

4. The Majesty of God

A.W. Tozer wrote: “The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of him.” We all have unworthy thoughts about God—especially during times of stress or difficulty. When we are tempted to wonder, Does God care? Has he given up on me? Can he really help me out of this mess? We need to hear what God has to say of himself in Isaiah 40. He challenges our puny thoughts, overwhelming us with his majesty, wisdom, grace and power. He is God beyond comparison; our incomparable God.

Discussion Starter

There are times for all of us when God seems distant or uncaring. How do you respond when God feels far away?

Background to our passage

There is a large gap in time between the end of Isaiah 39 and the beginning of Isaiah 40. Isaiah 39 ended with God declaring to King Hezekiah that Israel would surely be carried off into exile in Babylon. Chapter 40 begins a new series of prophecies directed to Israel in captivity in Babylon— they have now experienced the judgment of God for their sins, they are living in a foreign land under the power of a Gentile king, while their own land has been overrun and their temple desecrated and demolished.

Read Isaiah 40:12-31.

The Character of God: Study 4

1. What aspect of God's character is stressed in verses 12–14? In your own words, how would you try to explain this aspect of God's character to a person who had never heard of the God and Father of Jesus Christ?
2. Even small problems can seem overwhelming while we are experiencing them. How might the portrait of God in verses 12–14 encourage us at such times?
3. When are you most likely to start telling God how to run the universe?
4. Why do you think that in verses 15–17 Isaiah starts talking about the insignificance of nations in comparison to God?
5. Verses 18–20 give us some good reasons why idols are a pitiful substitute for God. How would you summarise these reasons?
6. At what point do you think people or things become substitutes for God?

7. [Optional] People with authority and power (political leaders, supervisors, teachers) can exert significant influence and control over our lives. Why can we trust God to overrule the world's rulers (vv 21–24)?

[Optional: Alternative question] Have you ever had an experienced a person exerting influence over your life that was unwise or inappropriate? Why can we trust God to overrule people of power and influence? (vv 21–24)?

8. [Optional] Why do you think God might challenge us to compare him to counsellors, nations, idols, princes and rulers?
9. Israel complained that God seemed distant and uncaring (v. 27). How do verses 12–16 answer this charge? How do verses 28–31 also relate to the accusation that God is disinterested and remote? In what way is this an encouragement to you?

Application

Turn to God in praise and adoration. Use this whole passage as the foundation and “springboard” of your prayer time.