

# Teaching Script



Week 1 – 3/27/2022



## INTRODUCTION

Okay, think about this. What's the best thing you've ever smelled? Warm chocolate chip cookies? Candles? Freshly cut grass? Popcorn at the movie theater?

All of those things rank high on the smell scale, but there's one smell that's greater than all others—the *new car smell*.

The other day I took my truck into the dealer for some maintenance, and the waiting area is in their showroom. Sitting there, I thought: *There's just something about that mix of fresh leather, perfect carpet, and all the shiny newness.* And while you can get a "new car" scent air freshener at Walmart, it's just not quite the same.

Whether it's the smell of a new car, the excitement of a new job, or the anticipation we feel when Amazon drops off a package at our door, we all love the feeling of something *new*. We love it so much that often we'll trade in something that works perfectly fine for a newer version. (I'm looking at you, iPhone users!) And hey, I get it, I'm the same way. Most of time, I'm a big fan of *new*.

## TENSION

But "new" also has a dark side, doesn't it? Sure, we love new places, new gadgets, and new *stuff*, but when we get into new *situations* the shiny excitement can wear off a bit. And, if you're anything like me, anxiety can quickly replace that initial enthusiasm. What once sounded exciting and fun can now feel terrifying or upending. It's not that we're against "new," it can just be a little nerve-wracking.

And we've never felt that collectively more than the year 2020. Remember when we thought the biggest thing to happen that year was the Olympics?

That year pushed us all into new territory a little faster than we'd have ever imagined. Sure, there was a moment where quarantine-life felt like a grown-up snow day, a short summer break for adults, but pretty quickly we all were in a new territory for longer than we'd first thought. On top of that, some of you are facing new territory months and months later. The world has changed, but *your* world has also changed. Maybe in the last year you've . . .

- lost a job
- changed jobs
- retired
- went back to school
- had a child
- or lost a loved one

The truth is, we're all entering new territory all the time and the big question we all face is this:

## How do we handle these *new* moments?

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### TRUTH

Thankfully, "new" isn't a "new idea." From the very beginning, people have faced challenges while moving into new territory—into new moments, places, and circumstances. In this series, we're going to look at the lives of people throughout history who have faced new situations and new territories, while discovering what God has to say about their situations and see how to relate it to even our own.

We're starting in the book of Isaiah. Before we get to the verse, let's do a little background work.

Isaiah was a prophet who delivered God's messages to His people. At the time of this writing, God's people had been rebelling against Him for a long time. So God had removed His hand of protection. Enemy nations stood poised and ready on their doorstep to attack and take over. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been conquered and absorbed into the enemy nation of Assyria. Isaiah was speaking to God's people who remained, the southern kingdom of Judah.

In that moment, things didn't look promising for God's people at all. Whatever good life they had before was long gone. Whatever hope they had for the future was questionable at best. Their rebellion had landed them in new situation with no clear idea of what was next.

It's not always rebellion that lands us in new situations. Sometimes life just puts us there. No matter the cause, maybe you've found yourself feeling a similar way: unsettled. Unsettled in new patterns of life, unsettled in a new social dynamic, unsettled financially. New territory can always feel a little unsettling because we haven't *been* there before. I imagine that's part of how God's people felt at this point in history.

Then Isaiah came along, and shared words from God that gave the people hope in the midst of uncertainty. He said this:

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland"* (Isaiah 43:18-19 NIV).

Can you imagine what a message like this would have felt like to a people who were living in unfamiliar territory? It had to be a breath of fresh air. Because God was reminding them that even though they were in a scary, new situation, He wasn't done. Yes, they couldn't imagine how things might turn out well, but that was kind of the point. They *couldn't* imagine because it had never been done before. God was doing a *new* thing among them.

This is so important for you and me because we have a tendency—based on our personalities and our circumstances and maybe even our human wiring—to feel the discomfort of new territory and assume that God isn't there, that He is absent, that He has abandoned us, that He couldn't possibly be working in the middle of it all. I make that assumption all the time. And here we had God Himself saying He was doing a new thing they'd never seen before. He was still working for good. It would be as foreign to them as a desert with rivers in it. It would seem impossible, and yet the impossible has often been God's specialty throughout history.

In fact, if you're new to faith or considering faith for the first time, I think many of the followers of Jesus who have been doing this for a while would tell you, "Life will *always* take you into new territory. If you are hoping to hang onto the way things have always been, to the way people say life is supposed to be, you're going to be very uncomfortable, because life is not that way. But if you're willing to stick close to God through whatever comes, you'll get to experience a way of life that is way better than anything you can imagine."

