



Lift Your Eyes

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL DAY

MARCH 1, 2023



greater^{europe}mission
SPIRITUAL LIFE

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WELCOME

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



Welcome fellow GEMers!

Whether you're joining us online today or doing this on your own, we're so glad God has given you the gift of this time with Him and that you've chosen to accept it! Our primary passage for today is Isaiah 40, especially the last ten verses.

A passage about God's ability to renew us seemed like an obvious choice for a spiritual renewal day and the rejoinder to "lift your eyes" felt particularly apt as this is a time to turn our eyes from the details of life for a long look at the One who gives us life.

But then, to our surprise and delight, one of the other words that kept standing out was "whirlwind." Are whirlwinds renewing? Maybe not, but when Krishana described living through a recent night of tornado warnings, Karen pointed out how the shape of a whirlwind (or tornado) broadens as you move your eyes upward. It seemed like such a perfect picture of the spectrum of God's character we see in Isaiah 40—from the pointed intimacy of Him carrying us close to His heart to the breadth of His power as Lord of creation.

Going back to Scripture we were reminded of other examples, both of God speaking in strength, such as His address to Job out of the whirlwind (Job 38:1), as well as Him coming in a gentle whisper, like He does to Elijah in the cave (1 Kings 19:12).

We trust that as you "lift your eyes," our infinite God will meet you in whatever way you need through this passage. We look forward to hearing some of those stories in our debrief time this afternoon!

Lifting our eyes with you,
Karen, Krishana, and Lynnae

WHAT TO EXPECT

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



Expect God to speak to you and be with you. God is the one who initiates relationship with us. He delights in you and has specific ways He is engaging with you in this season. Be aware of what God brings to your mind of His person.

Talk to God honestly about what you are feeling or thinking. Then take some time to sit quietly with Him—being with Him and listening to Him. When we are with a trusted friend, there are times of sharing and times of quiet. Give space for God to speak to you or to just be silent together.

You can also expect that there will be some moments of distraction or discomfort. Silence and listening can be difficult. They require us to relinquish control. We must acknowledge that God is His own person and can choose to speak (or not) when and how He wants.

Additionally, there is our own internal activity that is not easily stilled. The word of God is “alive and active” but so are our hearts and minds. We have a multitude of things, within and without, vying for our attention. It is important therefore, as we listen to God, to extend ourselves grace as we dance back and forth between focus and distraction.

Author Adele Calhoun encourages us, “Rather than judging ourselves as a miserable failure on the basis of inner detours, humbly return listening attention to Jesus.”

What will help you enter a time of listening to God right now?

PREPARING FOR YOUR RENEWAL DAY



Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31

God is the one initiating and pursuing us in relationship with Him but there are ways we can prepare for time with Him both externally and internally.

External preparations include things like picking the place you want to spend your time with God and making sure it has the things you will need (your Bible, a journal, ...) as well as removing things you won't need (potential distractions such as unfinished work, phone, etc.). It can also include letting family and colleagues know you will be unavailable during that time and asking a close friend to pray for you.

Internal preparation happens when we take time to pay attention to what is going on in our hearts, minds, and bodies. We ask God to help us notice which things are pulling our attention away from Him or hindering our ability to notice and respond to Him. And we see what things He may be inviting us to bring into interaction with Him. This can happen before and throughout our time with God.

For example, I may notice that my thoughts keep turning to a conversation from the previous day that I need to release to His care. I may realize that I'm experiencing feelings of fear that God will not meet me in this time or that He will say something I don't want to hear, and then be able to bring those fears to the Lord. Recognizing tension in my neck could point to frustration that I'm not getting what I expected out of the day and lead me to God's invitation to surrender my plans and ask for a more open heart.

For more, see this article on preparing for a day with God or our Day with God Organizer.

RENEWAL DAY OVERVIEW



Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31

The time schedule is identical for both Central European Time and Mountain Standard Time. Use this Zoom link for the whole day:

[ZOOM MEETING LINK](#)

09H00 – 10H00

Full Group Zoom Meeting

Introduction, Large Group Time, Small Group Time

10H00 – 12H30

Personal Reflection Time #1

12H30 – 13H00

Full Group Zoom Meeting

Midday Group Reflection

13H00 – 16H00

Personal Reflection Time #2

16H00 – 16H30

Full Group Zoom Meeting

Wrap up / Debrief

REFLECTIONS

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



09H00 – 10H00

Full Group Zoom Meeting

Introduction, Large Group Time, Small Group Time

Small group discussion questions:

- Which sound resonated the most with you?
- What characteristic of God did it remind you of and why are you drawn to that today?
- What is one word that your group members can pray for you as you enter this time with God?
- After someone shares, thank them for sharing and pray this prayer over them, including the word from the previous question:

Thank you, Lord, for your work in _____. We pray for your wisdom, love, strength and grace for _____ during this time.

