



# LED INTO FREEDOM

“He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”

Isaiah 61:1b

**T**he Bible is full of scriptures that show us God cares for our emotions and has created ways for us to truly enjoy life. Isaiah chapter 61 is a great example of what stepping out of captivity looks like and what freedom will bring. I highly recommend you read Isaiah 61 now as I will be referring to it many times in this chapter. As you read it, take note of the emotional state of those touched by Jesus’ anointing. These are powerful verses, creating a picture of how our lives as Christians are supposed to feel.

In the first few verses, it basically says that Jesus came to set us free from everything that holds us captive. This is good news!

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Jesus purchased liberty for those who are captive to negative emotions! He declares a new day for us—a day when vengeance is taken on our enemies. He replaces the prison of mourning with comfort. He takes the prison of ashes (ugly circumstances) and brings beauty back into our lives. He takes the emotional prison of heaviness and brings us into joy and praise. Our lives will no longer be desolate, but full and blessed.

The fruit of captivity is being unable to enjoy the fruit of the Kingdom of Heaven. Romans 14:17 says the Kingdom of Heaven is righteousness, peace, and joy. Therefore, a constant lack of those things reveals that something or someone is holding us captive from what Jesus purchased for us.

Often we think that if God wants us happy He will just “zap” us. But joy and the enjoyment of life are like all the other promises of God. We have to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to kill the giants in our way. I used to think my circumstances were the giant that needed to be killed. But it soon became clear to me that my beliefs were the real enemy. I discovered that my circumstances were very difficult to permanently change without first changing what I believed about them. Our emotional transformation, or freedom, actually comes from renewing our mind. (See Romans 12:2.)

One of the first steps in escaping our emotional prisons and entering into a joyful life is to believe that God has made a way for us to enjoy life. As I mentioned, Isaiah 61 is a perfect example of how God wants us to feel and experience life. Jesus came with good news to make us happy, heal our hearts, and cause us to live in freedom. That sounds like a happy life. For a lot of us, our prisons are on the inside. We can be imprisoned by our emotions and our belief systems. They restrict us in our relationships, our self-esteem, and our destiny.

Isaiah 61 tells us we will have comfort, beauty, joy, a spirit of praise (thankfulness), and double honor. (See verses 2-3, 7.) And

when others look at us, they should come to the conclusion that we are blessed. Try to picture yourself in these verses. Imagine what someone who has fully developed these attributes would feel. Do you feel as if your life is surrounded and marked by these things? If our everyday lives are not marked by these characteristics, then perhaps we have not received the fullness of what Christ came and died to give us.

Jesus purchased liberty for those held captive and proclaimed prison doors to open. This truth does not just apply to those held captive physically, but also emotionally. Apply these verses to whatever holds you captive. Are you captive to hopelessness? Are you captive to feelings of shame, failure, or anger? If you get up every morning feeling fearful, overwhelmed, tired, discouraged, and in survival mode; then I have good news for you! A lifestyle of negative, hopeless emotions is not your cross to bear. Jesus came to bring abundant life, and it can be yours! He has proclaimed that every prison door should be opened so we can walk in joy, hope, peace, and righteousness.

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While it is true that God created us to have emotions, it is also true that not every emotion is from God or based on a biblical reality. Many draining and painful emotions are symptoms of poor beliefs and actions. Just as extreme fatigue or fevers are symptoms that reveal our bodies are fighting to regain the natural state of health, many negative emotions are meant to warn us that our belief systems are out of order. Hope, joy, and peace are meant to be the natural state of being for born-again Christians. Our belief systems are like the immune systems in

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our bodies; they will create healthy emotions and a sense of dominion over negative circumstances. The best decision I ever made was to stop focusing on how I felt and begin focusing on what I believed.

To be imprisoned or held captive means that we will not only be stuck in emotional bondage, but that also walls will be built, separating us in our relationships and from our destiny. For instance, when my husband Steve and I were first married, I was unable to feel loved by him because of the negative beliefs that imprisoned me. No matter what he did, I couldn't feel loved because I subconsciously refused to believe he could love me. I interpreted things Steve did and didn't do as "proof" that he did not love me. I was using his weaknesses and personality traits against him. I thought if he really loved me, he would be more aware of my needs. I interpreted his actions as statements about how he felt about me rather than just facts about his personality.

