

Becoming an Isaiah

By Beth Moller

While it is true that no one can wake up one morning and decide to be just like a person from the past, such as Paul or Peter, Moses or David, we can all learn from the humble and obedient life of the prophet Isaiah. God has a call on each of our lives, and everyone's calling is different. But just because God has a purpose for our lives doesn't mean that we are puppets and automatically fulfill that calling and purpose. Human beings have a free will and a sin nature and are allowed to make choices. This is evident from the time we are born. Just because a 2-year-old child has been told not to touch the hot stove doesn't mean he or she will listen. In fact, the rebellious attitude that can be found in each one of us is likely to rise up and result in a burned finger. As we grow, we have choices to make that can have positive or negative consequences. But the most important choice we have is how to answer when we hear a call from God.

Isaiah chapter six is a very impactful chapter. It opens with Isaiah being confronted with God's glory. What an amazing sight that must have been. The Lord was *"high and exalted, seated on a throne"* (Isaiah 6:1b, NIV), surrounded by angels. Isaiah felt the holiness of God and of that place and realized his unworthiness immediately. This is the first lesson to learn from Isaiah. He was confronted with his own sin at the realization of how far he fell short of measuring up to a holy and powerful God.

However, in verse seven, God sends a seraphim to Isaiah with a live coal in his hand to touch his mouth. After doing so, the seraphim tells Isaiah, *"See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for"* (Isaiah 6:7b). Isaiah sees that God is capable of taking away sin and atoning for unrighteousness, and then he hears the voice of the Lord: *"Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?"* (Isaiah 6:8a). Isaiah's answer is key. He replies, *"Here am I. Send me!"* (Isaiah 6:8b) What an incredible answer. God has yet to say what He is sending someone to do, yet Isaiah answers that he will go, he will be obedient, and he will follow God.

In our own lives, I think it is often tempting to look at missionaries to other countries and assume that they have followed that call, just like Isaiah did, and are being obedient to God's calling on their life. While that is most likely true, people can be just as quick to judge others for not leaving their home country for missions work. However, as mentioned earlier, every calling is different, and we must be careful not to condemn those who have a calling different from our own. God has use for and need of missionaries in every city, state, and country. Our goal should be to have the attitude of Isaiah and say, "Here am I. Send me!" As someone who appreciates punctuation and grammar as a professional writing major, I love that the Bible uses an exclamation point to end the second sentence. It is a "send me" that is spoken with conviction, excitement, and willingness to lay aside our own plans for our Savior.

But the lessons from Isaiah's life do not end at his reply to send him wherever God wanted. The chapter continues. Isaiah 6:9-10: *"He said, 'Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving." Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'"* Isaiah's response is the same as what ours would likely be: *"For how long, Lord?"*

(Isaiah 6:11a) God's answer is not a clear cut answer. He does not tell Isaiah a certain number of days or years, nor does He reassure Isaiah that his ministry will eventually be effective. Rather, God expects that Isaiah will obey without any certainty of what the future will hold.

We are called to a similar obedience. Once God has made clear a calling for us to follow, we often do not know how long it will be until we see blessings come forth from it, if ever. Or, we may be uncertain what the Lord has for us to do and feel like we are in a waiting mode until the Lord makes it clear to us. But in whatever place we are, one thing is certain. We are called to be faithful to God, both in the little things that are seemingly meaningless and the “big” things that God has for us. Our answer should be what Isaiah’s was: “Here am I. Send me!” even when we don’t know what we are being sent to do.