

# CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

FAITH FORMATION FOR CHILDREN | YOUTH | FAMILY | ADULT

**Talking with God - God's Voice through the Prophets**  
**Week 3 - Talking with God- God's Voice Through Isaiah**

## **KEY POINT**

Isaiah's call story and commissioning reminds us that God's Word is not an abstract or timeless truth but a particular message for a specific time and place.

## **KEY VERSE**

Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Begin your time together with this, or another, prayer:

God of Isaiah, you call each person into your story through your Word. Be with us now as we join together to study your Word. Help us to hear our own callings and find our own place in your story. In your name we pray. Amen.

## **READ**

Isaiah 6:1-8

## **ABOUT THE STORY**

Isaiah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah, centered at the capital, Jerusalem. This first section of the Book of Isaiah was most likely written in the pre-exile years, before 586 BCE when the city of Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed by the Babylonian Empire. During these years, prophets like Isaiah warned those in power that their ways ran counter to God's ways, and that they were courting disaster.

There were primary themes in this period: hypocrisy, complacency, and self-interest. Isaiah spoke against worship for the sake of appearances (1:11-15), encouraged the people to return to the ways of God (1:16), and called them to deliver justice to their vulnerable neighbors (1:17). Only by returning to God's ways could Judah hope to avoid the coming wrath of God, according to Isaiah. But it is now too late. Their coming destruction is already set. However, out of their destruction, God will raise them to new heights and set them as a model among the nations, praised and proud of their accomplishments (1:26-27).

While the Book of Isaiah begins with these pronouncements, and continues in that vein for many chapters, it is still important for the prophet to establish his credentials, and today's passage does just this. Every prophet needs a call story, so that the people know that the message comes from God. Isaiah's call story comes in chapter 6, after the tone and content of his message have been established. The date of Isaiah's call is given as "the year that King Uzziah died," which has been estimated to fall some time between 742 and 736 BCE.

The content of the call story is typical here. The prophet receives a vision that commissions action on behalf of God. The prophet objects that they are not worthy. The objection is overridden by God's action. The prophet is sent with a specific message. Isaiah's call story has all of these elements, and ends (verses 9 on) with a message that makes clear the difficulty of Isaiah's work. It is Isaiah's unhappy job to tell the people how wrong they have been, that it is too late to change, but that God will still not abandon them.

God calls imperfect people to do God's work. Isaiah protests God's call, saying that he is not fit to serve. In response, the seraph cleanses Isaiah's lips with a coal and sends him anyway. As Christians, we are cleansed and sent by our baptisms. Our ability to serve is not based on our perfection, but on God's call.

## SHARE

- Name one thing that happened today that seemed special. Name one thing that happened today that seemed boring.
- When you have sensed or heard God's call to go and do or say something? What do you think of the idea that the ancient message of the Bible can come alive in a new way for people today? How does that happen?
- Most of us cannot claim to have had visions on the lines of those reported in the Bible. However, many of us have felt compelled to follow a particular path or calling. Share your stories of how you came to be where you are in life. Can you look back and locate a particular moment or event that turned the direction of your life? Help one another identify God's voice or hand in these stories.

## PRAY

Calling God, you have a purpose and a voice for each of us. Help us to hear your voice more clearly in our daily lives this week, so that we might speak as you have called us, and know that we are always serving you in all that we do. In your name. Amen.

## BLESS

Share this verbal blessing with one another: "God has claimed and called you by name. Amen."

## FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- Write a list of things that you enjoy doing and feel particularly good at doing. Prayerfully ask God how you might be called to use each of these things in service to others.
- Find a local vocational rehab agency, where people with disabilities are given training and assistance in finding their own callings. Find out how you can help.
- Pick one thing that you have always wanted to learn how to do and find a class in your area that will help you get started learning this new way of using your gifts.