

BREAKING

Free

UPDATED EDITION

The Journey, The Stories

Beth Moore

 LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life

BREAKING
Free
UPDATED EDITION

Beth Moore

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To my beloved staff at
Living Proof Ministries (aka The Village)

Without your trustworthy and tireless partnership,
I could not devote the majority of my time to
writing Bible studies. Thank you for sharing my
vision for God's people to get into His Word and
break free! You've inspired me, taught me, laughed
with me and cried with me. You are my very best
friends in the whole wide world.

I love you so much,

Beth Moore

About the Author

Beth Moore has written best-selling Bible studies on the Patriarchs, Esther, David, Moses, Paul, Isaiah, Daniel, John, and Jesus. *Breaking Free*, *Praying God's Word*, and *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* have all focused on the battle Satan is waging against Christians. *Believing God*, *Loving Well*, and *Living Beyond Yourself* have focused on how Christians can live triumphantly in today's world. *Stepping Up* explores worship and invites us to reach a new level of relationship and intimacy with God.

Beth has a passion for Christ, a passion for Bible study, and a passion to see Christians living the lives Christ intended. God bless you as you join Beth and explore the new and updated version of *Breaking Free: The Journey, the Stories*.

Introduction

I once believed only the spiritually lost were captives. God pried open my comfortably closed mind from the inside out with my life as the object lesson. I had no idea I was in captivity until God began to set me free.

As a small child I received Christ as Savior. I never missed a church service or church-related event. If anyone told me Christians could be in bondage, I'd have argued with all the volume a person can muster with a yoke of slavery strangling her. I was the worst kind of captive, a prisoner unaware. The kind of prisoner most vulnerable to her fellow cell mates.

Perhaps you're also unconvinced that Christians can live in bondage. Don't take my word for it. Take God's: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). This liberty plea was directed not at the world but to the church. To genuine believers.

If you've joined me in previous Bible studies, you'll notice several differences. I will be asking you to join me in Scripture memorization this time. The Word of God, our book of truth, is the key to unlocking the gates of our prisons. Begin by memorizing Galatians 5:1. Tape it to your mirror or refrigerator, or take it in the car with you; but say it, say it, say it until the truth is engraved on your soul.

The following statement will be our definition of captivity throughout our study: **A Christian is held captive by anything that hinders the abundant and effective Spirit-filled life God planned for her.**

Our themes will come from Isaiah, a book about the captivity of God's children, the faithfulness of God, and the road to freedom. Week 1 will overview the Book of Isaiah through the lives of the kings who ruled during the prophet's ministry. These kings exemplify many of the obstacles to freedom with which we must deal. Then beginning with week two we will seek to apply the formula for freedom to our lives.

Each week contains 5 lessons requiring 30-45 minutes to complete. If you spend this kind of time in the Word of God, He will change your life. I urge you not to miss a single lesson. Get completely involved,

picturing yourself as an eyewitness to the events you study. Ask God daily what He wants to say to you.

Each day will include one Principal Question, marked with an asterisk. Discussing the answers to these questions weekly in small group will help ensure each person's basic understanding of the material.

In addition to these 5 content-oriented questions, you will find a Personal Discussion Question in each lesson identified by [this color of print](#). These learning activities help group members personally apply the material by relating the events to their own lives. The weekly group discussion will consist of 5 Principal Questions and 5 Personal Discussion Questions.

No one will be expected to share personal experiences with the group. Sharing is voluntary, and we hope no one will share anything causing herself or others harm. Please answer the questions whether or not you choose to share them in small group.

Each daily lesson begins with a Scripture called Today's Treasure representing the theme of the lesson. Each lesson will invite your full participation through Bible reading and various interactive exercises. Don't simply read my journey. This is your journey. Your full participation will enable you to make liberty in Christ a reality in your life. The letters and excerpts in the book are genuine, from past students, but the photos are models, not pictures of those students.

I primarily use the *New International Version* of the Bible in *Breaking Free*. If you do not own one, you will still be able to answer virtually every question without significant confusion. I have used several resources for study of Greek and Hebrew words. Definitions taken from *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* and *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers), are enclosed in quotation marks with no reference. I have also used *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Words taken from Strong's are enclosed in quotation marks with the word Strong's in parentheses.

I'm so glad you're along on this trip. I believe it will be one of the most important journeys you or I have ever made. God is good to let us travel together.

