

# Called to Surrender

*August 17, 2025*

## Lesson Summary

### **Main Passages**

Isaiah 6:1-10; Jonah 3:1-5; Acts 13:1-3

### **Session Outline**

1. Listening in Obedience (Isaiah 6:1-10)
2. Reluctance in Obedience (Jonah 3:1-5)
3. Acting in Obedience (Acts 13:1-3)

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### **Theological Theme**

We may say we understand the importance of the gospel and our call to share it, but we must also surrender to God's will and the mission He has given us: acting in obedience to the mission.

### **Call to Action**

Identify three things that keep you from sharing the gospel with someone in your circle of influence. What do you need to let go of, give in to, or admit in order to submit to God's call on your life?



## Leader Guide

# Called to Surrender

### Introduction

In a famous encounter with God, Moses was working as a shepherd and noticed a bush that was burning but not burning up. Curious, he approached and found himself in a conversation with “the angel of the LORD” (Exodus 3:2). God told Moses He had seen the suffering of His people and was sending Moses to do something about it. What you may not remember about this story is that Moses didn’t say yes at first.

Moses’s excuses echo the ones we often use when we’re wrestling with God about a call or command to do something. Moses’s last objection before the burning bush is one so many believers still make today: “Please, Lord, send someone else” (Exodus 4:13).

In this series, we’re studying the gospel and God’s command that we go and share it. Today, we’re going to explore the need for our personal surrender and to say yes, despite our doubts. As Moses’s story teaches us, God doesn’t need us to have it all figured out, **He simply wants us to say yes.**

- ❓ What about sharing the gospel is intimidating to people?
- ❓ What kinds of things hold you back from sharing the gospel?

### Session Summary

Like Isaiah in God’s heavenly throne room, when we rightly understand our status as sinners in need of God and accept the gift of salvation made available through Christ, we are also primed and ready to be sent forth to share the gospel.

God can work through whatever effort we put forth for the sake of the gospel. We don’t have to have polished words or feel confident in what we are doing. Our job in sharing the gospel is faithfulness in sharing (Matthew 13:1-23); it’s God’s job to change hearts.

## 1. Listening in Obedience (Isaiah 6:1-10)



What effect did the presence of God have on Isaiah in this passage?



Isaiah was reoriented by God's presence. How does the same happen for us?

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the heavenly throne room, and what a sight it was! In this holy place, the Lord was seated “high and lofty” (v. 1) on His throne, and Isaiah recorded that “the hem of his robe filled the temple” (v. 1). Above the Lord were seraphim. Isaiah described them as each having six wings they used to cover their face, their feet, and to fly. With their voices, they offered worship before the Lord (v. 3).

The temple was filled with smoke and the powerful praise of the seraphim shook the “foundations of the doorways” (v. 4). In response to this magnificent scene, Isaiah recognized he was unclean, and so were the people he lived among. Isaiah was undone by God's presence and His glory. God's glory should elicit a similar response in us.

In response to Isaiah's realization, he was approached by one of the seraphim, who touched a glowing coal from the altar to his mouth, removing his iniquity and atoning for his sin.

Before we answer the call to share the gospel, we must first surrender to the Lord. We may not have received an awesome vision of the heavenly throne room like Isaiah, but thanks to our Bibles and the Lord's active presence in our lives, we can glimpse God's glory. He is holy and all of creation speaks to this. We have seen how He has worked in our lives. He is holy and deserving of praise, and we are sinful (Romans 3:23), just like Isaiah was.

Our atonement, and ultimately Isaiah's, comes from Jesus's blood. He died on the cross for our sins to reconcile us to God, and that blood covers all our sin forever (past, present, and future) when we accept God's gift of salvation. Following these events, God asked, “Who will I send? Who will go for us?” (v.8), and Isaiah responded: “**Here I am. Send me**” (v. 8).

Note the order of this passage: Isaiah had an encounter with God, was convicted because of his sin, was cleansed from that sin, and was then ready to serve.

What this looks like will vary from individual to individual, but God calls us all to serve. Where are you in the process we see Isaiah walk through here? Have you encountered God's glory and goodness in your life and responded?

Have you accepted the gift of salvation that God, in His boundless love, offers you? Are you serving?

Isaiah gave an immediate yes to God after his powerful encounter before the glory of the Lord. Moses was a reluctant yes. In both cases, they first had to surrender to the Lord to answer His call.



Application: Why is it important for us to be willing when God calls us?

