

**“LINK: WHEN YOU’RE FEELING DISCOURAGED”**  
**Isaiah 40:28-31**

**Lessons By The Lake Summer Series**  
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We’re starting this morning some new “Lessons By the Lake” called, “Links That Matter.” When I get e-mails on my computer or visit various websites there are often “links” that I can click on to find other resources and helps. In my study of theology and in my sermon preparation these “links” can often be very helpful.

To just click and zap, you’re there—Wow! It surely would have been great if there had been something like this when I was in graduate school at the seminary or when I was in my first twenty year of ministry. It is amazing what technology has done.

Now in our faith and life as Christians we can be thankful that our God has given us resources, and helps, we can click to everyday. It is called the Word of God, the Bible. There are many passages we can link to that provide help for life’s challenges and inspiration for daily living.

There are many passages we can link to that help us when we are discouraged, or afraid, or when we need assurance of eternal life when we die. So these next few weeks I am going to share with you some of the links we can turn to at various times and in various situations of life. My hope is that you may add these links to your files.

One of my favorite passages when facing discouraging moments comes from Isaiah, Chapter 40, beginning with verse 27. *“Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord: my cause is disregarded by my God?’”*

*“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is an everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”*

*“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but 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.”*

Have you ever had a faith crisis? Who hasn’t? Something happens and you say, “Wait a minute. This shouldn’t be happening. I’m on God’s team.” Ever ask the question, “Where is God in all this? Doesn’t he know what is going on? This just isn’t fair.”

At a time like this we have a faith crisis. We’ve all been there. We’re feeling all alone. We’re feeling discarded and rejected. And so we have these kinds of questions. Be assured, my friends, that there is nothing bad about these feelings. We all have them.

It is interesting when we may talk to someone outside of the faith. Some of them will tell you, “Well, I used to believe. I used to be involved in a church. I grew up in a church and was involved in Sunday school, or my youth program. But I set this aside some time ago.”

You know something I have found is that behind these kinds of comments there is usually a story. Someone who started in the faith but somewhere something slapped them in the head, it started not adding up for them, and they began saying that all this God stuff is kids-stuff.

There are a lot of people like this. People who set aside this faith stuff so they could get real about life; people who had a crisis and felt that God was no where to be found; people who saw a loved one or friend struggle with cancer, or the war, and felt that God really makes no sense.

Now if you will rewind with me some 600 years BC you find a group of people who are feeling exactly the same way. They are the people of Israel. They are living in a foreign land. What had happened is that they had been disobedient—they had set God aside earlier in their history.

The prophets had tried to warn them but now they found themselves in exile, very far from anything familiar. And they are asking lots of questions. Where is God in all this? Has he forgotten us? They were sick of waiting around for God to do something.

You can imagine how frustrated they must have been. The children probably said, “Tell us those stories of when God used to do things. Tell us about those times when God used to know what was going on.” I mean, these people were in a major crisis of faith, a spiritual pity-party.

Well, it’s that kind of stuff that is going on with the people of Israel. But then there is this prophet Isaiah. Prophet means “spokesperson” for God. Isaiah says to the people, “Wait a minute! Wait a minute!” *“Do you not know? Have you not heard?”*

Isaiah says, *“The Lord is an everlasting God.”* In other words he’s the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega. He’s ever present, all knowing. He’s got more energy than anything in this world. He never ends this God who you think is weak and tired.

He goes on...this God is *“the creator of the ends of the earth.”* He put this planet together. He is not a national God as you have made him to be—a God who is able to operate only in the boundaries of Israel. He is a cosmic God. He is so much bigger than you can imagine. Your little finite mind cannot grasp the infinite.

And he goes on to say, *“He will not grow tired or weary.”* God is not like those gods made with stone, or in theory or philosophy. They can’t do anything. Your God neither slumbers nor sleeps. God is up 24-7. He is never too weary to help.

J. Collin Smith uses the illustration of a child with so many toys. He often tires of the one and moves onto another. Isaiah says whatever you do, never imagine that God is like that. He will never tire of you. He will not lose interest in you or put you aside.

You and I already know that don’t we my friends? Every time we look at the cross we are reminded of that. Every time we share in Holy Communion we are reminded that God’s promises never fail. This God wants so badly to have a relationship with us that he sent Jesus to die on a cross for our sins—that the gap between God and humanity might be bridged.

Isaiah goes on to say that God is a generous God. He *“gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”* Have you ever felt weak—felt like you couldn’t take another step? Isaiah says that God is ready to infuse you with his strength.

And here's the promise Isaiah gives: *"Those who (wait upon) 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."* Those who surrender themselves to God daily will soar like eagles.

What a picture! Have you ever watched an eagle fly? It is a majestic picture. Isaiah is saying that whoever will trust their lives to Jesus will be lifted up like eagles. They will have their strength renewed.

Lloyd Ogilvie says, "The eagle does not soar on its own strength, but when it is caught in the stream of the wind. So it is when we wait for God." God's Spirit has the power to infuse the tissues of our impotent minds, our depleted emotions, our wayward wills, our weary bodies.

He wants to infuse us with his Holy Spirit. That's why the Holy Spirit is described as wind. He lifts us up on the wind of the Spirit so we can fly through the darkest, the deepest, most sorrowful—at all times as we go through life often getting very discouraged.

That's the promise, my friends. God is so much bigger, so much more loving, so much more faithful, than you can ever imagine. He is a great God. Build your life on his greatness.

So how do you wait upon the Lord? By simply being still. Henri Nouwen wrote a book, "Sabbatical Journeys." He had friends who were trapeze artists. They told him that there is a special relationship between the flyer and the catcher. The flyer lets go, the catcher catches. The flyer must never try to catch the catcher. They must wait in absolute trust they will be caught.

Sometimes life is like a trapeze and we feel like we are in midair. And as we wait the promise of Scripture is that he will catch you. He will lift you up. When was the last time you just had some quiet time? Some time to think about God's love and give it all to him?

Sometimes we need to begin our day with a God-consciousness. You know there are bumper stickers that say, "Start seeing motorcycles." How about putting one on your car that says, "Start seeing God"? Look for God; he's here; he's very active.

Our God comes to us in some of the most amazing ways. Spiritual experiences, according to Father Gerald Webber, are not a matter of finding God nor are they a matter of waiting for God to scream, "Look, here I am." Spiritual experiences surround us. We fall over them many times a day. A spiritual experience is simply acknowledging that God is involved in every part of life.

Sometimes it comes in a friend. Sometimes it's in a hospital bed where your body is saying you need help or rest. God shows up and ministers to you in some amazing ways.

He comes in the most amazing, mysterious, ordinary ways. And Isaiah calls us to not give up...to wait upon him. Yes we'll ask our questions. But don't give up. God is here and he loves you. It's just a matter of being still.