BREAKING

Free

session one viewer guide

Introductory Session

Isaiah 61:1-3 shapes the heart of our study and states the gracious intent of our God. Before we take this process forward, we'll trace it backward and capture a fascinating parallel for freedom drawn in Isaiah 9:4.

Turn to Judges 6:1-6. A few things we need to know about yokes and how they can be shattered based on the example of "_____:"

1. The blessed _____ can live under _____.
The goal of the oppressor is to make us ...

- _____ (vv. 3-4)—Hebrew *shahat*: "_____ ... _____ ... _____ ... _____." In the KJV terminology, the oppressors _____ the _____."
(*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.)

- _____ (v. 6)—Hebrew *dadal*: "bring _____, _____, be _____, not be _____, _____, be impoverished."
(*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*)

2. If we don't seek _____, we will seek _____ (v. 2 and glance ahead to v. 11).

Consider a little history on the relationship between the Israelites and the Midianites ...

Read Judges 6:7-17.

3. God stands to get much glory from making _____ out of the _____.

Read Judges 6:17-23.

4. Whatever we may end up setting _____ the _____ will be _____ by God.

5. The purpose of this journey is _____ but to _____ to the full measure of _____ He promised us (v. 23).

* You have permission to make copies of the viewer guides.

Week 1

Untying the Cords of the Yoke

He is a God who breaks strongholds.

I knew that God could set me free from my insecurity but had lived all of my life comfortable in my chains. I understood that He wanted to deal with the insecurity in my life, so I asked Him to take my shaking hand and walk me to the other side, to freedom. And He did. It's a cliché but so true — I felt like a completely different person. I see things so differently now. The world of truth outside the walls of that prison of lies is so unbelievable!

8 I completely laid down my life to the Lord.

Day 1

The Reign of Uzziah

Welcome to *Breaking Free*. The themes will flow from Isaiah. No book has more to say about captivity and freedom. In weeks 2 and 3 we will consider five primary benefits of our relationship with God and five obstacles that keep us from those benefits.

Since we often see ourselves best through the examples of others, this week we will begin by getting to know the kings who reigned during Isaiah's ministry. Sometimes we see traces of ourselves in them, but we will also develop a much greater appreciation of the prophet's wonderful themes as we view them against the backdrop of his day. Each day we will examine the reign of a different king who ruled Judah in Isaiah's day. We will receive important insight into the spiritual state of God's people and discover why their choices made captivity inevitable.

Isaiah 1:1 lists the four kings who reigned over Judah during Isaiah's life. Find their names in the list below and order their reigns 1, 2, 3, 4.

___ Hezekiah ___ David ___ Josiah ___ Uzziah
___ Ahaz ___ Jotham ___ Saul ___ Ahab

Before we turn to the first king, let's consider a few facts about Isaiah—God's primary spokesperson to the people of Judah during this historical period. Isaiah ministered as a prophet in and around Jerusalem in the time when Israel was a divided kingdom. After King Solomon's death in 931 B.C., the formerly united Kingdom of Israel divided to the north and the south. The Southern Kingdom took on the name Judah. The Northern Kingdom continued to be called Israel.

Isaiah primarily served the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the location of Jerusalem, the holy city. The prophets Hosea and Micah were his contemporaries. Isaiah's name means *The Lord Saves*, and the word *salvation* is used in his book 27 times—twice as many as the other Old Testament books of the prophets combined. The prophet Isaiah was married, and I think you might be blessed by the title he gave his wife in Isaiah 8:3.

What did Isaiah call his wife?

Can you imagine them being introduced as the prophet Isaiah and his beloved wife, the prophetess? I like Isaiah already, don't you? He and the Mrs. had two sons: Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. I would have nicknamed them Jash and Hash to save time. I doubt that he did. Under normal circumstances he may have had a playful side, but these were not funny times. At a speaking engagement someone said to me, "I've heard you before. You used to be funnier." I grinned and retorted, "Life used to be funnier." I'm sure life used to be funnier for Isaiah too. Nothing is humorous about God's impending judgment.

Today's Treasure

"After Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall."

2 CHRONICLES 26:16

God moved me
to a true place
of humility.

