

Faith in the Power of God

“Where is Alexis now?” asked Dana’s sister, Ciara.
“At school,” Dana replied.

Alexis was the 15-year-old niece of both Dana and Ciara. Dana had been serving as guardian for Alexis after their sister, Karah, had been hospitalized and later admitted to a nursing home following a breakdown.

Alexis was willful, rebellious, and obstinate. She was not totally happy about staying with her aunt.

“You have better living conditions than the drug and crime filled neighborhood they lived in,” Ciara had said.

“She’s not used to this neighborhood and school,” Dana offered apologetically.

The situation and circumstances were taxing, and Alexis seemed determined to push the limits.

“If I didn’t have four children, I would take her,” Ciara said.

Since Dana had no children, the family thought it wise for her to serve as guardian.

“Are you going to be all right?” asked Ciara.

“I prayed about this and felt led of the Lord to go through with it,” Dana said with a weary smile. “I know the Lord will help Alexis and me. I have great hopes for her!”

“Yes, He will,” said Ciara, getting up from her chair. “But I’d like to pray for your strength in the Lord before we leave for the school to pick her up.”

“Amen,” said Dana. “I know the Lord will strengthen me where I am weak!”

1. *When was a time in your life that you felt dismayed or hopeless?*

2. *Is there an area of your life that you feel is beyond hope or redemption? If so, why?*

3. *What does it mean to practically “take heart” in your daily life?*

Who Compares to God?

Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-26, KJV

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-26, NIV

¹²Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales

and the hills in a balance?

¹³Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?

²⁵“To whom will you compare me?

Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.

²⁶Lift 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.

Throughout Isaiah 40, the prophet described a God who was beyond understanding and beyond comparison to any creatures He had created. Certainly, the Lord God was the only one capable of providing true power, comfort, and hope to His creation. In this section, Isaiah (and God) posed a series of poetic questions about God to his readers, not totally unlike the questions God Himself had

once posed to Job (Job 38—41).

In verse 12, Isaiah first asked, Who else but God could have “measured,” “marked off,” “held,” and “weighed” in His “hands” the waters of the sea, the heavens, the dust of the earth, the mountains and hills? The answer is understood: Only the great and true God, who had created all of it, could have accomplished all these things.

These examples from creation not only displayed God’s infinite power but also His infinite knowledge and wisdom in creating them as He had. Thus, Isaiah moved on to another rhetorical question: “Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?” (vs. 13). The answer, again, was plain: no one.

After further comparisons of the infinite, unfathomable God to simple, worthless idols (vss. 18-24), the questions resumed in verse 25—and the first two came from God Himself. “The Holy One” put forth two parallel questions to His listeners: “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” Once more, the questions were rhetorical: God has no equal, and He is beyond compare to any other created being or thing.

Isaiah then added one more question in verse 26: “Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?” All Isaiah’s readers had to do was look around them. God’s magnificence and power were obvious to anyone who took the time to consider His works. Isaiah then elaborated on God’s greatness: “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.” God knew every star inside out and placed each of them in its proper place.

4. *What questions did Isaiah ask his readers in verses 12-13? What were the correct answers?*

5. *What did God Himself ask in verse 25—and again, what was the only possible correct response and why?*

6. *What else did Isaiah ask in verse 26? What did he appeal to as evidence?*

Our Strength Comes from God

Isaiah 40:27-31, KJV

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40:27-31, NIV

²⁷Why do you complain, Jacob?

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

²⁸Do 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.

²⁹He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

³⁰Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

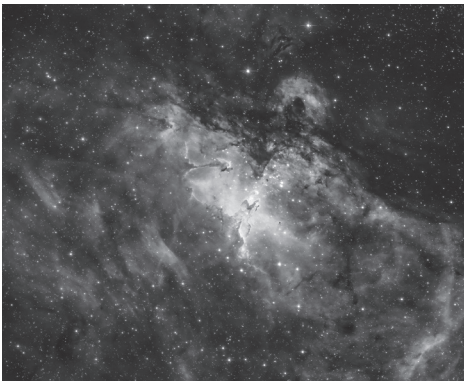
³¹but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

The questions continued in verses 27-31—but this time the answers were not far behind. Having presented the evidence for God's sovereignty over all His creation, Isaiah now addressed God's people directly: "Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God'?" (vs. 27). It was clear from these questions that God's

people had fallen into hard times—and that they had blamed God instead of themselves for their circumstances. Isaiah made it clear that they had no right to complain, and that instead it was they who needed to stop “hiding from” and “disregarding” God.

