



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Vision Sunday Sermon given on Sept 10, 2023

by Rachel Keeler

BIG NEW THINGS – Isaiah 43:1-6, 14-21



I. Introduction

Welcome to Vision Sunday, the official kick off to the new ministry year. Our theme this year is **“New Beginnings: Preparing for What’s Next”**. There are so many ways that this is a time for new beginnings: we’re still rebuilding our church on the other side of the pandemic; we’re trying to figure out what church looks like in the current political and social landscape; and we’re preparing for a leadership transition here at Grace. So in many ways, we’re sensing God calling us to be ready for what’s next and we’re focusing this year on preparing our hearts and minds for the new things God wants to do here.

Question: How do we prepare for what’s next?

Bottom Line: Only when our hearts are open to new things can we experience all that God wants to give us.

Let’s begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings:Isaiah 43:1-6, 14-21

1 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.
3 For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom,
Cush^[a] and Seba in your stead.
4 Since you are precious and honored in my sight,
and because I love you,
I will give people in exchange for you,
nations in exchange for your life.
5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you;
I will bring your children from the east
and gather you from the west.
6 I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’
and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’
Bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the ends of the earth—

14 This is what the LORD says—
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
“For your sake I will send to Babylon
and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians,^[a]
in the ships in which they took pride.
15 I am the LORD, your Holy One,
Israel’s Creator, your King.”
16 This is what the LORD says—
he who made a way through the sea,
a path through the mighty waters,
17 who drew out the chariots and horses,
the army and reinforcements together,
and they lay there, never to rise again,
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:

- ¹⁸ ***“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.***
¹⁹ ***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.***
²⁰ The wild animals honor me,
the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
²¹ the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

II. **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. When was the last time you had the opportunity to embrace something new?
When was the last time you sensed God invited you to embrace something new?
How did you respond to that opportunity?
2. The context of today’s passage occurs after a long period where the people of Israel experienced exile in Babylon and the destruction of their city Jerusalem. God gives Isaiah this message of hope, a promise of rescue and restoration, to deliver to God’s people.
 - Read Isaiah 43:1-6 – either individually or as a group.
 - What promises or phrases resonate with you? Bring encouragement or comfort?
 - What do you notice about God, His Word, His character?
3. Isaiah 43:18-19 says, *“Forget the former things; do not dwell in 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.”*

It is common human tendency to become so focused on the past that it keeps us from seeing what is happening in the present. It happens in our personal and professional lives. It can easily happen in our faith lives too.

- Can you think of a time when you were stuck in the past that you missed a great opportunity?
- How about in your faith journey? Can you think of a time when you were too focused on the past that it prevented you from seeing the new things God is doing in your present?
- What helps you to overcome being stuck in the past? To keep you focused on God?

4. In Isaiah 43:19, *wilderness* is a metaphor for intense personal struggle or challenges. We all have a wilderness in our lives. It could be internal, or related to our family, friends or colleagues at work. It might be a broken relationship, a health issue, financial problem or spiritual struggle.
 - Think about an experience where you went through a wilderness. How did God meet you in that time? How did you overcome?
 - Are you currently going through a wilderness? If so, how can the group pray and support you? What promises of God can you hold onto?

God wants to meet you in your wilderness, in and through a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and do a new thing in your life. At Grace, we developed a framework called the “Connection Pathways” to live out the vision to “discover life with God for the good of the world.” We invite you to prayerfully lean into which pathway God may be inviting you to focus this season.

1. Being curious
2. Growing with practice
3. Finding community
4. Making an Impact

5. Pastor Rachel introduced two new members of our congregation who were recently baptized, Cliff and Marsha.

Cliff explained how the story of Joseph in Exodus changed his perspective as he navigated challenges in his marriage and the workplace.

He quoted Genesis 50:20:

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Marsha said that she has been transformed through Christ, that now she has the courage to do things that used to frighten her. She referenced 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

- For those who heard their testimonies, how did their stories resonate with you? Encourage you?
 - What is your story? What were the “former things” in your life you were tempted to “dwell on?” What new thing have you sensed God doing in your life in your cent years?
6. What new thing might God want to do in your life this year?

Take Home Message:

Whatever it is that you are struggling with, God wants to meet you just as you are, in and through a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. He wants to do something new in this season of your life. *This is a year to lean in, invite God into our wilderness experiences and open our hearts to hear the new things he wants to do.*

Let's Pray**III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search**

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

Prayers for Preparation of the heart – Listening & Inviting

- Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

Prayers for the Purposes of God

- Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

Prayers for the People of Grace

- Pray that Grace Chapel will to seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

Prayers for the Person God's calling

- Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

Prayers for the Process of discernment

- Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

IV. The Journey

Stay tuned for updates on the newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool.

We invite your group to take the assessment and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- A prophet is someone chosen by God to deliver His message to the people. These messages are often judgements, accusing people of failing to worship and honor their relationship with God and others, and also warning them of the consequences. Prophets also bring messages of hope and confidence in God's mercy, forgiveness, and his faithfulness.
- When we are always looking to the past, we may miss what God is trying to do in our lives right now.
- It's never too late. God is a God of new beginnings. He is always doing something new in our lives, making all things new. His mercies are new every morning. There is always a next invitation, another opportunity, a new "new thing."
- Grace Chapel's Vision: Discovering life with God for the good of the world
- A Pathway for Everyone: Ongoing next steps for starting and growing in faith
 - ◆ *Being curious:* having an open mind to new ideas and experiences
 - ◆ *Growing with practice:* being deliberate about developing spiritual practices (worship, prayer, Scripture reading, solitude, generosity)
 - ◆ *Finding community:* our relationship with others should reflect our relationship with God
 - ◆ *Making an impact:* allowing Christ to live through us so that God can restore the world