For instance, when I failed to wash the dinner dishes, he would get up early and do them. Because I believed I was inadequate as a wife, I thought he believed that, too. I believed he thought I was not performing as well as his mother in this area. So every time he washed the dishes, I interpreted it as "I am not enough." It wasn't until years later that I discovered one of his love languages is acts of service. When I thought he was saying, "You are not enough," he was really saying, "I love you." Eventually I understood that our marriage was not going to fail because Steve didn't love me. It was going to fail because I could not receive his love. To receive his love, I had to change two things. First, I had to radically train myself to believe I was lovable and worthy of love. Second, I had to acknowledge his love for me as truth—even if that truth did not "feel" true. Practically this meant I had to stop looking for proof that he didn't love me and start looking for proof that he did.

If you want to discover what your negative emotional strongholds (prisons) are, then take note of what you are always

trying to prove. For example, if you think no one understands you, then you will constantly be making cases against people for misunderstanding you. You will focus on and rehearse those events in your mind. If you think you are a failure, then you will be looking for proof of failure.

These are negative strongholds of belief that cloud our ability to see and restrict us from healthy relationships. We judge our outer world by the beliefs in our inner world. It is time to tear down the negative strongholds that have imprisoned us and kept us captive to pain. Now is the time to build positive beliefs that will create strongholds of hope, peace, and joy.

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our inner world.

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At the end of Isaiah 61:3, it says “That they may be called trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” He is glorified when we exchange our ashes for beauty. When we have accessed His comfort, His beauty for ashes, His oil of joy and praise; then He is glorified!

We serve a God who has actually invented an oil for joy! Isn't that awesome?! He actually has an oil of joy! It's like He is saying, “You know what? My children experience mourning and go through hard things in life. I think I'll invent an oil of joy for them!” Wow! I take things literally, so when He says He has an oil of joy, and when He talks about the peace of God guarding our hearts (see Philippians 4:7), I believe they are actual substances. I don't think this is just a theology—joy and peace are substances that are carried.

Have you ever noticed someone who is really happy, and when you just walk by them something inside of you changes? That's what God is like! His peace and joy actually have a

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substance that will change your emotions and thoughts, and at times, even your whole body can react to someone who is really full of peace or joy. You have probably seen how people harboring negative emotions can affect a room. But now it is time to see how positive emotions can also shift things!

Let's read further in Isaiah 61. In verse 7, it says instead of your shame you shall have double honor! Wow! I love the way God's economy works. God says, "I've got beauty for your ashes, praise for your heaviness, double honor for your shame." What a deal! Unfortunately, the enemy tries to make you think that because you are in shame or guilt, you can't go to God. Shame becomes your prison. It keeps you from the place of honor and intimacy that is your rightful position in Christ.

What else may be keeping you imprisoned or restricted? How about the prison of confusion? Verse 7 goes on to say, "Instead of confusion, they shall rejoice in their portion! [I want that one—no more confusion!] Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs."

For many of us, the problem is thinking that we have to perform to obtain God's comfort, beauty, joy, or honor. But everything in His economy is taken through faith. We must go to Him by faith for the exchange.

In verse 9, we see the result of the freedom Christ purchased for us. It describes a people that are observably different, and the difference will be that "their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles and their offspring among the people. And all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity who the Lord has blessed."

Isaiah 61 is a powerful chapter, creating a picture of how our lives are supposed to look and feel as Christians. We should expect comfort, beauty, joy, a spirit of praise (a wellspring of thankfulness), and double honor. Just because we have not seen all the manifestations of these promises does not mean they

are not for us. It just means the transformation has been short-circuited by beliefs that have not been renewed with the truths and promises of God. Romans 12:2 says to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

We will not contend for what we do not really believe is possible or legally ours. The first step to obtaining our freedom and walking in our rightful inheritance of joy, peace, hope, honor, and comfort is to have faith in God’s promises in Isaiah 61 and in the truth that Jesus legally obtained them for us.



## REFLECT

» You are a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven and as such have full access to righteousness, peace, and joy. Imagine yourself walking in His Kingdom and carrying and experiencing the attributes of righteousness, peace, and joy.

» How aware of His blessing are you? How does this awareness affect your emotions? Meditate on the blessings that you have. How does meditating on the blessings affect your emotions?