Once more, Isaiah presented a couple rhetorical questions to his listeners—expressing his disbelief at their disbelief, as it were: “Do you not know? Have you not heard?” (vs. 28). As Isaiah explained throughout the remainder of verse 28, God is everlasting. He created everything, He does not run out of strength as people do, and His understanding is—beyond understanding. He was more than capable of “giv[ing] strength to the weary and increas[ing] the power of the weak” (vs. 29).

Isaiah then reminded the people that human strength, no matter how impressive, will ultimately fail. However, those who placed their hope in God’s strength—those who “wait upon” Him, as the King James Version put it—would regain their own strength as well. Not only would such people survive, they would thrive: “They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (vs. 31). They would not only walk but would soar, and their strength would be as constant as that of God Himself.



This photo of the eagle nebula reminds us of the “Creator” (Isa. 40:28) who “renew[s]” our “strength” (vs. 31).

Photo: David (Deddy) Dayag

7. *What questions did the people of Israel ask in verse 27? What was wrong with these questions?*

8. *How did Isaiah react to the people’s questions, and what solution did he give them in verses 28-29?*

9. *What promise did this chapter end with?*

Hoping through the Pain

My husband works as an electrician, which is a fairly labor-intensive job. One day in November, he woke up in excruciating back pain. It was unlike anything he had ever experienced; he was literally screaming, and no position brought him relief. He obviously couldn't go to work in that condition, so he returned to bed and tried to relax as best he could. This was the beginning of a three-month-long saga—we just didn't know it yet.

For weeks I took Bryan to the chiropractor and physical therapy. We tried all kinds of home remedies, over-the-counter drugs, essential oils; church staff came and prayed with him and over him; and nothing worked. He was unable to work during this period of pain, and we couldn't find any relief for him—or even a cause.

After seeing multiple doctors, we finally got one to order an MRI for Bryan to see what was really going on in his back. However, the position Bryan needed to lay perfectly still in for the MRI was too painful for him to endure. After *four* attempts to perform the MRI with pain relievers and partial sedation, the doctors decided to fully sedate Brian to get him through the scan. They finally found the problem—a severely herniated disc that would require back surgery. My husband, only 30 years old at the time, needed a life-altering surgery.

His surgery took place when our daughter was one week old. Though we faced setback after setback, we trusted that eventually God would bring us to victory. Bryan's surgery was successful; and six weeks later, he returned to his job—almost five months after this crazy roller coaster started. All glory be to God for keeping our hope alive and restoring Bryan's physical and mental strength.

10. *When was a time that you endured even though the situation seemed hopeless? How did it turn out?*

11. *Does our culture encourage hope? Why or why not?*

12. *How have you seen God prevail over an impossible situation?*

Hope in All Things

Consider the damage that is done when we put our hope or trust in things other than God. What are the consequences? Spend some time in prayer for renewed trust in God and strength to carry on even when it seems hopeless.

► *Why is it sometimes easier to hope in ourselves more than God? Write here how you might change this mindset and find hope in Him.*

KEY VERSE

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. —Isaiah 40:29, KJV

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. —Isaiah 40:29, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of February 5 through February 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Daniel 3:1-7—Hear the Music and Bow Down.
- Tues.** Daniel 3:8-18—Defying an Immoral Command.
- Wed.** John 10:24-38—Works That Proclaim the Truth.
- Thurs.** Acts 4:5-20—When Faith Comes under Fire.
- Fri.** Acts 5:17-29—We Must Obey God Alone.
- Sat.** Isaiah 43:1-7—You Will Not Be Burned.
- Sun.** Daniel 3:19-28a—Delivered from the Flames.