

Isa. 6:1–8

Ps. 29

Rom. 8:12–17

John 3:1–17

Here Am I, Lord!

**Goal for
the Session**

Tweens will consider Isaiah's call and listen for ways God's call comes to them today.

■ 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

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens are beginning to wrestle with whether their faith in God makes a difference in their lives: *Why do I need to know the stories of the Bible, anyway? What does the world of the Bible have to do with my modern one?* On the surface, Isaiah's vision seems very unlike their daily world. Help them to engage their imaginations to hear of Isaiah's call, born out of confession and grace. By making connections with their own worship and lives, perhaps they can believe that God also has work for them to do in the world.

Holy, holy, holy Lord! The whole earth is full of your glory. Amen.

■ LEADING THE SESSION

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ white cloth
- ☐ large white battery-powered candle
- ☐ timer or stopwatch
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheet 1
- ☐ pencils
- ☐ Color Pack 27, 28, 31, 33
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player

For Responding

- ☐ option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils
- ☐ option 2: copies of your church worship bulletin, chalkboard spray paint, large smooth stones, chalk, bowl of water
- ☐ option 3: newsprint, crayons or markers

GATHERING

Before the session, if you are using option 2 in Responding, find one large smooth stone (about 3" wide) for each learner. Lay clean stones on newspaper and spray the tops with chalkboard paint, following label instructions.

Greet tweens as they arrive. Invite them to sing "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" (Color Pack 31; track 6 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024) as they help you arrange the white cloth and candle in the center of your meeting space. Light the Christ candle, welcoming Jesus' presence in your midst. Tell tweens that today is Trinity Sunday on the church's calendar, and see what they recall about the Trinity. (They will learn more later in the session.) Pray aloud:

Dear God—Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit—we thank you for bringing us together today to learn about you. Bless our time together, and open our hearts to your presence with us. Amen.

Form pairs. Give each pair a copy of Resource Sheet 1 (30 Seconds) and a pencil. Explain that pairs are to work together to list as many ideas as possible for each of the categories. You will time them, giving them 30 seconds per category. Use a stopwatch or timer to start and stop their work in each of the four categories.

Gather the entire group, and invite pairs to share some of their most creative answers. Say that in today's Bible story, one of God's prophets received a message in an amazing way.

Every Time I Feel the Spirit

Refrain:

Every time I feel the Spirit
moving in my heart I will
pray.

Yes, every time I feel the
Spirit
moving in my heart I will
pray.

Upon the mountain, when
my Lord spoke,
out of God's mouth came
fire and smoke.
Looked all around me, it
looked so fine,
till I asked my Lord if all was
mine. *(Refrain)*

Jordan River, chilly and cold,
it chills the body but not
the soul.
There is but one train upon
this track.
It runs to heaven and then
right back. *(Refrain)*

If using an outdoor
space is not possible, try
to use a carpeted space
in your church building.

Affirm that it's impossible
for our human brains
to understand fully
how God can be one
and three at the same
time. On Trinity Sunday,
we give thanks for all
the ways God is made
known to us.

EASY
PREP

EXPLORING

Recall that Isaiah was a prophet, a person God called to speak God's word to the people. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and worshiped God at the temple. Show Color Pack 27, which shows Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The Bible reading today tells how God spoke to Isaiah in the temple one day.

Move to a space outdoors where tweens can lie on their backs. Invite them to get comfortable and think about what they can see from this perspective. Read aloud Isaiah 6:1–8. While tweens are still lying down, ask them to ponder to themselves:

✠ What parts of this Bible passage are the most vivid? What parts are most confusing?

Ask tweens to sit up and gather as a group. Distribute Bibles and ask them to turn to Isaiah 6:1–8. Show Color Pack 28. Explain that the word *seraph* (plural, *seraphim*) comes from a Hebrew word meaning "fiery ones." This photo shows what one artist imagined what seraphim look like. Ask tweens to compare the artist's imagination with Isaiah's description in verse 2. Ask:

✠ According to Isaiah, what was the job of the seraphim?

✠ How do the seraphim's words of worship in verse 3 compare with the words your church uses in worship?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud verse 5. Challenge tweens to restate this verse in their own words. Discuss:

✠ What does Isaiah mean when he says that his lips and the lips of his people are unclean?

✠ What do you think Isaiah is feeling at this point in the story?

✠ How does Isaiah receive God's forgiveness?

Look at God's call in verse 8. Ask for ideas about what God is calling for someone to do here. Invite observations about why God uses the word "us" in verse 8—who might "us" be?

Recall that today is Trinity Sunday. Christians believe in one God, who is made known to us in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Use the words that your church uses in worship when speaking of the Trinity.) Ask:

✠ Do you think the us in "Who will go for us?" might refer to the Trinity? Why or why not?