Isaiah was obviously well-educated. He was probably born in Jerusalem of a family related to the royal house of Judah. God inspired him to write the longest book in the Bible written by a single author. Isaiah's ministry extended approximately 40 years, bridging 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. As we study each king's reign, keep in mind that before the prophecies of physical captivity were fulfilled, evidences of an internal captivity already appeared. As you study this week, look for benefits God intended for His people and obstacles to those benefits.

Isaiah's calling came, not coincidentally, right after the death of King Uzziah. To understand Isaiah, we'll launch our history lesson with a brief examination of Uzziah's reign. Please read 2 Chronicles 26:1-15; then complete the following:

The name *Uzziah* means "the Lord is my strength." In what ways does this passage suggest much of his reign was a reflection of his name?

* In the margin, describe why you think Uzziah would have been a hero to a boy like Isaiah.

Did you note that Uzziah became king when only 16? The Southern Kingdom enjoyed great prosperity and protection under his reign. Although his father, Amaziah, foolishly caused the city of Jerusalem to be vulnerable (2 Chron. 25:18-23), Uzziah faithfully fortified it and raised up an army to defend it.

Isaiah's parents and grandparents must have spoken often of the close call under Amaziah's reign. They would have proclaimed the heroics of King Uzziah who saved the day, strengthening Jerusalem's ramparts once again.

The Southern Kingdom must have seemed secure, practically invulnerable to captivity. Now read 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 and complete the following:

What primary sin proved the downfall of Uzziah (v. 16)? _____

What about 2 Chronicles 26:5,15 hints that Uzziah also might have allowed the obstacle of prayerlessness to roll between himself and God?

Uzziah had more power than any other individual in the Southern Kingdom. Virtually the only authority withheld from him was the authority given to the priests of God to serve in the temple.

In the margin describe why you think Uzziah presumed this forbidden role and why the confrontation by the priests took such courage.

Just picture the scene with me. We have no idea what possessed Uzziah to suddenly grasp such a sacred task, but we certainly can assume he knew better. According to verse 5, Zechariah "instructed him in the fear of God." We can also assume that power motivated him far more than worship.

Whatever moved him to action, Uzziah rose from his throne and headed out the palace doors. He marched through town, through the temple gates, and across the courtyard. Bystanders watched and whispered. He probably took a utensil and gathered coals off the altar of sacrifice to burn the incense, then headed arrogantly into the holy place. By this time, he had the undivided attention of 81 stunned priests who summoned the courage to follow him in for a confrontation. They were not motivated by turfism but reverence for the One who had appointed them. Uzziah had not offended the priests. He had offended God.

Consider Uzziah's reaction when confronted by the priest. How do you know he hadn't just made a mistake in judgment?

- his pride led to his downfall he was unfaithful to the Lord
 he became angry when corrected all of the above

Parts of the Bible really make me grin. The occasional understatement gets a laugh out of me almost every time. Read 2 Chronicles 26:20 one more time. I love the part that says, "Indeed, he himself was eager to leave." Yes, I suppose he was. I wonder if he got a glimpse of himself in the mirrored laver on the way out.

The rest of the story is not amusing at all. In fact, our egos could probably stand a few moments of sobering meditation on 2 Chronicles 26:21-23.

Based on all we've learned by Uzziah's example today, in the margin describe why you think God hates pride so much (Prov. 8:13).

God's hatred of pride doesn't mean He wants you to feel bad about yourself. In fact, putting ourselves down represents another twisted form of pride. God hates pride because it dethrones Him and puts ourselves at the center of our universe. I believe God's hatred of pride expresses His love. Pride slights Him, but it destroys us.

Uzziah had been a good man. An excellent king. A wonderful provider. A courageous warrior. Even a visionary and an entrepreneur (v. 15). Yet when his life was over and his body rested in the grave, all people could say was, "He had leprosy." How like our human natures—both in our tendency toward pride when we are blessed with success and in our tendency to judge someone's entire life by a brief season of failure. Pride, in itself, can lead to captivity (Jer. 13:15-17). We certainly see that it led to a real and tangible captivity in Uzziah's life.

As we close today, let's take a moment to think about a very real issue in our Christian lives. God wants very much to prosper us. I'm not thinking in terms of monetary prosperity. I'm just thinking of His desire to give us victory and successes in our efforts. He probably does not enjoy humbling us any more than we enjoy being humbled, but pride is so crippling to the believer that He often has little choice.

