



Life Guide applying God's Word to life

God's Help for a Hurting World June 7th, 2020

(Isaiah 6:1-8)

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

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!”

1. God called prophets to help his people when they were hurting.
Write down one way *you* are hurting? (We'll come back to this.)
Now write one way your *neighbors* are hurting?
Finally, write one way our *nation* is hurting?

Me: Answers will vary widely. Some good clues are “what do you think about when you can't fall asleep?” or “What are the things that are difficult to talk about?”

Neighbors: Jesus' description of a neighbor is anyone you come in contact with, so friends and family count here too.

Nation: Coronavirus. Racism. Riots. Political polarization. And more.

2. To prepare Isaiah to help people, God taught Isaiah mostly through his eyes rather than his ears. In your own words describe what Isaiah saw in v. 1-3. What does that teach you about God?

God was high up in the air. He was on a throne. He had a huge robe. There were seraphim. (Seraphim might be angels, but they might be like the living creatures in Revelation 4:6-8 “*In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings.*” The root of the word means *serpent* so some scholars think they were winged snakes. Either way, they are impressive.) The seraphim are shouting out to one another about God's holiness and glory.

It becomes obvious that God is more than we often think he is. He is more than an impersonal force, more than a white-bearded sky-grandpa, more than a best friend. God is HOLY, which means sinless, utterly unique, and different from everyone else. God is intimidating. God is a little scary. That's why Isaiah was afraid. It's good for us to remember how much bigger and different God is from us.

3. V. 4-5 make me think of Exodus 19. If you were in Isaiah's place, what thoughts would you be having?

Exodus 19:9-25 ⁹ *The Lord said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said.*

¹⁰ *And the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹ and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not approach the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. ¹³ They are to be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on them. No person or animal shall be permitted to live.’ Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they approach the mountain.”*

¹⁴ After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵ Then he said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations.”

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole

mountain trembled violently. ¹⁹ As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

²⁰ The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up ²¹ and the Lord said to him, “Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish. ²² Even the priests, who approach the Lord, must consecrate themselves, or the Lord will break out against them.”

²³ Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.’”

²⁴ The Lord replied, “Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the Lord, or he will break out against them.”

²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them.

If I saw the temple shake and fill with smoke, I would think, God is getting ready to kill me! This is bad! Coincidentally, that is how every sinner reacts in God’s presence. It makes all boasting and pride melt into fear and repentance.

4. In your own words describe what Isaiah saw in v. 4-5. What do these verses teach you about human beings?

Isaiah saw the temple shaking and filling with smoke.

It taught him that compared to God we are all ruined. We deserve to be killed. We are unclean, as Isaiah said.

5. In v. 6-7 Isaiah sees something very surprising. Can we come up with five reasons why this might catch a prophet by surprise?

- The seraphim approached him.
- He seared his mouth with the coal, which would hurt a lot.
- Instead of Isaiah polluting the coal, the coal made him clean. That is unusual.
- Isaiah’s guilt is atoned for, which means someone else is bearing responsibility for his uncleanness.
- Isaiah didn’t have to do anything for this to happen.
- There are other good answers. The gospel is always a surprise to an honest sinner.

6. In v. 5 Isaiah is despairing. In v. 8 he’s volunteering. What prompted that change in Isaiah? Be as specific as you can. What prompts that change in you? Be as specific as you can.

In Isaiah the change came from seeing this glorious God, seeing his own sin, seeing God take away his sin and then hearing God look for a volunteer. If Isaiah thought God was boring or little he wouldn’t volunteer. If Isaiah was prideful or “holier than thou” he wouldn’t volunteer. If Isaiah was guilty he would think he’s unqualified. If God didn’t invite him he wouldn’t have the guts to volunteer.

In me, God has told me the truth about my sin. If I don’t take that seriously I will be too proud to serve. God has forgiven my sin in baptism and in his word. If I don’t take that seriously I will be too guilty to serve. God has also called us to be his witnesses. If I don’t take that seriously I will miss the opportunity to serve.

7. Let’s review: When God wanted to help his hurting people, lessons did he teach his prophet?

God is holy. He is big and intimidating and amazing to see.

I’m a mess. I sin. I’m dirty. I don’t deserve to live near God.

God makes me clean. God took away my sin by his grace in Jesus.

God requests help. God wants me on his team, to be his witness.

8. Look at the hurts you listed in question 1. What might go wrong if we try to help those hurts without learning the lessons God taught Isaiah? How do those lessons prepare us to help a hurting world?

Answers will vary. Imagine someone filled with self-righteousness trying to help. Imagine someone filled with guilt trying to help. Imagine someone trying to help with only their own wisdom and strength. God’s preparation teaches us how to avoid all of those.