 2015

Then the Lord says he has carved us into the palms of his hands. Centuries later, the risen Savior invited the Nephites to come one by one and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet (3 Nephi 11:14–15). He still bears those marks, and they are for us.

TALK ABOUT IT

When have you felt forgotten, and what helped you know the Lord still remembered you? Did anything at conference this weekend help?

TAKE TO CHURCH

The Lord will not forget you. He has graven you on the palms of his hands.