Now obviously, we're not saying God causes all of the new territory that comes with pandemics or job loss or death. But the truth is God can do something new in the middle of *new* that we never imagined. Perhaps, just as God is doing with you right now. In fact, I'd love for all of us to consider this question:

In the middle of the chaos of the last year, in the middle of uncertainty, in the middle of competing messages from competing experts, in the middle of *all* of the change, **what if God wants to lead you into new territory?** Think about that for a minute.

If you're anything like me, that possibility is equal parts exciting and terrifying. On the one hand, I've walked with God long enough to know His plan is always good. God's plan always leads to an abundant, full, better life story. At the same time,

there's a part of me that wants to say, "no thanks" and run the other direction, because the reality is new territory is always a little bit scary. There's just something inside us that recoils at the discomfort and the disorientation of being somewhere we've never been before. And at some point, no matter how good the new situation is, we all find ourselves longing for and wishing for and dreaming of something that was a bit more comfortable, a bit less scary (even if it's less good).

I think that's why God, through Isaiah, begins the way He does:

*"Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past."*

In other words, don't be so stuck on the way things have always been that you miss out on the new thing God is doing right now. Don't hang on so tightly to:

- the way that's comfortable
- the way that's familiar
- the way that feels under control
- the way you've always done it
- the way we've always done it

That you find yourself unintentionally pushing against the God who is doing a new thing. The old territory, the familiar "this is how it's always been" territory, is comfortable, but there are some ways your faith won't be able to grow while you're there. After all, it takes very little faith to stay in familiar territory.

That's why it's so important to . . .

<b>Let God lead you into new territory.</b>
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Thousands of years later, the apostle Paul, who knew this story of God's people very well, wrote letters to the followers of Jesus throughout Rome. Like many of us, their whole way of life had been disrupted by the story of Jesus. Their lives had been permanently changed by hearing the Gospel, which is the Good News that God had sent His Son to give them a new life—to lead them into new territory.

And in this new territory, Paul wrote this:

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2a NIV).*

In other words, don't get stuck in how it has always been done. Don't get stuck in the patterns that the world tells you is how it should be. Instead, be transformed into something new. How? By the reNEWing of your mind. In other words, **when you're approaching new territory, let your mind go first.** Let yourself imagine. Let yourself dream. Let God change how you think. Let yourself let go of the old ways in your mind, even before you do it in your life.

We'll talk more next week about how the mind affects us in new territory, but as we begin this series, I simply want us to pay attention to this truth: **When we're approaching new territory, our minds can pull us forward or hold us back from the new territory where God is calling us.**

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### APPLICATION

So, what does new territory look like for you? Chances are the answer to that question is pretty foggy. After all, if you had it all figured out it probably wouldn't be new territory. Maybe it's . . .

A new work situation. Maybe you've retired or changed jobs or lost a job.

A new family situation. Maybe you've added to your family or lost someone recently.

A new health situation. Maybe you're in treatment or therapy that's changing the way you experience life.

We're all facing new territory personally, *and*, in some ways, we're all facing new territory together. We're learning to live differently than we have before. We're learning to do church differently. We're learning to worship differently. We're learning to lead kids and teenagers differently. In one way or another, we all had an idea of how the year 2020 was going to go, how this year was going to go, how life was going to go and, well, that has changed. We're approaching new territory.

So, for the next few weeks, as you show up here, I want you to be keenly aware of what God may be saying to you, where He may be leading you. Write down the areas where you sense He is wanting to do a new thing and then when you feel the same longing for the old way, the old land, the former things creeping up in your mind, pause and practice saying this phrase to yourself:

**New territory. Same God.**

**New territory. Same God.**

Things may be unfamiliar, but He is familiar.

Things may feel uncertain, but He is as steady and sure as He has always been.

Things may feel like a brave new world for us, but He is still the Creator and Sustainer of it all.

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## LANDING

It's times like this that I'm reminded why we do small groups, because on our own, you and I will always have moments when we're tempted to dwell on the past and miss what God is doing right now. And in those moments, in groups like these, we can encourage and remind each other of what's true.

1. God is always leading us somewhere new.
2. He can be trusted.
3. New territory. Same God.

**Let God lead you into new territory.** He can be trusted, because He has always been trustworthy. He can be followed, because He is always leading us well. And we can let go of the former things knowing we won't miss out, we won't regret, and we won't turn back, because where He is going is exactly where we want to be.

# Small Group Discussion



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the best thing you've ever smelled? Do you have memories or an association with that smell?
2. What are your general feelings about "new"? Do you like new things and prefer change? Or are you a creature of habit and prefer to stick with the tried and true?
3. Think back over the past 12 months of your life. What is one new thing that you experienced? How did you feel about it?
4. When you are in seasons of change, do you ever find yourself comparing the new season to the old season? Why or why not?
5. How does change effect your relationship with God?
6. Are there any areas in your life where you sense God may be wanting change to happen?