

**Sermon Notes 5/5/24**  
**“Divine Direction”**

**How can we follow divine direction in a wicked world?**

1. We must take refuge in \_\_\_\_\_.

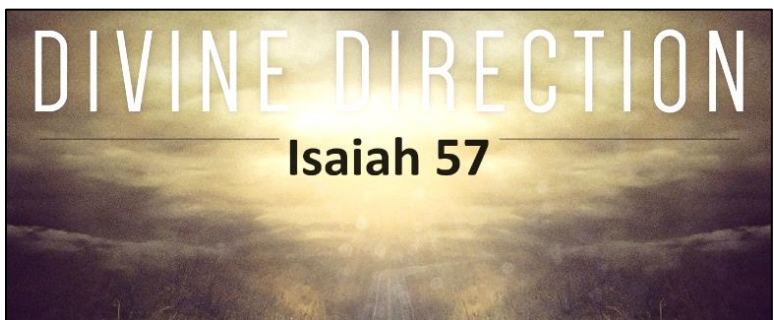
Isaiah 57:13  
Isaiah 57:5-6  
1 John 2:15-17  
Matthew 11:28-30

2. We must build up \_\_\_\_\_ way.

Isaiah 57:14  
Isaiah 57:7-10  
Colossians 2:6-8

3. We must have \_\_\_\_\_ hearts.

Isaiah 57:15  
Isaiah 57:3-4  
James 4:7-10  
Proverbs 3:5-7



# Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 52: May 5-12

Isaiah 57

In Isaiah chapter 57, the prophet continues to rebuke the evil leaders of Judah (56:9-12). As righteous people were dying, the culture was becoming more corrupt. They were falling deeper into greed, sexual immorality, idolatry, and child sacrifice. But God did not give up on His people. He had a plan to revive them, heal them, and restore them. He had a direction for them to follow that would bring them peace. And God wants to do the same thing for us. No matter how corrupt our culture becomes, God has a good plan for us to follow that will bring us peace. But how can we follow divine direction in a wicked world?

## Read Isaiah 57

1. What did the people fail to consider and understand about the death of righteous people? (57:1-2)

James Smith notes,

God was slowly removing the righteous prematurely by death from the midst of Jerusalem. The leaders did not take note of this warning. Those who had lived upright lives passed by means of death into peace. They rested upon the bed of their graves. Thus, God was delivering the faithful from the moral evil of their surroundings, and from the calamity which was about to befall Judah (57:1–2). (Smith, 153)

2. Who does God address in verse 3?

3. Based on the context, what are the answers to the rhetorical questions in verse 4?

Terry Briley writes,

The description in the following verses again brings Isaiah's message back to the present condition of his generation. This generation is the product (עֲרֵב, *gera'*) of bad parenting. The children rebel against the covenant because they are offspring of adulterers and prostitutes (cf. 1:21). They treat those who speak the truth with contempt (cf. 28:9-18) because they are the offspring of liars. (Briley, 250)

4. What were the people doing to their children in verse 5?
5. How did God describe the idolatry of His people? (57:6-8)

Many of the worship rituals of Canaanite idolatry included sexual immorality. However, the Old Testament prophets often described idolatry as spiritual adultery. Ray Ortlund comments,

Isaiah understands that God's covenant with us is marital in nature. God loves us with a jealous love, like a man's passion for his wife. Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, all told us that treating God as if he weren't enough to satisfy us is spiritual whoredom. It's why we must bring our emptiness to Christ and satisfy ourselves again and again. It's why the most important thing about us is our love for Christ, our openness to him alone. (Ortlund, 382)

6. How did the people demonstrate the level of their devotion to their idols? (57:9-10)
7. What questions did God ask His people in verse 11?
8. How would their own accomplishments help the people in the time of God's judgment? (57:12)
9. What would happen to all the idols of the people? (57:13)
10. What would happen to those who take refuge in the LORD? (57:13)
11. What commands did God give to His people in verse 14?

Briley observes,

The bleak prospects in Isaiah's day for a righteous and trusting Israel will not stop God from accomplishing his purpose. The existence of a faithful remnant, no matter how small, holds out the prospect for a better future because of God's ability to work through that which is weak by human standards... God can transform what appears to be an abject defeat into glorious triumph. (Briley, 252)

12. What does God tell us about Himself in verse 15?

Ortlund notes,

Where is God? In two places. He dwells in the high and holy place, where we can't go. And he dwells among the lowly and contrite, where we can go. So, the way to find God is obvious. Humble yourself, and he'll find you. God is not like us. For us, there's no neighborhood too classy for us to move up to, if only we can afford it. But God doesn't value upward mobility. He values downward mobility—not because he feels uncomfortable dwelling in the high and holy place, but because down low is where he finds the people who are open to him. (Ortlund, 383)

13. How did the people of Judah respond to God's discipline? (57:16-17)

14. Despite their stubbornness, what was God planning to do for His people? (57:18-19)

Ortlund observes,

Didn't Jesus say, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)? Didn't Paul say, "Christ came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near" (Ephesians 2:17)? If we stay low before him, he will dwell among us with a peace and a healing and a comfort we can't explain except as a miracle of the Holy Spirit. He offers healing to all, both insiders and outsiders. (Ortlund, 383-384)

15. What warning did God give to those who remain wicked? (57:20-21)

16. What do you think God wants us to "ponder" and "take to heart" the death of the righteous?

17. How can we encourage the next generation to honor and trust God?

18. What does it mean for us to take refuge in the Lord?

19. How can we remove obstacles out of the way, and help people to come to the Lord?

20. How will you maintain a humble heart this week?

**Sources cited:**

Briley, Terry R. *Isaiah: Volume 2*. College Press, 2004.

Ortlund, Ray. *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*. Crossway, 2005.

Smith, James. *The Major Prophets*. College Press, 1992.