## 2. Reluctance in Obedience (Jonah 3:1–5)



What do you know about Jonah's story and what happened prior to this passage?



How do these verses reveal God's grace to Jonah and to Nineveh? What do we learn about Jonah from these verses?

This is one small snippet of Jonah's story, another in a long line of ordinary people God called to extraordinary purposes. In Jonah's case, upon hearing God's call the first time, Jonah didn't surrender to God's will. In fact, he tried to head in the opposite direction from where God told Him to go. Running in the opposite direction of God's call is a temptation many of us have faced.

Jonah's disobedience landed him the belly of a fish to reflect on his choices for a few days (Jonah 2). When the fish spit him out, and Jonah found himself on dry ground once again, the word of the Lord came to him a second time. God still wanted to use Jonah to call the people of Nineveh to repentance.

This time, Jonah went. Verse 3 tells us that Nineveh was a city so large that it took a three-day walk to get from one side to the other. Do you notice what verse 4 tells us? On Jonah's first day there, he delivered what seems like the least effective sermon ever: "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!"

That's it? One day's walk into the three-day wide city. Jonah's words alone weren't much incentive for action but look what God did: "Then the people of Nineveh believed God" (v. 5). In response: "God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it" (v. 10).

We can learn a lot from Jonah's story, but let's apply this specifically to our call to share the gospel. Jonah was called to share God's message with people he hated. These people were Jonah's enemies! But the gospel is for everyone. That includes our enemies, and those we don't like.

Jonah's delayed obedience was in many ways an example of what not to do. Delayed, reluctant obedience is better than no obedience, but this is not the heart posture God desires from us. Jonah did just enough to satisfy the command God gave him. He didn't align himself with God's heart in this mission (see Jonah 4). God wanted to use Jonah to give the people of Nineveh opportunity for redemption, but Jonah didn't want them to repent. So, he "phoned it in."

We have the same choice. We, too, can "phone it in" when it comes to the Great Commission. We can "surrender" on a technicality but still not be aligned with God's heart, but this is not best. If you read on in the book of Jonah, you will see clearly that he remained mad and miserable.

The good news that can be found for us in the book of Jonah is the results. Jonah delivered possibly the worst sermon of all time, and God still worked. Nothing can thwart His plan. This includes reluctance, half surrender, or words that, by all appearances, shouldn't convince anyone.

Our job in sharing the gospel is only to sow (Matthew 13:1-23); it's God's job to change hearts. If God used Jonah's "phone it in" sermon to save an entire city from disaster, He can work in us for the sake of the gospel also. We will all feel like we fumbled a conversation or said something poorly at times, especially at first, but God will work no matter what.



Application: How does the story of Jonah give us hope when we think about God using us to lead others to Himself?

### 3. Acting in Obedience (Acts 13:1-3)



What was the context for the events that take place in these verses? What does this tell us about how we might also seek to hear from God?



What did the Holy Spirit call for, and what was the result?

We recently finished a series on what makes a healthy church, through the book of Acts. In this passage, we see the healthy church in Acts at work!

## Paul and Barnabas Commissioned

The Antioch church had already reached out to Gentiles in its own city. While some of its leaders were fasting and praying for further leading, the Spirit directed them to send Paul and Barnabas on a mission. The others then “commissioned” Paul and Barnabas to the new ministry, fasting, praying, and laying their hands upon them as an expression of solidarity and support. The Antioch church would be Paul’s sponsor on all three of his missionary journeys.

The church at Antioch was made up of believers with different giftings, who were intentional in their faith with action like worshipping and fasting. As they worshipped, the Holy Spirit prompted them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for specific work God had in mind for them.

Immediately we read, when they finished their time of worship and fasting, “they sent them off” (v. 3). The Holy Spirit gave instructions, and they followed it without delay. Barnabas and Saul surrendered to the Holy Spirit’s instruction and willingly went on mission.

If you’ve read the book of Acts, and much of the rest of the New Testament, you know the incredible impact their yes had for the gospel. Their work is still being used by God to bring new believers into His family today.

The church heard the Holy Spirit’s call as they were intentionally seeking to grow in their faith and grow closer to the Lord through spiritual disciplines. Many times, we think we can’t hear or feel God’s direction in our lives. But sometimes it’s not that the Lord isn’t calling, it’s that we haven’t slowed down the noise enough to dedicate time to listen for Him.

Like Isaiah before them, God worked powerfully through Barnabas and Saul’s immediate surrender and yes to share the gospel. We may never know the impact we have on the lives of those around us, but the Lord works powerfully through faithful, obedient surrender.