In the margin write your thoughts on how a person can avoid falling to the temptation of pride when he or she meets with success. Conclude by giving prayerful consideration to the example we've seen today.

Day 2

The Reign of Jotham and the Call of Isaiah

Today's Treasure

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple." **ISAIAH 6:1**

Did you notice this week's title? We direct our efforts this week to untying the cords of the yoke. This yoke bound God's people to the captivity the prophet Isaiah foretold. We have two goals for this unit: (1) to deepen understanding of themes from the Book of Isaiah and (2) to learn more about captivity and freedom from the successes and failures of God's people.

Our method of reaching this goal is to analyze each king who reigned during Isaiah's lifetime and ministry. Yesterday we read the tragic last chapter of King Uzziah's life. The pride that captivated him internally finally captivated him externally, and he died in seclusion after a very prosperous reign. Remember, Uzziah reigned in Jerusalem 52 years, so he was the only king Isaiah had known. Uzziah must have had a tremendous impact on Isaiah. To meet the second king affecting Isaiah's ministry, today's reading will overlap yesterday's slightly. Please read 2 Chronicles 26:21–27:9. Then complete the following:



How was Jotham similar to his father, and how was he different?

similar

different

Verse 6 tells us "Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God." In the margin describe why you think Jotham might not have fallen into the same trap of pride that his father did.

Though great wisdom rests in learning from the mistakes of others, we don't always learn so easily, do we? Especially when the example happens to be a parent!

What was the spiritual state of the people under Jotham's reign?

corrupt reverent fearful repentant

We will center our thoughts on two events in the reign of Jotham: Isaiah's call and the corrupt practices of the people. Read Isaiah 6:1-8 slowly and aloud. We want to look at Isaiah's call to see what we can learn about the kings who reigned during his lifetime. Keep our task in mind as you complete the following:

If you could describe God with just one word based on Isaiah's vision, what would it be?

Isaiah's vision of God caused a sudden awareness of what specific sin?

- idolatry adultery pride
 unclean lips impure thoughts

As overwhelming as the vision must have been, why do you think Isaiah so readily responded to the call? Respond in the margin.

Isaiah grew up under the reign of the mighty King Uzziah and no doubt idolized him as a young boy. Imagine the future prophet with his friends, squeezing through the crowds gathered in the marketplace when the victorious King Uzziah returned in pomp and splendor after the crumbling of the walls of Gath.

Imagine the excitement that permeated the tiny homes in Jerusalem when the watchman on the wall announced the coming of the ambassador of Ammon, bringing tribute to King Uzziah. As the little boys played war, they would have fought over who got to play the part of King Uzziah. Now he has the audacity to die and leave them hero-less. Perfect timing. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord."

In no way do I want to minimize the pain and tremendous challenge of losing a very important hero-figure. The experience can seem earth-shattering; and if we were loyal enough to the old, it can leave us bitter toward the new.

Have you ever lost a hero? Yes No

If so, who was it and why was he or she such a hero to you?

I could never express the challenge of facing the passing of a hero like the anointed tongue of the late Oswald Chambers. These words are so important to me, I practically have them memorized. Read and meditate.

Our soul's history with God is frequently the history of the "passing of the hero." Over and over again God has to remove our friends in order to bring Himself in their place, and that is where we faint and fail and get discouraged. Take it personally: In the year that the one who stood to me for all that God was, died—I gave up everything? I became ill? I got disheartened? Or—I saw the Lord?

It must be God first, God second, and God third, until the life is faced steadily with God and no one else is of any account whatever. "In all the world there is none but thee, my God, there is none but thee." Keep paying the price. Let God see that you are willing to live up to the vision.¹

Oswald Chambers was not suggesting those who are devoted to God are those who do not care for others. We are to love one another, share each other's burdens, and actively encourage one another as the body of Christ. We are to reach out to the lost and care for the downtrodden.

So what do you think Chambers meant when he wrote “until the life is faced steadily with God and no one else is of any account whatever”?

I believe Isaiah idolized King Uzziah. When he pictured a throne, he most likely pictured Uzziah, not the King of all creation, sitting on it. He, as well as most of his fellow patriots, did not look on King Uzziah as a simple instrument in the mighty hand of God. They saw a mighty man who, at the most, used God as an instrument for victory.

