

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Missions

Isaiah 6:1–12



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Most of us like the view from our own backyard better than from anywhere else. Oh, we open the gate now and then to see what's going on in the world. We watch the news or read the paper and shake our heads over the pain, injustice, and persecution in other countries. But that is often as far as it goes. After all, we've got our own lives and our own problems to worry about. We've got our own dreams to fulfill and goals to pursue.

Isaiah probably felt the same way. Born almost thirty centuries ago, likely into an aristocratic family in Judah, Isaiah probably had his life-plan all mapped out. He surely caught reports about the mounting power of Assyria, Judah's notorious enemy. He probably sighed about the pagan customs that had spread their roots across his homeland. He might have mourned about the idolatry, immorality, and ritualism that had begun to erode the foundations of his religion. But, at least from the biblical text, it didn't seem like Isaiah had personally involved himself in changing the moral or spiritual landscape of his country—at least, not until Isaiah faced a heartbreaking loss and then had a life-changing encounter with God.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. God Uses Circumstances to Make Us Aware of His Presence (Isaiah 6:1)

In the midst of an immoral society and the threat of war, Judah's king, Uzziah, died. Since Isaiah had access to the king's courts (Isaiah 36–39), he probably knew Uzziah and took his death hard. In the midst of Isaiah's grief, the Lord visited him in a vision. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne, in complete control, high above the tragedy and uncertainty in Judah.

2. God Reveals His Character to Make Us See Our Need (Isaiah 6:2–7)

Isaiah came to the temple in grief, but he found himself in worship as God revealed His greatness to Isaiah. For a moment, the heavens opened and Isaiah saw God for who He is; sovereign, sitting on His throne, and encircled by angelic worship. In the face of God's holiness, Isaiah saw his sinfulness. But as God purified Isaiah's lips, He gave Isaiah the ability to serve Him.



Quotable

“Don't just pretend to love each other; really love people.”

— Charles R. Swindoll



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3. God Gives Us Hope to Make Us Realize We Are Useful (Isaiah 6:8)

God's heart beats for the world in need. In Isaiah's time, God saw villages spread out like lonely islands, people stranded in a sea of despair. God could have sent His angels with His message, but He chose to send Isaiah. But first, Isaiah had to step outside the ivory tower and catch a vision for God's broader world program.

4. God Expands Our Vision to Make Us Evaluate Our Availability (Isaiah 6:8)

After the grief that brought Isaiah to his knees, after he had seen God in all His majesty, and after God sent an angel to purify Isaiah's sinful lips, then God asked, "Whom shall I send?" After Isaiah's view of God had expanded, he was ready to serve God as His prophet.

5. God Tells Us the Truth to Make Us Focus on Reality (Isaiah 6:9–12)

After Isaiah exclaimed, "Here I am. Send me" (Isaiah 6:8), God had to sober Isaiah's reeling heart with the realities he would face. Though Isaiah would speak God's words, God's people would not listen. So Isaiah would focus his ministry on obeying God, not merely getting results, God told Isaiah ahead of time that he would face dull, unrepentant people.



A CLOSER LOOK

Face-to-Face with the Sovereign One

After Uzziah's death in 739 BC, the bottom dropped out of Isaiah's life. Faced with the death of the sovereign leader of Judah, Isaiah might have wondered where God was. As Isaiah entered the temple and sought God's guidance in the midst of his despair, the sovereign Lord stepped into Isaiah's life and showed him something he wouldn't quickly forget. Isaiah came face-to-face with the holy God and it changed the entire course of his life (Isaiah 6:1).

When the Lord chose to reveal Himself to Isaiah, He pulled back the curtain so Isaiah could see Him as the majestic, sovereign Lord. Even though Isaiah's human king had died, Isaiah's eternal King still reigned. Just as the hem of His robe filled the temple, God's glory and power fill the entire earth.

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Faced with the immensity of the vision, Isaiah might have wondered: *If God's glory fills the entire earth, why doesn't everyone — Jew and Gentile alike — worship and obey Him?*

Next, Isaiah saw several strange heavenly beings, six-winged angels, surrounding God's throne, continually singing to one another: "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Isaiah 6:3). As Isaiah watched the seraphim, who exist to worship and serve the Lord, he had to face reality; Isaiah had to face his sin. And before Isaiah could serve God, he had to accept God's cleansing grace (6:5–7).

Now you might be wondering: *If the heavenly beings praise and serve the Lord continually, and that is what God desires from all of His creatures, then how will all the people around the world get the opportunity to become His worshipers and servants?*

That's where missions come in. Remember: missionaries aren't just those special people who travel to remote places and share the gospel in the jungles. All Christians are missionaries. The sovereign Lord asks *each* of us: "Whom shall I send?" (6:8).

After revealing Himself to Isaiah, the Lord extended grace to Isaiah and called him into missionary work. Though very few people would listen to Isaiah's message, God asked for Isaiah's faithfulness. He would take care of the results. The sovereign Lord also asks for our faithfulness as we live as missionaries every day. And He will take care of the results.



LET'S LIVE IT

Strengthening your grip on missions requires a firm handle on God's call. The greatest confirmation you need is not the tangible results of your labors but the inner assurance of being in the nucleus of God's will. Isn't it time you allowed Him to launch you, like an arrow, into the needy world? Imagine the impact of one arrow, obedient to the bend of the bow, in the hands of the almighty God. No wonder Isaiah volunteered with the eager words, "Here I am. Send me."

Are you ready to say with Isaiah, "Here I am. Send me"? What hesitations do you feel? How might you overcome your uncertainty?



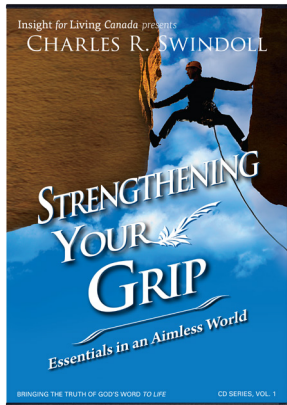
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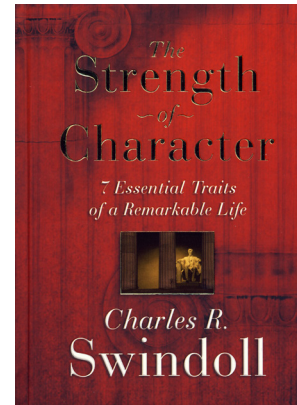
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