Application: What does this teach about surrendering to God’s will for our lives? Where do you need to surrender?

## Conclusion

We started our study today in Isaiah 6 when Isaiah received a glimpse into the heavenly throne room. When he witnessed God in all His glory, the “foundations of the doorways” (v. 4) were shaken, and so was Isaiah. When he vocalized the truth of his situation (he was an unclean sinner), he received atonement and was ready to receive God’s call.

In response to who God is, Isaiah said “Here I am. Send me” (v. 8). This is a faithful response and one that the Lord desires from us, too. When we rightly understand our status as sinners in need of God and accept the gift of salvation and atonement Jesus’s death on the cross offers, we are primed and ready to be sent forth to share the gospel, but we must first surrender to God’s will.

In the story of Jonah, we saw an example of reluctant obedience. Jonah’s halfhearted surrender and “phone it in” sermon to the people of Nineveh

isn't an example for us to follow, but it does teach us an important truth: God can work from any effort we put forth toward spreading the gospel. Our job in sharing the gospel is only to sow (Matthew 13:1-23); it's God's job to change hearts.

In the book of Acts, we saw another example of obedient surrender to the will of the Lord. As the body of believers was worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them, telling them to set aside Barnabas and Saul. The Holy Spirit gave instructions, and they followed without delay.

Like Isaiah before them, God worked powerfully through Barnabas and Saul's immediate surrender and yes to God's call to share the gospel. We may never know the impact we have on the lives of those around us, but we can all be sure that the Lord works powerfully through faithful, obedient surrender.

Just like the many ordinary believers we see God call in Scripture, God wants to use you to share the gospel with those in your life. Are you asking Him to send someone else or saying, "Here I am. Send me"?

- ❓ What are some simple things we can do to better listen for and surrender to God's will in our lives?
- ❓ If God can work through us no matter what, why does it matter if we surrender to God's will in our lives?
- ❓ What is holding you back from sharing the gospel? Have an honest, gentle discussion about worries and hesitations and how to submit those before the Lord.

## Prayer of Response

*Thank God for the gift of salvation. Thank Him for the examples in Scripture of ordinary people He has used to do extraordinary things. Ask for His help fully surrendering to His command to share the gospel. Ask Him to help you work through any fears or worries holding you back as you seek to move forward in obedience.*

