

Remembering: Leaders' Guide

Isaiah 63:7-9

28 December 2025

Read Isaiah 63:7-9 and be prepared to explore more of chapters 63 and 64 as necessary. It would be nice if you can read both chapters in advance but it would be too much to read in the group.

1. When you look back on various situations in years past, particularly difficult ones, are there situations where you are aware that your remembering is more positive than when you were going through it? James talked about the “experiencing self” and the “remembering self” (from Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal*) and how they often differ. James mentioned one reason why the remembering self could be more positive than the experiencing self. What was it and might there be any other reasons for the difference?

One reason the “experiencing self” can be more negative than the “remembering self” is that in the middle of the experience we have no assurance that we will survive the experience let alone thrive. The uncertainty of outcome and fear of the unknown tends to give us a more negative perspective.

2. Isaiah 63:7 to the end of chapter 64 is a lament. How does this lament differ from the patterns of the psalms of lament (see, for example, Psalm 13, 74)?

“The Psalms generally start with a blunt declaration of what is wrong with the current situation and then, with nothing having changed in those circumstances, the psalmist shifts to the discipline of praise and thanksgiving - often a recounting of God’s historic faithfulness to Israel. This lament is different in that it starts with God’s historic faithfulness to Israel.”

3. What is the risk in recounting God’s faithfulness?

“The risk of remembering and recalling God’s faithfulness is that it may very well expose the vast chasm between God’s faithfulness and our own lack thereof.”

4. In the sermon James said that it is a work of the Spirit that enables us to see both the faithfulness of God and our own lack thereof. Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.

Because it isn’t a good feeling, it might be less obvious that sorrow over our prodigal ways is as much a work of the Holy Spirit as being able to see God’s faithfulness woven into the very fabric of our lives and world. Yet a “Godly sorrow that leads to repentance” (2 Cor 7:10) is necessary to the life of faith.

5. According to the sermon what is the difference between condemnation and conviction? How should we respond to each?

Condemnation is a final judgement and punishment.... There is no recourse, no stay of sentence, and most significantly, no hope.... **Conviction**, on the other hand, is the loving light of God's holiness shone on our waywardness, with the invitational words, "I made you for more. Come this way.... In this direction lies your purpose and who you were meant to be - and along with it love, joy, peace and hope." Words of **condemnation** are satanic lies and must be rejected in Jesus' name. **Conviction** should be responded to with a ready repentance that leads to reconciliation.

6. There is spiritual opposition to our ability to see God's faithfulness on the one hand and our own unfaithfulness on the other. If by God's grace we are able to see both of those things with greater clarity, what is a third area of spiritual battle that it is good to be aware of and engage in with greater clarity?

"It has to do with where our focus lies. If, like the prophet, we are overcome with remorse and sorrow at our unfaithfulness, both individually and collectively,... we may yet be tempted to remain focused on the wrong thing. We might be tempted to remain obsessed with our radical and inexcusable infidelities. But, by that same Holy Spirit, we are free to choose where our focus should be: which is the radical and inexplicable faithfulness and mercy of God. And our Godly sorrow should be swallowed up by a profound joy and gratitude for that faithfulness and mercy."

7. But it all starts with identifying the unfailing love, the faithfulness of God that is woven into the very fabric of our lives. You might want to close out your time together by practicing that particular aspect of spiritual seeing - which is the spiritual discipline of thanksgiving.

Where do you see the faithfulness and love of God in your life - and in each other's lives? Often we can have blind spots in our own lives where others may more easily see God's faithfulness. However, if someone is struggling with a grief or disappointment that makes it hard to see God's love and faithfulness, treat the situation tenderly. Make room for the pain that may come to the surface in such a time.