

Leader Guide

I Will Help you

Winter 2025 | Week 2

Message Date 1/19/2025

THE GOAL

This week is a standalone message from Pastor Craig out of Isaiah 41. It is God telling the Israelites that He is there to be with them and hold their hand and help them through the process and journey they're going through. We see how it connects and relates to us because we see God's tenderness, especially through the lens of Jesus in the New Testament. However, the Israelites didn't quite learn the lesson well. Instead, they wandered away from God's help. The goal this week will be to explore, "how does one do that?" It boils down to hardness of heart. Exploring and unpacking this idea is the goal for this week's study. What does it mean to be hard-hearted and how do we untangle it?

MY STORY

- 1) If you were a kitchen appliance, which one would you be and why?
- 2) What's the weirdest food combination you secretly enjoy that would shock everyone in this group?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

Isaiah 41:13-20 (NIV)

"For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. ¹⁴ Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob, little Israel, do not fear, for I myself will help you," declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵ "See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff. ¹⁶ You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away. But you will rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁷ "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. ¹⁸ I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched

ground into springs. ¹⁹ I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, ²⁰ so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.”

- 4) What does the image of God “taking hold of your right hand” and saying, “Do not fear; I will help you,” reveal about His character and approach to guiding His people? How might this reassurance apply to someone facing challenges in today’s world?

I find this comforting. I know the promise is for the Israelites, but it also speaks of the tenderness of God and when I think about it through the lens of Jesus, I recognize that Jesus is with me and that offers me comfort that He will help me – that it’s not just up to me to figure it out. This reveals that He is much like a dad and a friend and a comforter. I find this passage, even though it’s written to the Israelites, very comforting when I think about it in light of how Jesus loves people.

- 5) Pastor Craig talked about this help from God being missed by people. What are some of the reasons that people miss the help of God?

There are all kinds of reasons that people miss God’s help in their life. But one of the key ones is hardness of heart. You will most likely get lots of answers on this, but hardness of heart is the key thought we’re looking for.

- 6) What is hardness of heart? What does it look like in real practice in our lives? Can you be hard-hearted in one area and not in another towards God?

Hardness of heart in its simplest terms is a resistance to God’s leading and guidance. It is self-centered and self-serving thinking. It’s about me thinking that I know better than God does. Sometimes it’s arrogance, sometimes it’s false humility. An example of this is thinking, “I’m a piece of garbage and not worthy of God’s love.” This is still hardness of heart. It looks like many things in our lives. Explore this a bit. I think you can be hard-hearted in one area and not in others towards God. But I do believe that the hard-heartedness can infect the rest of your life. And realistically, if you’re hard-hearted in one area, it means that you’re unwilling to allow God to move you and shape you. I know this is definitely true for me.

- 7) Pastor Craig talked about a list of things that hard-heartedness keeps us from. What are some of these things, and are there other things that he didn’t add?

Invitation, forgiveness, soul healing and restoration, friendship with God and others, God’s wisdom and blessings and His favor, the miraculous, the church. What else does it keep us from?

- 8) Is there an area in your life that you are hard-hearted and are wrestling with, or have you done this in the past? What was it and how did you overcome it?

(Justin) The answer is yes. I have been hard-hearted in my life, and I had to experience some consequences to humble myself before God and let Him lead. That is the way to overcome. It is to choose humility – over and over again. Another key element for us is self-reflection and being very honest with ourselves. I need a group of people in my life that I can be honest with, and that can be honest with me.

- 9) What does it mean to be teachable? How is being teachable connected to being humble? Is there anything you need to do to be teachable?

Being teachable is about being curious. It's a simple recognition that I don't know everything, and that even with things that I am good at and know a lot of information about there's always more to learn, there's always more places to grow. Being teachable is a state of mind and attitude, regardless of my feelings. Being teachable is connected to humility because I have to choose humility to be teachable. I have to recognize my own limitations, and that God is greater and that others may know more than me. If I'm willing to be teachable from all situations in life, my horizons are huge.

CHAIR TIME TOOLS

Reflection questions for Chair Time. Think about the following questions and pray through them with Jesus.

- 1) Read again the passage from Isaiah 41. Is there anything that jumps out at you about God's character?
- 2) Is there an area of hardness of heart in your life?
- 3) Is there something you need to surrender to God and be teachable in?