I love to watch the playoffs of most any sport. Something about naming a team or a player as the best excites me. I always watch the interviews afterward and sit smugly satisfied when the winners thank God for the victory. Yet I must confess I don't grab the next morning's newspaper to read about God. It's the star player. Although the star may thank God, it's not God who gets the ring. The team doesn't retire God's number. They don't boast about His statistics. And we wouldn't expect them to. The point is—the players become the heroes. At best, some may mention God as their means to their heroic end. I believe this scenario was true of King Uzziah. He may have sought God in advance for strength and victory and he may have thanked God when He delivered, but the king didn't go out of his way to resist heroics. Finally, he believed his own press. Big mistake.

People crave a human worth worshipping. We are wise not to deliver.

I see an important point emerge from his example. A wide gulf lies between thanking God for our wonderful victories and pointing people to God as the One and only Sovereign victorious. People crave a human worth worshipping. We are wise not to try to deliver. Uzziah accidentally left poor Jotham hopeless to measure up in the minds of many. I believe Isaiah was one of them.

Notice Isaiah 6:1 does not say, “In the year Jotham became king, I saw the Lord.” Not the existence of something new but the removal of something old opened Isaiah's eyes to the kingship of God. At no time is our vision more capable of seeing God in His rightful place than when the focus of our former attentions has been removed from our sight. Sadly, however, the removal of our earthly king could be to no avail. Like the people of Isaiah's day, we can choose to be everseeing, but never perceiving.

Can you think of a time when you allowed God to change your focus from someone else to Him? In the margin describe the circumstances.

Now let's turn our attention to what Isaiah saw when God called him. The light of His glory not only shined on the throne room of God but it also fell on the carnal man before Him. The more Isaiah saw God, the clearer he saw himself. He was

undone (v. 5, KJV), *ruined* (NIV). The word means “to be destroyed ... a violent end.” He had just heard the sound of the angels roaring, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty!” If when the angels spoke, the door posts and thresholds shook, what in the world would happen when he opened unclean lips and tried to speak? In his opinion, he was as good as dead. All he could do was confess his sin.

This was Isaiah’s brilliant moment. No other response fit. For unclean lips to join in praising the holiness of God would have been as unthinkable as King Uzziah burning incense in the temple. Isaiah was probably just as corrupt in mind, mouth, and practice as the people surrounding him. To make a point, God often calls the unworthy, present company included. I don’t believe He called Isaiah because he was a man of character, like Noah. I suspect He may have called him because he was just as sinful as the rest of them. Who better to speak to the sins of the people than one who has also sinned and turned to God?

Reread 2 Chronicles 27:2. This verse takes the spiritual temperature of the people of Isaiah’s community. The mercury hardly shows. Their leader, Jotham, walked steadfastly before the Lord. He did not enter the temple of the Lord like his father. Yet the people continued their corrupt practices. Why? Probably because of a little tidbit of information appearing in 2 Kings 15:32-35.

What did Jotham fail to do?

remove the high places restore the temple fortify Jerusalem

The high places were sites elevated on hilltops and dedicated to worship of pagan gods.² Alarming, isn’t it? The thought of the people of God building shrines to other gods is almost unthinkable, yet they did it over and over. God warned His people constantly not to take on the practices of the Canaanite pagans. He told them He would not share His glory with another and that such practices would surely lead them into captivity.

Jotham sought God faithfully and walked steadfastly before Him, but he refused to demand respect for the one and only God. Jotham was boss. He could have destroyed the high places, but he obviously feared the people more than he feared God. Jotham conquered nations, but he refused to rule his own people. He chose to overlook a terribly grievous sin.

Is it any wonder God called a man by the name of Isaiah out of the midst of the people? He was one of them, yet a cut above. Educated. Opinionated. Of probable means. Like the rest of us, Isaiah probably tended to act like whomever he spent his time with. Then one day, “he saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted.”

That’s the only way we’ll ever truly see the Lord. He cannot be less than who He is. That day God cleansed the lips of Isaiah to speak some of the most poetic expressions that ever kissed a scroll. For indeed, out of the overflow of a changed heart the mouth most beautifully speaks. May we voluntarily dethrone every Uzziah and every Jotham in our lives and put them in their rightful places. Only then are we free to see the Lord seated on a throne, high and lifted up, as we journey to our destination.



God lifted me.

How does God want you to respond to what He showed you today?