



LONG STORY SHORT

A Year through the Bible

Reflection Guide

The Beginning of the End 2 Kings; Isaiah

Exploring the Story, Chapter 16

In 722 BC, the northern kingdom of Israel falls to the Assyrian empire. Ten years later, the Assyrians would threaten the southern kingdom of Judah. While God delivers the people of Judah this time, the prophet Isaiah warns them of a coming exile—this time at the hands of the Babylonians.

MONDAY

Read: 2 Kings 17

Reflect: The northern kingdom of Israel finally falls to the Assyrian empire. While the story mentions King Hoshea's failed alliance with Egypt, the story also recognizes that God's hand is at work. The people had worshipped other gods and had disobeyed the covenant God had given to them. Read 17:34. What connection, if any, do you see between worship and obedience? Do you think one is more important than the other? Why or why not?

Respond: Think about your own experience of worship. How, if at all, has worship changed you to be increasingly obedient to God?

TUESDAY

Read: 2 Kings 18

Reflect: Now the Assyrians are on Judah's doorstep, threatening to overrun Jerusalem. The Assyrian envoys try to convince the people that the Lord will not fight for them and that they should surrender to the vast Assyrian army, but the Judahites do not respond to the Assyrians' taunts. When, if ever, has your Christian faith seemed outlandish to you? What is the most outlandish tenet of your faith? Why do you believe it?

Respond: Think back on your faith journey. When, if ever, has God shown up, even when people told you that God would not?

WEDNESDAY

Read: 2 Kings 19

Reflect: King Hezekiah, the king of Judah, knows that the only way he will be able to defeat the Assyrians is if he relies on God's strength and God is his only ally. God defeats the Assyrian army, and the city of Jerusalem is saved. With what besides God are you tempted to ally yourself when you are facing a difficult circumstance? Why? In the past how have these other alliances worked for you?

Respond: In prayer, rededicate yourself to God and ask God to

help you depend increasingly on God alone.

THURSDAY

Read: Isaiah 3–6

Reflect: The prophet Isaiah presents God's case against the people of Judah. More than simply being idolatrous and disobedient, God accuses the people of perverting justice and confusing evil for righteousness. Based on what you have read, what is the massive injustice that is most concerning to God? As you look at your own community, what injustices, if any, do you see? How might God be calling you to address these issues?

Respond: In prayer, ask God to help you see injustice and oppression and to inspire you to work to correct these problems.

FRIDAY

Read: Isaiah 13–14

Reflect: Isaiah tells the people of Judah that they will face exile at the hands of the Babylonians, but God also announces that God will rescue the people from Babylon and lead them back to the land. People from all over the world will come to the promised land and join Israel in worshiping God. In the midst of a difficult time, what, if anything, gives you hope? How, if at all, do you try to share that hope with others?

Respond: Look back on your faith journey. What aspect of your faith, if any, carried you through rough times?

SATURDAY

Read: Isaiah 49

Reflect: Isaiah tells the people about a coming servant who will fulfill Israel's role as being a light to the world, displaying the glory of God on earth. As God's glory shines, justice, mercy, peace, and abundance reign, and people from all over the world will be faithful to God. As you read these images of hope and comfort, what emotions does it evoke in you? Why? Which parts resonate most deeply with you? How would you translate this message of hope into contemporary language?

Respond: As a way of engaging more deeply with this passage, sketch a picture of these images of hope.

SUNDAY

Read: Isaiah 53

Reflect: The book of Isaiah is the most-quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. With passages such as this one, it is easy to understand why. As we read the Old Testament story through the lens of Jesus Christ, we gain new insight into the big story of God's saving work. Consider what you have read over the past weeks as part of Long Story Short. What insights, if any, have you gained into the big story of the Bible? What questions, if any, do you still have?

Respond: In worship this morning, thank and praise God because God is revealed to us in the story of Scripture.