

Study Guide:



"Finding God's Best: A New Way in the Wilderness"

This guide is designed to review the core concepts, scriptural context, and interpretive points presented in the sermon "Finding God's Best: A New Way in the Wilderness," the fourth part of Pastor Adam's series titled "Into God's Best for Your Life"

A Guide to God's Path in Uncertain Times

Introduction: When You Don't Know Which Way to Go

Have you ever found yourself at a crossroads, asking the difficult question: "God, which way do I go?" If so, you're not alone. Whether it's a key family decision, a choice about your career, or trying to find the right school for your children, we all face moments where we need direction. We look for guidance, often praying, "God, what would you have me do?"

In these moments of uncertainty, finding peace can feel impossible. But the key lies in trusting that God is in control, even when the path ahead is unclear. This guide summarizes the core insights from the sermon "Finding God's Best," which explores a biblical framework for navigating these very moments. It is a message grounded in the profound hope found in Isaiah 43:18-19, offering a way to make decisions with confidence and peace.

Let's begin by turning to the core Bible passage that forms the foundation for this journey.

1. The Core Scripture: A Promise for Hard Times

The sermon is built upon a short but powerful passage from the book of Isaiah. It's a timeless promise from God, delivered to His people just when they needed it most.

Isaiah 43:18-19

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

Understanding the Context

To fully grasp the weight of these words, it's helpful to understand the situation in which they were written.

- **Who wrote it:** The prophet Isaiah.
- **To whom:** The people of Israel.
- **The situation:** Isaiah was writing approximately 150 years *before* the people of Israel would be taken away into captivity—a future filled with immense hardship and uncertainty.

This context reveals a message of profound hope delivered in advance of a crisis. God was promising His people that even as they headed into a metaphorical "wilderness," He would provide a new way forward. In fact, Isaiah's message was so full of hope and focused on salvation that many theologians consider this part of his book to be like a "New Testament within the Old Testament." It was a word to guide their steps so that even in the darkest days, they could have peace.

So how do we apply this promise? It starts by understanding the very first command God gives in this passage, one that is often misunderstood.

2. The First Step: "Remember Not the Former Things"

The passage opens with the command, "Remember not the former things." This phrase can be confusing, and it's important to avoid a common pitfall:

- This verse does **not** mean to forget everything God has said before. It is not an instruction to discard past lessons, like the Ten Commandments, or to assume God is simply wiping the slate clean as He did in the days of Noah.

The correct understanding is far more hopeful. God, speaking through Isaiah, is signaling an end to the old, destructive system of “cyclical sin.” He is introducing something new. This isn't just any new plan; it is the *ultimate* new plan. He is speaking, in the greatest of ways, of how salvation would come through Jesus Christ, permanently breaking the old cycle of failure and offering a new path forward where there seems to be no hope.

The table below clarifies this distinction:

What it DOESN'T Mean	What it DOES Mean
Forget all of God's past instructions (like the 10 Commandments).	Stop focusing on the old cycles of sin and failure; God is doing something new.
God is wiping the slate clean like in the days of Noah.	God is introducing a new path forward where there seems to be no hope.

Understanding this verse correctly is the foundation for building a trustworthy way of approaching life's biggest decisions.

3. The Goal: A Process for Finding God's Way

The sermon's goal is to help you begin developing a process for making decisions that align with God's best for your life. This isn't a formula for a perfect, easy life; the path might still be difficult or look different from what you planned. However, by following this biblical process, you can have peace and assurance that you are walking in God's way.

The foundational principle of this process is simple: **trust**. The starting point is trusting that God is always capable of “doing a new thing.” It is about having confidence that He can make a “way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” in your own life, no matter how impossible the circumstances may seem. It's the deep assurance that comes from knowing who is in control and who is on the throne—it's Jesus.

With this foundation of trust, you can approach any decision with a heart ready to see the new thing God is doing.

4. Conclusion: Your Key Takeaways

If this way of thinking is new to you, let's distill it down to three key truths you can hold onto.

1. **God Offers Hope in Hopeless Situations** The core promise of Isaiah 43:19 is that God can create a path where one doesn't seem to exist. He specializes in making "a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert," offering real hope even in the most difficult circumstances.
2. **Look Forward to God's New Thing** The instruction to "remember not the former things" encourages you to stop being trapped by past failures or old cycles. Instead, you are invited to look forward with anticipation for the new path that God is creating in your life through Jesus.
3. **Trust is the First Step** The entire process of finding God's path begins with trusting in His power and sovereignty. Believing that He is on the throne, no matter what is happening around you, is the foundation for making decisions with peace and confidence.

This message was originally shared during an ice storm, a time when plans were disrupted and the world outside felt uncertain. Like that unexpected storm, difficult moments in our lives can be an opportunity to pause, find quiet, and feel God's presence and peace, knowing that He is always, and in all things, in control.

Short-Answer Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the provided source material.

