

# Life Group Guide: Personal Vision

Feb 2-8 2020

**Focus:** The goal of this gathering is to be able to process Isaiah 43 and talk about our own personal vision. The guide focuses in on verses 18 & 19 to not dwell on the past, but to see what *new* thing God is doing.

**Prep:** We used the video to give a lot more of the cultural context for this time, so the main prep is simply in focusing in on what questions you think would be best to create a fruitful, meaningful, and transparent discussion.

## Video:

Show the video. It is about 5 minutes long. It will set up the conversation on personal vision.

## Scripture:

### Isaiah 43:14-28 (NIV)

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,

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.

22 “Yet you have not called on me, Jacob,

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- you have not wearied yourselves for me, Israel.
- 23 You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings,  
nor honored me with your sacrifices.
- I have not burdened you with grain offerings  
nor wearied you with demands for incense.
- 24 You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me,  
or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices.
- But you have burdened me with your sins  
and wearied me with your offenses.
- 25 “I, even I, am he who blots out  
your transgressions, for my own sake,  
and remembers your sins no more.
- 26 Review the past for me,  
let us argue the matter together;  
state the case for your innocence.
- 27 Your first father sinned;  
those I sent to teach you rebelled against me.
- 28 So I disgraced the dignitaries of your temple;  
I consigned Jacob to destruction  
and Israel to scorn.

## Reflection Time

- We recommend taking about 4-5 minutes for people to reflect after the passage. But before you do, say something like:
  - “I encourage you to first take a couple minutes to reflect on this passage and the video, come up with any questions, connections, or what the passage says to you tonight.”

## Questions for Discussion:

*Leaders: Remember to mark the questions that are most pertinent ahead of time.*

**Question:** In verses 16 and 17, Isaiah is reminding the readers (and us) of who He is, what He has done, to show how God has been faithful. What are some stories or ways you have seen where God been faithful in your own life?

- *Possible follow up after sharing:* How has that encouraged your faith?

**Question:** Verse 18 says to “forget the former things and don’t dwell on the past.” Why do you think it’s tempting for people to not just reflect and learn from the past, but to get stuck looking backwards?

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**Observation:** Verse 19 says that God is doing a NEW thing. But an interesting question is asked in "Do you not perceive it?", insinuating we could be missing what God is doing.

**Question:** How do we become more aware of the new things God is doing? What are the effects when we miss what God is doing?

Ex of becoming more aware: watching, reflecting, and then celebrating whenever you notice God doing a good work. Another idea is to tell others the story of what God is doing so you can celebrate together. That encourages everyone's faith!

Also, intentionality: You find the things that you are looking for. If you want to know what God is doing, it requires intentionality in seeking after Him and looking intentionally for where He is moving.

Ex of missing it: busyness may make it harder, not spending time with God consistently.

**Observation:** If God is doing a new thing, it implies a freshness to God's work. It's not stale - He's even "making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

**Question:** Why do you think God uses the imagery of streams in the wasteland and a way in the wilderness? What is it about growth and guidance that appeals to us?

**Question:** How do we make sure that our personal vision for our lives aligns with God's vision?

**Question:** Since God is doing a new thing, and his mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23), what do you see as your personal vision for this next season in your life?

Ask the question a different way: How are you hoping to use your life to glorify God in 2020?

**Question:** If you were to help someone create their own vision of their life and to be focused on Him doing a new thing in their life, what sorts of ideas would you share to help them cultivate a God-aligned vision for their life?

**Observation:** Verse 25 talks about our sins being blotted out, a clear pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. This is another way that's pointing forward to a brighter future. Not one in captivity, but one filled with hope.

**Question:** How do we, as followers of Jesus, look to the overarching story of God to help provide our eternal hope?

**Observation:** Verse 19 - This new work that God is about to do will be so extraordinary as to transcend even the earlier work of the Exodus. Therefore, Israel must let go of the old imagery in order to understand the new. Note the reversal of what happened before: Instead of a way through the sea, it will be through the desert. Instead of the sea made into dry land, the desert will bring forth life giving water.

**Question:** In what ways do we need to let go of what or how God did something in the past to be open to what He has for our future?

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**Observation:** Verses 22-28 serve as an explanation of Israel's current status. They are in exile now because of their past sins. Prior to the destruction in 587 B.C., their prayers had been insincere (v.22), their worship empty (v.23), their devotion lacking (v.24), and their sins weighty (v.24). For these reasons, Yahweh brought destruction (v.28).

**Question:** In what ways do you think it's easiest for any of us to fall away from our vision from God and get caught up in the same mistakes as what happened to these Israelites?

**Observation:** Part of the theme of this passage is that Israel has been unfaithful, but God has continued to be faithful and merciful, despite this. The Bible says that we all sin (Romans 3:23), so we all let God down and are unfaithful to Him at some point.

**Question:** How have you seen his faithfulness to you even through your failures?

**Observation:** One thing to take note of is all the language used is with personal pronouns of "I" for God and "you". This shows God is personally invested in His people. And shares to begin the passage "Do not fear, for I am with you." This passage provides us so much hope - that even in a situation as dark and terrifying as being held as a captive - God is still there. God still cares. God is still with us. He still notices us.

## Prayer:

If anyone has shared anything from their heart about their own personal vision, whether a struggle or a dream, this would be a great place to focus on for prayer. A few potential questions to open up prayer time could be:

- *Topic focused prayer:* In the vision for your life, what are you hoping God will do?
- *Personal connection focus:* How can we as a community pray for what's going on in your life right now?