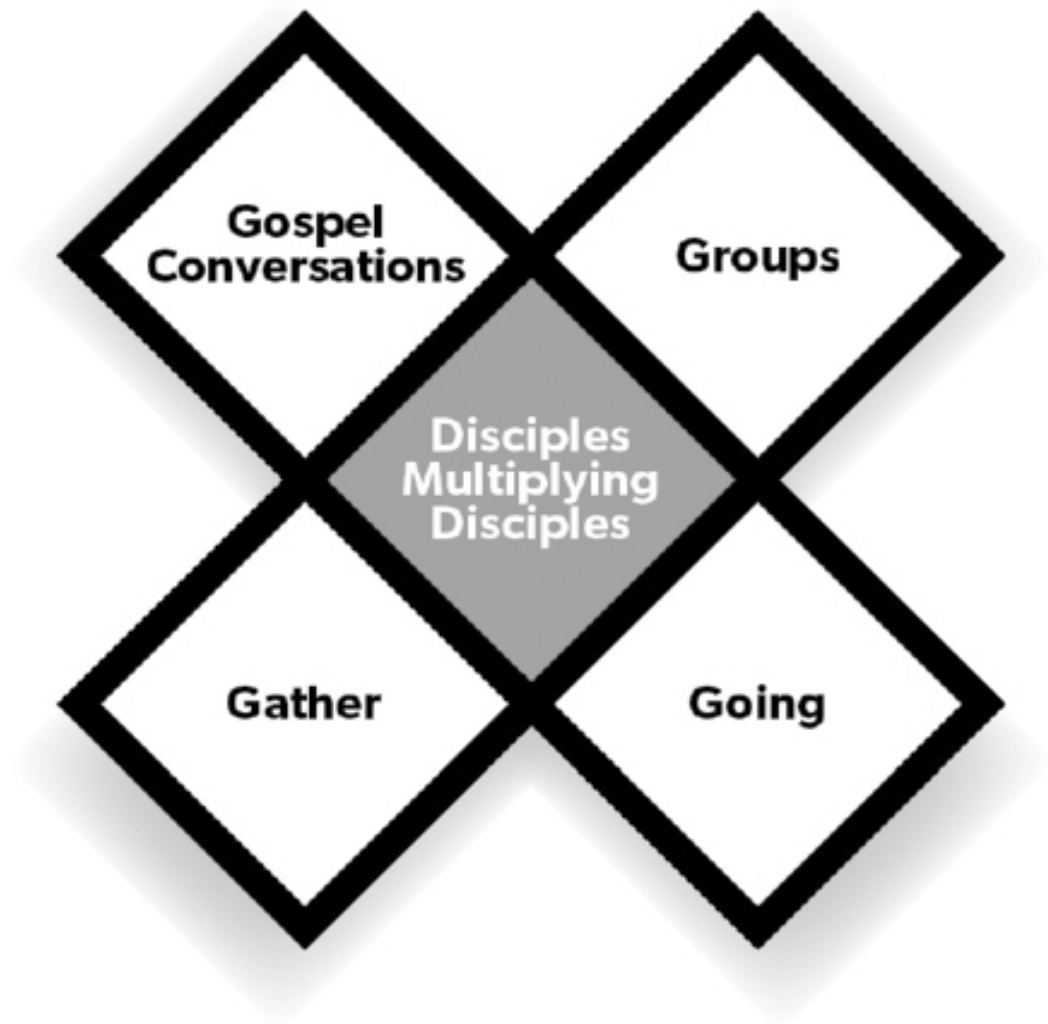
## Memory Verse

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking: Who will I send? Who will go for us? I said: Here I am. Send me. —Isaiah 6:8*

## Additional Resources

- *Isaiah* by Raymond Ortlund
- *Exalting Jesus in Jonah* by Eric C. Redmon, Bill Curtis, Ken Fentress
- *Exalting Jesus in Acts* by Tony Merida

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples





# Historical Context of Isaiah

## Purpose

Isaiah's message is relatively simple. First, Isaiah accused God's people of sin: rebelling against the one who made them and redeemed them. Second, Isaiah instructed these sinners to reform their ways and act obediently. Third, Isaiah announced God's judgment on the people because of their sin. Finally, God revealed his future restoration of the people, or at least of the faithful remnant that survived the judgment. As part of the restoration of God's people, Isaiah foresaw both judgment on the nations (chaps. 13–23) and a future turning of the nations to God (2:1–4). The first part of the book (chaps. 1–39) emphasizes sin, the call to repentance, and judgment; the second part (chaps. 40–66) emphasizes the hope of restoration.

## Author

The book presents itself as the writing of one man, Isaiah son of Amoz. The superscription to the book dates his prophetic activity as spanning the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (783–742 BC, Isaiah's call is dated to this king's last year, 6:1); Jotham (742–735 BC); Ahaz (735–716 BC); and Hezekiah (716–686 BC). On Uzziah (Azariah) see 2Kg 15:1–7; 2Ch 26:1–23. On Jotham see Kg 15:32–38; 2Ch 27:1–9. On Ahaz see 2Kg 16:1–20; 2Ch 28:1–27. On Hezekiah see 2Kg 18:1–20:21; 2Ch 29:1–32:33. Not much is known about Isaiah apart from his prophecy.

## Setting

Uzziah's reign was a particularly prosperous time in the history of Judah, but storm clouds were on the horizon. Assyria was on the rise again in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC). The Assyrian king threatened to engulf Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. After the death of Tiglath-pileser, his successors, Shalmaneser and Sargon, defeated the northern kingdom in 722 BC and deported its citizens. This event brought Judah even more under the shadow of that great empire. Isaiah 37:38 suggests that the prophet lived until the death of Sennacherib in 681 BC.

## Special Features

Isaiah was an eighth-century BC prophet. His book is the first of the Prophets in the English canon and the first of the Latter Prophets in the Hebrew canon. Isaiah is powerful in its poetic imagination, intriguing in its prophetic vision, and complex in its structure. One can never read or study the book without gaining new insights into the nature of God and our relationship with him. The authors of the New Testament read the book of Isaiah in light of the coming of Christ and realized that this prophet anticipated Messiah's coming with remarkable clarity. For this reason they quoted or alluded to Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book.

## Extended Commentary

### Isaiah 6:1-10

6:1 King Uzziah (called “Azariah” in 2Kg 15:1) died about 740 BC. He had been a relatively good king, and did “what was right in the Lord’s sight” (2Kg 15:3), though he did not remove the high places. God also blessed Uzziah’s reign with prosperity and military success. His death, coupled with the rise of Assyria, created great uncertainty in Judah. Note that God is so great that just the hem of his robe filled the temple.

