

3 Isa. 51 Choices to Help You Hang Onto Hope

Current events have been pretty dark. The new abortion law in New York, growing concerns over North Korea and Iran, and the global refugee crisis—just to mention just a few. How do we as followers of Jesus hang on to hope?

I've been studying Isaiah 51 for the last few days; in this chapter, Isaiah reveals a few of the tenacious choices he made in order to choose hope. In our time in history, we still need hope, don't we? I've met many who are discouraged and feel defeated. But hope is alive—His name is Jesus! Just as Isaiah made tenacious choices to cling to hope, you can as well! Are you ready? Here they are:

Look to the Rock. “Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug (Isa. 51:1b). Now you might be wondering, *What on earth does that mean?* Isaiah is challenging Israel to return to the Lord; He is our rock. The psalmist David also refers to God as his rock in Psalm 18:2. What a great word picture Isaiah and David paint for us by describing God as our rock. When I think of a rock, I imagine strength. A rock is solid and strong. In the New Testament, Jesus is also described as our rock. He is our rock-solid foundation.

Steve and I like to wander around Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. The big red boulders that make up the national park are majestic. Our grandsons love to climb and hide within the natural fortresses created by them. In the moments when you need hope, pause and praise Jesus Christ for being your rock. Imagine yourself hiding in the clef of the rock, sheltered from the storms of life.

Listen to the Lord. “Listen to Me” (Isa. 51:1a, 4a). We are

constantly bombarded with all the noise in our world: news channels on TV, the opinions of others on Facebook, email, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter. All that information can be exhausting. I believe it can also make us cynical.

Be informed, but don't become addicted to the news. Create the space for quiet and listening to God's voice. Spend time in His Word. Listen for the still small whisper of His voice. Turn off Netflix and turn on worship music. It's amazing how what we listen to affects our attitudes.

When I sense heaviness in my spirit, I will often turn on worship music and go room by room through my house praising God. As I allow the music to prompt my praise, my attitude shifts. I want my home to be a place filled with joy, peace and hope.

Lift your eyes to drink on the beauty of creation. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath" (Isa. 51:6). In the passage surrounding this verse, Isaiah is saying that the heaven and the earth will someday vanish, but the salvation of the Lord will go on eternally. But even though earthly beauty will pass away, I believe our souls were designed to enjoy the beauty of creation while we are here. The Bible is clear that creation reflects the beauty of its Creator (Ps. 19:1, 95:4-5; Rom.1:20).

May I gently challenge you, friend? When you need hope this week, go outside and take a walk. Or if it's too cold where you live, take a drive, or simply look out your window. Look for the splendor all around you. Take a moment and glance up at the stars at night. Drink in the beauty of the sunrise in the morning and the sunset tonight. Notice the patterns created by the clouds, or buy some bright flowers for your house. All of God's creation magnifies the artist who imagined it in the first place. As you enjoy its beauty, worship the Creator—and I believe hope will rise in your heart.

God created you to carry His hope to the world around you. Don't let the light of hope diminish in your heart. Ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit and then view your purpose as bringing hope to a world that needs it desperately. Know that as you read this, I am praying this prayer over you:

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13).

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