10H00 – 12H30

Personal Reflection Time #1

Read through Isaiah 40:21-27 slowly. Try reading it again out loud, if you have the opportunity to do so.

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

*He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.*

*He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*

REFLECTIONS (continued)

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



*He brings princes to naught
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.*

*No sooner are they planted,
no sooner are they sown,
no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.*

*“To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?*

*He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing” (Isaiah 40:21-26 NIV).*

point of view: *a position or perspective from which something is
considered or evaluated*

Take a few moments and consider the last time things looked small because of your point of view. You could have been looking at the world from the top of a mountain peak. Or from the top floor of a major skyscraper. Maybe you even journeyed to the top of a Ferris wheel.

Before you got to that point of view, what was it like to look up to where you were headed? Can you describe it?

REFLECTIONS (continued)

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



In this passage, we're given God's point of view. Which description are you drawn to the most?

If we take an even broader view of Isaiah 40, we see that in our smallness, the love and care of God, the Creator of all things, is evident.

"He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young" (Isaiah 40:11 NIV).

Take some time to have a conversation with God the Creator. Notice what it's like to bring yourself—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to the conversation. How does His perspective impact yours?

Take some time to have a conversation with Jesus the Shepherd (as we see in Psalm 23). Notice what it's like to bring yourself—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to the conversation. How does His perspective impact yours?

Where are you needing to lift your eyes today to the One who is not only your Creator, but also your Shepherd?

Explore more of God's majesty: Read Isaiah 40:10-14 and consider spending time in worship.

REFLECTIONS (continued)

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



12H30 – 13H00

Full Group Zoom Meeting

Midday Group Reflection

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God”? v. 27

- Speak honestly, release demands, humbly listen to God’s heart of love.

13H00 – 16H00

Personal Reflection Time #2

This morning we lifted our eyes to see God in his majesty and power. This afternoon we shift our gaze to God’s face looking upon us. Isaiah 40:27-31 (NIV) is the text we will rest in.

Read the text out loud, slowly, and ask God to allow you to hear it as if for the first time. Don’t analyze it. Just hear it.

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God”?

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,

and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary

and increases the power of the weak.

REFLECTIONS (continued)

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



(cont.)

*Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

Give yourself at least two to five minutes of silence between readings.

Read the text a second time. Notice any reaction you have to a particular word or phrase. What attracts you or disturbs you?

Sit for a few minutes with what you noticed.

Read the text a third time. Ask God if He has something for you to hear or notice from this text?

Stay in quiet before God with whatever is happening inside you. Then, rest in the knowledge of God's love for you in a few minutes of silence.

In response, journal, or draw/paint a picture, or take a walk with God and allow Him to continue the conversation. Perhaps place one or all of these questions before God? Is there an invitation from God in this text?

Is there an area of your life where you feel God has abandoned you – disregarded your cause?

What does it mean for you to 'put your hope in the Lord'? What could that look like?

REFLECTIONS (continued)

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



16H00 – 16H30

Full Group Zoom Meeting

Wrap up / Debrief

Notes:

APPENDIX

Lift Your Eyes ~ Isaiah 40:21-31



Additional Scripture: 1Kings 19; Job 38-42; Psalm 62; Matthew 27:45-54; Romans 11:33-36

Family Resources:

- <https://gemspirituallife.com/spiritual-formation-for-families/>
- <https://gemspirituallife.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/07/Family-Day-Away-Organizer-2021.pdf>

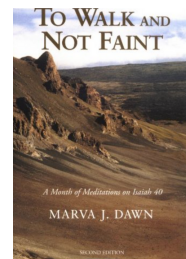
Lent Suggestions:

- <https://www.faithward.org/daily-lent-devotions>
- <https://ccca.biola.edu/lent>
- Podcast: Lent for Leaders: With God in the Wilderness
<https://www.podbean.com/ep/pb-dtung-11b0200>

Book ideas:

(Keeping It Simple)

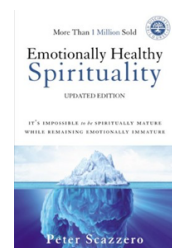
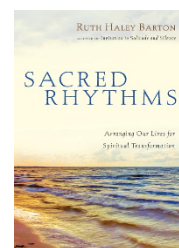
The Life You've Always Wanted, by John Ortberg



To Walk and Not Faint: a Month of Meditations on Isaiah 40,
by Marva J. Dawn

(Going Deeper)

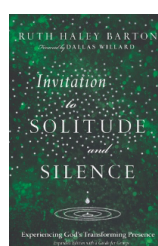
Sacred Rhythms, by Ruth Haley Barton



Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, by Peter Scazzero

(Deeper Still)

Invitation to Silence and Solitude, by Ruth Haley Barton



Renovation of the Heart, by Dallas Willard