

## Devotions for July 18 -July 24, 2011

### **Monday, July 18, 2011: *Sour to Sweet* Daily reading: Isaiah 29:13-14**

Scholars debate whether Isaiah was written by one person or many. Authorship is claimed by Isaiah ben Amoz. Born into an influential, upper-class family, Isaiah knows royalty and gives advice concerning the nation's foreign affairs. He marries a prophetess, and they have at least two children. Isaiah lives in Judah, and, according to tradition, is sawn in two inside of a hollow log during the reign of Manasseh. Chapters 1-39 are primarily a scathing condemnation of God's people in their failure to trust and obey God. Chapters 40-66 are filled with hope, as Isaiah points to God's promises for future blessing, especially through the Messiah. Today's verses are a good example of the correction Isaiah brings to the Israelites. This book moves from sour to sweet. Where do you need to move from sour to sweet? Ask God to speak a word of sweetness into your life today.

### **Tuesday, July 19, 2011: *god and God* Daily reading: Isaiah 44:6-8**

Isaiah 44 speaks to God's people in exile. Imagine the trauma these people have experienced: they've lost their homes, possessions and freedom. Even loved ones are lost in the conflict leading to exile. On a spiritual level, the people wrestle with their identity. The ancient belief is that when nations engage in battle, their gods engage in battle, too. The victorious nation obviously has more powerful deities. Can you imagine the impact of that belief on the Israelites, whose entire identity is predicated upon their covenant relationship with Yahweh? It is to this issue that Isaiah addresses today's text. What impact would it have on you to come to the conclusion that your God was defeated by someone else's God? Where are you feeling defeated? Ask God to bring you back home from your exile.

### **Wednesday, July 20, 2011: *Future* Daily reading: Isaiah 49:5-7**

Israel need not fear for themselves or their future. All that they have experienced was and is in the hands of the Lord. God allows them to be exiled to discipline them for greater obedience and a clearer witness. Now God's power will be seen in their release from captivity. Far from being defeated or dead, Yahweh is very much large and in charge. There are no other gods. Yahweh is all in all, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Since Yahweh is the God of the Israelites, they need not fear. Instead, they are called to experience, and then give witness to, the power of God at work, restoring the nation once more. Can you imagine how hard it would be to believe the words of this prophet, and then believe that you will be a light to the nations while you are in captivity? What do you believe about your future? Can you see beyond your own circumstances? Ask God to give you great hope for the future.

### **Thursday, July 21, 2011: *Discipline* Daily reading: Isaiah 44:6-8 again**

Isaiah tells these defeated people that what they see and experience is not the whole story. It is God who allows Assyria to defeat them, to discipline them for their faithlessness and injustice toward the poor and the weak. But God's discipline has a purpose: not just to punish, but to teach. God calls the Israelites to turn back to God and live in faithfulness. Isaiah tells them that soon God will come and set them free; lead them back victoriously to their homeland, and restore their fortunes. Then Israel will bear witness to all that God has done, that the world might know that the Lord God is the God of all creation, and that there is no other god. Do you think God's heart breaks over our treatment of the poor and the weak? Ask God to open your heart to the things that really matter to God.

### **Friday, July 22 2011: *Life from Death* Daily reading: John 11:25-27**

Life from death. Isn't that the good news that God still proclaims into our lives through Jesus? Isn't that the good news we need to hear over and over again when we feel lost, defeated, confused, hopeless and at the end of our rope? Don't we all need regular reminders that no matter how abandoned we feel, we are never alone? There is no darkness so deep that the light of God's love in Jesus Christ cannot penetrate and dispel it. We all need Isaiahs to remind us of the truth of God's enduring presence and steadfast love. We all need Isaiahs to remind us that nothing is beyond God's redemption and restoration. Is there anything in your life that seems beyond redemption and restoration? Ask God for new life today.

### **Saturday, July 23, 2011: *Perspective* Daily reading: John 8:12-15**

The world is filled with people who are lost in darkness, struggling with identity, feeling defeated, and despairing. We are called to be Isaiahs, empowered to share the good news of God's steadfast love, enduring presence, and redemptive power. The good news that the light of Christ is more than enough to dispel the darkness. Who do you know in some kind of captivity today? Who do you know in need of an Isaiah to proclaim the good news, to help them to see life from a different perspective? Be an Isaiah to them today. Who is an Isaiah to you? Ask God to lead you to the person who needs you to speak words of hope into their darkness.

### **Sunday, July 24, 2011: *Identity* Daily reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

Let Isaiah speak into our circumstances. We, too, struggle with identity. We are captive not only to sin, but to the mindset of the world. We are focused on success and power. We are tempted to buy and accumulate more and more in the attempt to find contentment. Isaiah's message confronts our lack of trust in God, and encourages us that God's incredible love can set us free. Let's learn from Isaiah that we are called to be people who lovingly confront the sin of the world and proclaim the good news of God's liberating power. Our identity is not established or measured by earthly standards. What might seem foolish is actually wise. We find that in God's world we can see our circumstances with a new perspective. Where do you find your identity? Where are you most fully you? Ask God to help you see your identity through a new lens.