1. What was the immediate circumstance that led to the church service being held online?
 2. What is the primary biblical passage that forms the foundation of this sermon?
 3. What is the central life question the sermon aims to help answer for listeners?
 4. According to the speaker, what is the ultimate goal or intended outcome for listeners by the end of the sermon?
 5. What is the historical context in which the book of Isaiah was written, specifically in relation to the nation of Israel?
 6. What dual message was Isaiah delivering to the people of Israel concerning their future?
 7. Why have some commentators referred to parts of the book of Isaiah as the "New Testament of the Old Testament"?
 8. In the context of Isaiah 43:19, what do the metaphors "a way in the wilderness" and "rivers in the desert" represent?
 9. What is the first command given in the scripture passage being analyzed?
 10. What is a common "passage pitfall" or misinterpretation of the command to "remember not the former things"?
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Answer Key

1. The sermon was delivered online because the weather was "extremely icy," making road conditions dangerous. This situation was presented as an opportunity to pause, spend time with God or family, and make the most of an unusual circumstance.
 2. The foundational scripture is Isaiah chapter 43, verses 18 and 19. The speaker reads these two verses directly from the Bible at the beginning of the sermon's main analysis.
 3. The sermon addresses the central question, "How do you know which way to go?" This question is relevant for various life decisions, such as those related to family, career, or education, where one might feel uncertain about God's will.
 4. The goal is to help listeners develop a process for making decisions that will always end in "God's best" for their lives. This process, rooted in scripture, is intended to provide assurance in decision-making, even if the outcome is difficult or unexpected.
 5. The book of Isaiah was written approximately 150 years before the nation of Israel was taken away into captivity. The text was intended as a prophecy and a guide for the people as they approached this difficult period in their history.
 6. Isaiah was warning Israel about the hard days and terrible things that were coming as a result of their cyclical sin. At the same time, he was offering them the unique hope that God alone can provide through His Son, Jesus.
 7. This portion of Isaiah has been called the "New Testament of the Old Testament" because of the way it is written and its prophetic focus on salvation. It describes how God is going to do something new and that a new way is coming.
 8. These metaphors represent God providing hope and a new path in situations that seem hopeless. The "wilderness" signifies a place where it seems there is no path, and the "desert" signifies a place of drought and lifelessness where God can miraculously create a source of life.
 9. The first command given in Isaiah 43:18 is, "Remember not the former things." The sermon begins its textual breakdown by focusing on this specific instruction from God to his people.
 10. A common misinterpretation is that this command means to forget everything God said before, including the instructions given by Moses, the 10 Commandments, and God's past actions. The speaker clarifies that this is not a good way to interpret the passage and leads to a misunderstanding of God's word.
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Essay Questions

Reflect on the themes of the sermon to construct a detailed essay answering the following prompts. Do not provide answers.

1. Analyze the connection between the sermon's immediate context (an ice storm forcing an online service) and its central theme of God "making a way in the wilderness." How does the speaker use the present circumstances to illustrate the biblical message?

2. Discuss the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy. Explain how a message written for Israel 150 years before their captivity is applied in the sermon to contemporary personal decisions faced by modern believers.
 3. Explore the interpretive challenge presented by the command to "Remember not the former things nor consider the things of old." Based on the sermon's explanation, how can a believer reconcile this command with the importance of learning from and honoring past scripture and God's historical acts?
 4. The sermon describes parts of Isaiah as the "New Testament of the Old Testament," referencing a coming salvation that ends an old system of "cyclical sin." Elaborate on what this means and how the promise of a "new thing" in Isaiah 43:19 points toward the concept of salvation through Jesus.
 5. The speaker's stated goal is to "develop a process for making a decision" that leads to God's best. Based on the provided text, what are the initial components of this process, and how does the exegesis of Isaiah 43:18-19 serve as the foundation for this decision-making framework?
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Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Finding God's Best	The central theme of the sermon series; living out the optimal path or will that God has for a person's life.
Former Things	A phrase from Isaiah 43:18 referring to past events. The sermon warns against misinterpreting this as a command to forget all of God's previous instructions, such as those given to Moses.
Isaiah	The prophet inspired by God to write the book of Isaiah. He wrote to the nation of Israel, warning them of coming captivity while also offering them hope in God.
Isaiah 43:18-19	The key scripture passage for this sermon: "Remember not the former things nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing now."

	<p>It springs forth. Do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."</p>
Israel	<p>The nation to whom the prophet Isaiah was writing. The sermon notes that his prophecies were written about 150 years before Israel was taken into captivity.</p>
Moses	<p>Mentioned as an example of "the former things" that people might mistakenly believe they are supposed to forget. He is referenced as the one who "gave instruction from Mount Sinai."</p>
New Testament of the Old Testament	<p>A description some commentators have applied to parts of the book of Isaiah. This is due to its writing style and its prophetic focus on the new way of salvation that would come through Jesus.</p>
Passage Pitfalls	<p>The speaker's term for common misinterpretations of a scriptural text. An example given is the incorrect belief that "remember not the former things" means to discard the 10 Commandments.</p>
Wilderness / Desert	<p>Metaphors from Isaiah 43:19 used to describe a seemingly hopeless situation. The "wilderness" is a place without a path, and the "desert" is a place of drought, where God promises to create a new way and provide life-giving rivers.</p>