6:2 The seraphim were angelic creatures of great power and importance. Their name means “burning ones,” and the implication of fire evokes thoughts of danger and mystery. Covering their eyes shielded them from the brilliance of the divine glory. Covering their feet (possibly used here as a euphemism) may have been a posture of submission.

6:3 The word holy spoken three times is emphatic or superlative and points to God’s otherness. He is completely separated from anything profane or sinful. His sovereignty is underlined by the fact that his glory filled the whole earth.

6:4 It was probably the entire building that was shaking to its foundations at the thunderous hymn sung by the seraphim. The smoke was likely incense, which cloaked Isaiah’s vision in mystery.

6:5 In the presence of such holiness, Isaiah felt the weight of his own sinfulness. He feared for himself because he knew that God did not tolerate uncleanness in his presence.

6:6–7 God prepared Isaiah by cleansing his lips, the instrument by which he would execute his prophetic task. He did this symbolically by having one of his seraphim touch the prophet’s lips with a burning coal. Fire can purify (Nm 31:22–23), and this burning coal was taken from the altar where sacrifices were offered to atone for sin (1Ch 6:49).

6:8 Isaiah’s readiness to serve contrasts with the reluctance of Moses and Jeremiah (Ex 4:1–17; Jr 1:6). 6:9–10 Isaiah was a prophet with a message of judgment. God’s commission recognized that, because of its sin, Israel’s healing could only come about through their punishment. Isaiah’s message from God would serve only to distance them even more from God. These verses are quoted in the NT to explain why Jesus taught in parables (Mt 13:14–15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10) and to explain the people’s lack of response to the gospel (Jn 12:40; Ac 28:26–27).<sup>1</sup>

### Jonah 3:1-5

3:1–3 Jonah went to Nineveh as God had commanded. Extremely great city (lit “a great city to God”; see textual footnote) may have a double meaning: great in size (where “God,” Hb elohim, is used as a superlative for “extremely”) and a city “important to God” even though inhabited by Gentiles. Three-day walk could refer to greater Nineveh that included the region around Nineveh proper, including modern Kuyunjik, Khorsabad, and Nimrud with a sixty-mile perimeter. More likely, however, it refers to how long it would take for Jonah to preach thoroughly throughout Nineveh itself, street corner by street corner.

3:4 Forty often refers to a period of testing or judgment in the Bible (Lk 4:2; Heb 3:9), serving here to give Nineveh time to repent.

Jonah preached only on the first day of his three-day task (see note at 3:1–3), showing his half-hearted obedience. Demolished (Hb *haphak*) has a secondary meaning of “changed” which is not the sense Jonah meant, but ironically that is how the word of prophecy was actually fulfilled. Nineveh was not destroyed, but was instead changed.

3:5–8 After recounting that Nineveh repented and believed the deity whom Jonah represented (v. 5 uses the impersonal term God, not the personal name Yahweh/Lord), the text then explains that this overwhelming response was a result of a royal decree. The king led by example. Sackcloth was worn during times of mourning and repentance, usually while sitting atop ashes (Gn 37:34; 1Kg 21:27; Mt 11:21). Person or animal means even the animals fasted, bellowing miserably to heaven along with the people.<sup>2</sup>

## Acts 13:1-3

13:1 Prophets and teachers apparently refer to functions and (possibly) offices within the early church. The teachers continued the apostolic function of transmitting Jesus’s message (see note at 6:2–4), while prophets conveyed divine revelation via interpreting the OT or giving new insights (11:27). This is the only reference in Acts to teachers, although the function of teacher is described elsewhere in the NT (1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11; 1Tm 1:7; 2:7; 3:2; 2Tm 1:11; 2:24). The group of prophets and teachers was diverse, including people from Africa and Cyrene, and at least one person (Manaen) who was connected to Herod’s household.

13:2–3 The routine of the prophets and teachers included worshiping the Lord and fasting. This helps to account for their openness to the Holy Spirit, who directed them to set aside Barnabas and Saul for a work to which the Spirit had called them. Barnabas and Saul were confirmed in their calling after a process of fasting, praying, and laying on of hands. This commissioning marks an important turning point in the history of the church, as Saul and Barnabas were selected to extend the gospel message beyond Judea and surrounding regions.<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. Tremper Longman III, “Isaiah,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1049–1050.
2. Joe Sprinkle, “Jonah,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1403–1404.
3. Stanley E. Porter, “Acts,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1739.