



Week 1: Isaiah 40:1-11

GOD'S GLORY, MY COMFORT!

Isaiah, the prophet to kings, spoke during Israel's opulent years, but this wealth wasn't a shield from God's judgment. The first 39 chapters thunder with warning after warning – for Israel and beyond. But then, in chapter 40, a dramatic shift occurs. The book pivots, reminding us: God's judgment on sin doesn't diminish his grace and mercy. In fact, his glorious presence becomes the very source of our comfort. More than material blessings, this is a far greater comfort in the unwavering promise of God's shepherding care, a guiding hand through life's darkest valleys and ultimately, an astonishing promise of a coming salvation.

THE SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40:1-11

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶ A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹ Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

¹ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ² warfare – or difficulty.

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 1

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What does comfort mean to you personally? What are some ways people comfort themselves during difficult times?
2. Consider someone you would describe as a truly gentle person. What specific actions or qualities do they possess that exemplify this quality for you?

DIVING DEEPER

3. To get a feel for the first 39 chapters of Isaiah, look at the opening verses of chapters 15-19. How does the tone of these messages to Israel's neighbors differ from the way chapter 40 begins?
4. Chapter 40 of Isaiah uses a lot of imagery related to Israel's geography. Reread the text for this week and underline or circle any references to geographical features. Why do you think Isaiah uses such imagery?
5. Who do you think is the speaker in verses 1-2? Why is it important for the message to come from a voice of authority?
6. Verse 3 is quoted in the New Testament regarding John the Baptist. What significance does this connection hold for your understanding of the passage?
7. Some scholars suggest Isaiah 40:1-11 features three voices. Using the chart, can you identify these voices and the message each conveys?

VOICE	WHO IS IT?	SUMMARY OF CONTENT

8. We read about God as a shepherd in Isaiah 40:11. Now, consider Matthew 2:6, 6:4, and John 10:11-16. How do these New Testament passages shed light on what Isaiah was foreshadowing in his description of God as a shepherd?

9. Verse 2 of Isaiah 40 speaks of the Lord offering comfort. Do you believe this comfort is primarily material (i.e. health, well-being, safety, etc.), or does it encompass something more? Do you think it excludes material comfort altogether?

10. What truths about God rings true most deeply with you in this verse? Why do these specific aspects of God's character speak to you?