

Isa. 6:1–8

Ps. 29

Rom. 8:12–17

John 3:1–17

Claimed by God

Goal for the Session Youth will hear God’s claim on Isaiah’s life and consider God’s claim on their lives.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Isaiah 6:1–8

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Michael H. Floyd

Jerusalem’s royal temple is imagined as the earthly representation of YHWH’s heavenly throne. Because the temple is the axial point at which heaven and earth come together, Isaiah can see from this location into the throne room above. Isaiah is surrounded by the smoke from burning sacrifices and incense, and by the noise from the festive throng of worshipers. This mirrors the praise of the heavenly attendants—represented by the seraphim—that surround YHWH’s throne (cf. Ps. 29:1–2, 9b–10). The mythic imagery of the heavenly council is the antecedent of Trinitarian thinking: Christians are reminded that such a notion of God points to a mysterious divine-human encounter with sociopolitical consequences.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Donald K. McKim

From early times, Isaiah 6:1–8 has been viewed as pointing to what became the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The passage itself, of course, does not lay out a full-fledged view of God as eternally existing as three coequal persons. But taken with other biblical passages (especially from the New Testament) it anticipates what the early church gradually came to understand as the Trinity. The vision and call of Isaiah is one illustration of the way the triune God has been at work in history, as attested by the Scriptures. The Isaiah passage is a witness, pointing to the triune God’s revelatory actions in calling Isaiah, and in the biblical story of salvation.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Kristin Emery Saldine

Isaiah’s vision accentuates at least three characteristics of God’s relationship with us: God encounters us in our historical context, God’s word is revealed in our worship, and God calls us to serve. The elements of our worship—gathering, praising, confessing, praying, hearing, and responding—all are appropriate responses to the holy God who claims us. We should not be afraid to name the sins of our time, just as Isaiah did. Think of the image of the seraph cleansing Isaiah’s lips with a live coal. That is how vibrant and powerful God’s forgiveness is, drawing us into service and drawing our attention to the needs of the world beyond our own.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” G. Lee Ramsey Jr.

The faithful frequently wonder about vocation. How does God call the believer? How does one listen for the call of God, and how do we know if what we hear is the voice of God? The Isaiah account invites the congregation to hear and see how God calls the believer: from an awareness of the mysterious and frightening presence of God, to conviction and confession of sin, to reception of forgiveness, and finally to surrender to God’s direction. The verses that follow (vv. 9–13) get Isaiah into a mess of trouble. Rather than a call to a settled ministry, God summons Isaiah to prophetic engagement with faithless Israel.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 6:1–8

YOU WILL NEED

- paper
- pens
- modeling clay or play dough
- Bibles
- Internet-connected device
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- clear plastic cups
- measuring spoons and cups
- rubbing alcohol
- turmeric
- pitcher of water
- baking soda
- vinegar
- copies of recent worship bulletins or orders of service

For Responding

- option 1: question cards cut from Resource Sheet 2
- option 2: newsprint, marker, paper, pens
- option 3: newsprint, marker

For Film Connection

- Internet-connected device

Focus on Your Teaching

The vision of God appearing to Isaiah, with its winged seraphs, smoke-filled temple, and mysterious ritual of a coal being touched to Isaiah’s mouth will spark the imaginations of young people who have been steeped in the mysterious worlds of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* and Harry Potter at Hogwarts. In these stories, an “ordinary” hobbit and wizard are called upon to do extraordinary things as they fight evil in the world—much like Isaiah, who is claimed by God to proclaim God’s Word in a world that has turned a deaf ear.

Gracious God, help me to hear your call to teach your Word to these young people and to proclaim with Isaiah, “Here am I, send me.” Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

As they arrive, give each participant a sheet of paper and a pen. Have youth brainstorm a list of people (including groups of people) who have a claim on their lives. Provide modeling clay or play dough and have participants sculpt one of the people or groups of people on their lists. When all are finished, give participants an opportunity to show and explain their sculpture to the rest of the group. Set the sculptures aside for Closing.

Explain that, in this lesson, they will explore God’s claim on their lives.

Pray:

Loving God, you called each of us here today to hear your Word. Open our ears and our eyes to all that you have to teach us today. Amen.

Have the group quietly watch “Bible Verse Isaiah 6:8—Inspirational & Motivational Video” (bit.ly/FOWIsaiah6). Listen as Isaiah 6:8 is read, and pause the video for youth to silently read the quotes. Discuss how the participants relate to the quotes by John MacArthur and Billy Graham.

Tell your group that this Bible passage, Isaiah 6:8, is the response to a vision that the prophet has and to keep this in mind as they dive into today’s session.