Ask for volunteers to read aloud Isaiah's response in verse 8, using the tone of voice they imagine Isaiah might have used. Discuss:

✠ Have you ever felt that God was calling you to take action? If so, how did you know?

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following activities.

1. Here Am I Acrostic Tweens will identify ways to respond to God's call to serve through an acrostic. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Here Am I Acrostic) and pencils. Read aloud the information at the top of the page. Have learners complete their acrostics individually or working with a partner. After they have finished, ask volunteers to read

their acrostics. With learners' permission, offer the acrostics for publication in your church newsletter or on its Web site.

2. **Confession and Forgiveness** Tweens will connect Isaiah's confession and experience of assurance with their own worship experiences. Look together at your church's worship bulletin or order of service for words of confession and pardon used in worship. Comment that just as Isaiah felt guilt for his sins and the sins of his people, we also are guilty of failing to be the people God would have us be. Distribute the painted rocks and pieces of chalk. Invite tweens to write a word or phrase on their rocks representing something they feel guilty about. Assure them they do not need to show this to anyone. After all have finished, invite learners to spend a moment praying silently about the word or phrase they've written. Then ask them to take turns washing their rocks in the bowl of water. After everyone has washed the words from their rocks, speak the words of the seraph in Isaiah 6:7.
3. **Community Art** Tweens will ponder God's call in a time of drawing and reflection. Form groups of three. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and markers or crayons. Begin by reading aloud Isaiah 6:1–8 and asking: In what ways did Isaiah experience God's call? Give tweens a few minutes to draw their responses somewhere on the paper, then ask them to trade places with a group member. Read aloud Isaiah 6:1–8 and ask: In what way have you seen, heard, or felt God's presence? Give tweens a few minutes to draw their responses somewhere on the same paper, then ask them to trade places with a group member. Read aloud Isaiah 6:1–8 and ask: What might God be calling you to do? After a few minutes, invite tweens to look at what has been drawn by all the groups. Invite them to share insights and observations about the art. Discuss: To what extent did this activity make you think about God in a new way? What did this activity add to your understanding of God's call?

Option: To stir imaginations, try using a dark color of mural or bulletin board paper instead of newsprint and provide oil pastels or colored chalk for drawing.

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

*I'm gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I'm gonna work so God can
use me . . .*

*I'm gonna share so God can
use me . . .*

*I'm gonna care so God can
use me . . .*

CLOSING

Gather around the candle and light it, if necessary. Invite tweens to tell one thing they learned about God today. Pray aloud:

*Holy God, Three-in-One, thank you for creating us, forgiving us, and
giving us power to do your will. Help us to hear your call and give us
courage to respond! Amen.*

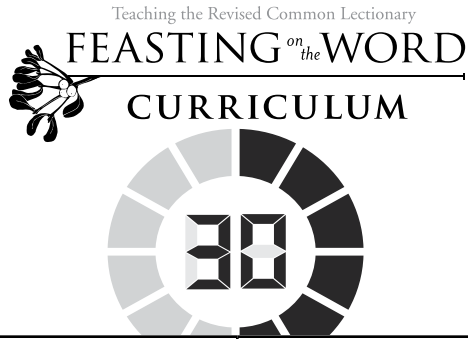
Sing "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" (Color Pack 33; track 11 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024).

Extinguish the candle.

Lead the closing charge:

Leader: Let us go out into the world as God's beloved and forgiven children.
All: Amen! (All clap.)

May 26, 2024
Here Am I, Lord!

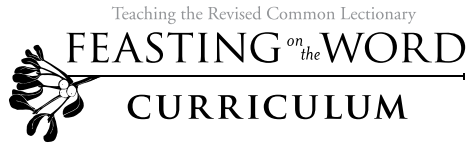


Tweens
Resource Sheet 1

30 Seconds

<p>How could someone get a message to you?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.	<p>When you're going somewhere you've never been, how could you find your way?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.
<p>What might prevent you from doing something that someone asks you to do?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.	<p>If someone needs you to do something, how could they inspire you to do it?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.

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Tweens
Resource Sheet 2

Here Am I Acrostic

God asked, "Who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8) and Isaiah answered. His response is written in the words printed vertically below. Think of ways that you could respond to God's call to serve, and fill in the acrostic below with one idea that begins with each letter. For example, "Help Mom with cooking." (Hint: You can use the letter in the middle of a word, like "clEan toys at homeless shelter.")

Reading
Solving math problems
Talking with people
Singing
Drawing
Playing sports
Inventing games
Cleaning
Helping when others are upset
Cooking
Creating things
Repairing
Giving to others
Praying
Doing things on a computer
Writing stories and poems
Organizing
Helping younger kids learn
Telling stories
Planting and weeding
Taking care of small children
Brainstorming
Taking care of animals

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