

# Isaiah's Reality

WEEK 4

Biblical Moment

## Taking Captive Our Thoughts

**Please have your team split in partners and read together and answer the questions at the end:**

***Psalm 73:17 (ESV) "until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end..."***

It was a Wednesday night. My sister and dad were going to church in Joplin, Missouri, where they live, and asked me to join them. I was there visiting for a few weeks to spend time with dad after mom's passing. I was delighted to go, so we headed over to the church rather quickly.

We arrived late. The room was packed, but we were able to find seats in the very back. The pastor was teaching from Psalm 73, a psalm written by Asaph. Asaph was a Levite who some describe as a prophet. He was also a worship leader and skilled in singing and poetry. Many say that Asaph was not only very gifted, but a man who understood where his gifts came from. He used his music to praise the Lord amongst a needy world.

As we began to read Psalm 73, it sounded somewhat familiar to my heart, as if I were writing it myself! Asaph was in a stage of descent. He was questioning God about events and circumstances that overwhelmed him and it was shaking his faith to the core. He began to describe God's faithfulness to His people, to those who were pure in heart, yet Asaph was seeing the wicked prosper in his generation. The wicked were becoming richer and appeared to live a life of ease



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continuing in their unbelief. He proclaimed the wicked to be full of pride even as he was envious of their successes. He was honest and straightforward in his thinking and struggles with God.

Asaph describes in Psalm 73 how he was living his life in innocence for nothing, to no avail or advancement, but to continually have God's scrutiny on him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, giving him more obstacles to overcome. Asaph uses the word "all" many times, which obviously isn't accurate. He wasn't living a pure life ALL in vain or for nothing, nor was he rebuked ALL day long by the Lord. He was understandably self-absorbed. When we focus inwardly, we tend to exaggerate the truth. Everything seems more of an issue to us, because it is about us. In Asaph's defense, he was overwhelmed. This is normal when questioning life, especially doubts that attack our faith.

This next passage, however, is where the focus changes for Asaph and where it changed for me as I read it. Psalm 73:15 (ESV) says, ***"If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed the generation of your children."*** In Asaph's heart, he was questioning the circumstances around him, and whether God was going to address or change them. But before he reacted with the frustration and disappointment, he considered the negative consequences to that action. If he spoke against the Lord out of anger and bitterness, he could have betrayed the next generation by attempting to discredit an all-capable and all-powerful God. Other believers might have questioned their own circumstances as well, harming their spiritual growth and development. Even though Asaph still had his questions, he kept silent, speaking with no one but the Lord and Him alone.



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Asaph later explains in verse 17, that all the defending, all the striving and all his question marks came to an utter end as he entered the sanctuary. The Lord changed his perspective from “self” to “eternal.” Wow! Just one decision to arise changed the focus from self and stopped the downward spiral. This can only happen when we are in God’s presence.

The word “arise” doesn’t mean to stand up, put on armor and set out with force to fight the enemy. It’s the absolute opposite. Arise really means to kneel down in complete SURRENDER to the King of Kings, asking Him to change our perspective and to give us His power to do so, because there is nothing in us that can. It’s in reaching the end of ourselves that we find the true beginning in our Savior. Only when we realize there is a bigger picture in life, can we ever arise. This is becoming the child of God we need to be so He can reveal His greatness through us to a lost and dying world. That is life changing!

Some commentaries explain Psalm 73:17, by saying, Asaph realized a shift in his focus which allowed God to transform his heart. He understood life was not for him to prosper in his own accomplishments. Asaph rather understood that man’s existence on earth reflected a pilgrimage, here but a moment, desiring to follow Christ in the journey, making God known.

I find it funny that writers of the scripture did not know they were living to be noted. They didn’t realize their very lives were being recorded to encourage us today. I praise the Lord for giving us true life documentaries to demonstrate how to prosper in life when life doesn’t make sense.



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May we never define God by our circumstances but rather define our circumstances by our all sufficient, all powerful, all knowing, unquestionable Savior who is more than capable of conquering within us and around us for His Glory.

Questions with your Partner: Have you ever been frustrated by life's circumstances? Has it ever rocked your faith in God? Looking back, how would you have changed your responses?