EXPLORING

Read Isaiah 6:1–8 together. Then, form two groups to present the Scripture passage in the following ways:

- ✠ Group 1: Enact the story in the style of a dramatic film.
- ✠ Group 2: Create a series of tableaux that portray significant moments in the story.

Once both groups have presented their portrayal of the story, explore the following questions:

- ✠ How did the groups portray God in similar and different ways?
- ✠ How did the groups portray Isaiah in similar and different ways?
- ✠ What is Isaiah concerned about in verse 5? How does God address Isaiah's concern?

A seraph is a heavenly being with six wings, most likely serpentine in shape. Isaiah 6:2, 6, and 7 are the only verses in the Bible that mention this creature.

Form pairs of participants. Give each pair two clear plastic cups and a copy of Resource Sheet 1 (Mix It Up). Provide measuring spoons and cups, rubbing alcohol, turmeric, water, and baking soda. Have participants follow the instructions for Part 1 on the resource sheet. When all have completed Part 1 and have cups with red-colored liquid, explain that this is like the effect that sin and guilt have in our lives.

Provide vinegar and have pairs follow the instructions for Part 2, which will cause the mixture to foam and return to its original color. When all have completed Part 2, have pairs discuss the reflection question on the resource page. Explore the following questions together:

- ✠ How did this action prepare Isaiah to hear and accept God's claim on his life?
- ✠ How does God claim our lives today?

RESPONDING

Choose one of the following learning activities:

1. **Dialogue Partners** Form pairs of participants. Give each pair a set of question cards cut from Resource Sheet 2 (Question Cards). Have pairs place the question cards face down in a stack. Have pairs take turns selecting a card, asking the question on the card to the other person, and listening as the other person responds to the question. Note that some participants may not feel as if they've been claimed by God. Assure them that this is normal and encourage them to listen to other stories about feeling claimed.

When pairs have selected all of the question cards, gather the entire group and ask:

- ✠ What did you discover in your conversations about God's claim on your life?

EASY
PREP

Consider playing a recording of “Isaiah 6” performed by Todd Agnew (bit.ly/FOWIsaiahSong) while participants write responses to the posted question.

- 2. Reflective Response** Ask: How do Christians today know that God has a claim on their lives? Give participants an opportunity to name examples of God’s claim on people’s lives. Then, write *How does God’s claim on my life affect how I live?* on a posted sheet of newsprint. Distribute paper and pens. Have participants write a response to the posted question. When all are finished, give participants an opportunity to read their responses to the rest of the group.
- 3. Skits** Ask: How do Christians today know that God has a claim on their lives? Give participants an opportunity to name examples of God’s claim on people’s lives. Then, have each participant answer the question: What is an example of one way in which God’s claim on your life affects how you live? Record the answers on a sheet of newsprint. Have participants work together to create a skit that creatively portrays all of the listed responses.

CLOSING

Have participants hold the sculptures that they created in Gathering. Explore the following questions together:

- ✠ How does God’s claim on your life connect with the person or group of people represented in your sculpture?
- ✠ In what specific way can you pay attention to God’s claim on your life in the coming week?

Send the participants with this blessing: “Go into the world with thanksgiving for God’s claim on your life, looking for ways you can respond to this claim by putting your faith into action.”

■ ENHANCEMENT

FILM CONNECTION

In *Evan Almighty* (PG; 2007), Evan Baxter goes to serve in Congress in order to change the world. God, however, has different ideas about what it means to save the world and calls for Evan to build an ark. If your church has a viewing license, watch together the scene (bit.ly/FOWEvanGod) where God (played by Morgan Freeman) and Evan (played by Steve Carell) first meet. Discuss:

- ✠ How is Evan’s response similar to Isaiah’s response to God’s call?
- ✠ What are the similarities and differences between how God is portrayed in Isaiah and in *Evan Almighty*?

Mix It Up



Part 1

1. In a clear plastic cup, combine ½ cup of rubbing alcohol and ½ teaspoon of turmeric.
2. In a separate clear plastic cup, combine ¼ cup of water and 1 teaspoon of baking soda.
3. Slowly pour the turmeric/alcohol combination into the glass of water.

What happens to the color of the water?

Part 2

1. Pour ¼ cup of vinegar into the glass of red water from Part 1.

What happens to the color of the water?

	Reflection Question:
	How is the reaction of adding the vinegar to your mixture like the seraph touching the coal to Isaiah’s mouth?



Question Cards



How have you seen God's claim evident in someone whose faith life you admire?



What are two examples of ways in which God's claim on your life affects how you live?



What three words best describe how it feels to be claimed by God?



What are two ways in which you can respond to God's claim on your life in the next two hours?



What words would you use to explain to a friend that you are claimed by God?



What are three ways in which you can respond to God's claim on your life in the coming week?