

EQUIP South Africa 2012
Session 1
Isaiah 6 – Focusing on Jesus
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God is being incredibly kind to us and wants to be kind to us. He is looking to reveal Himself to us in a fresh and new way. He is wanting to do this so that we would be undone. Because when we're undone by Him we can see what He wants us to see.

It's "GO" time for the Kingdom

I do believe we're in a fresh season. We don't want to miss what God is saying and doing. God has reminded us many times that transition is important and that there is a purpose in transition. That purpose is not to keep transitioning but to get us into position for what He has called us to do.

God is more committed to our future than He has ever been. He hasn't just kept us on life support. He has taught us many things and shown us many things and gotten us to go back to many things to see again what it's all about. It's so easy to get caught up in all the wrong things – this even happens to people with good hearts and good intentions. It happens when we taken our eyes off the main thing, Jesus Christ.

I've been asking God to reveal many things and I've never experienced Jesus like I have the last few years. I'm excited and grateful for what I've been through and I have a message and it's to tell the world and even the Church about Jesus Christ. What unites us is not just our purpose but first and foremost our great King, Jesus Christ. For without the King we have no purpose and are simply on a mission doing things and hoping for the best. But when we are captivated by Jesus, when that King grips our hearts, regardless of where we're at and what we're involved in it gives us clarity and perspective.

We've transitioned now and God has said we're in position – for breakthrough, for taking ground, for advancing and storming the gates of hell. This is exciting because it means it's "go" time, we are now in the position to walk more and more in the things God has given us to do.

God's Church is triumphant and victorious, in spite of opposition and persecution, and it's taking territory wherever it goes. All over we're being stirred. We're not just talking about it but walking it. There's this partnership and a willingness to go at it again and pay the price,

rather than just dreaming about the glory days. Our season is upon us to walk in the glorious inheritance we're being called to.

Envisioning

God wants to envision us. I want to look (and 'dream') the text of Isaiah 6 in light of that and realise that where we get vision from is so very important. Because when God reveals there are ramifications; not just for us here or our cities but for the nations we're walking in and yet to walk in.

I still believe that the biggest battlefield we have in the Kingdom is the truth about Jesus Christ. He is and must stay the central theme and focus to everything we are and everything we'll ever become. If we move away from that we lose the very truth and foundation of what it's all about.

In Matthew 16 the Father reveals to Simon that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. We can talk and rave about Jesus and so on and that's good but we need the Father to reveal the Son to us. After Simon answered as he did, Jesus then began to reveal who the Church is and our sure victory. We seem to want to hear a lot about ourselves but we need to see Him first. And when we see Him then we see us. Then we see the world. Then we understand our role and responsibility. And so that's why the Church, not just the world, needs to understand who Jesus is and continually be pointed towards Him. Our message is Jesus Christ.

In these times we must contend for that revelation. We must be intentional. It's not about mentioning Jesus every now and then or singing about Him from time to time but about intentionally making Him the central theme and focus, from beginning to end and everything in-between. We're not going to graduate from Jesus. Please don't go beyond Jesus. First and foremost, stay in the knowledge of who Jesus Christ really is.

It reveals your church

I speak to those who lead churches – the most revealing thing about your church is what your people think about Jesus, not about Mission, your church, a conference or NCMI. It's eye opening. Our most significant message is what we say or leave unsaid about Jesus Christ.

We're about the Bible and this is a key value for us. If it's in the Bible we do it. If not we don't. Anything else but the Bible kills people. But we must remember, to stay Biblical it's not just about doing things the Biblical way but about testifying what the Bible testifies. And from beginning to end the Bible testifies about Jesus.

It was God who exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave Him the name above every name. God's pleasure is all over people who rave about Jesus. If you take God's Word and run with it His favour and pleasure will be with you. It doesn't matter what kind of impact your church makes, favour is when the Father looks on His people raving about His Son that He sent into this world who has now have the name above every name.

Staying the course

Why do we want great signs and wonders? So Jesus can be absolutely glorified. We want His presence and power manifested so that He would be exalted. The book of Revelation tells us that right now angels worship Him in heaven. If He is being worshipped by angels how much more should we worship Him on earth?

The early church stayed the course not because of a mission but because they were captivated by Jesus. I don't know what the future holds but I know it'll be exciting. But it's also going to have difficult times. Read your Bible if you don't agree. As we break open regions and new places we're not going to stay the course if we're a church that's captivated by mission. People will bail on the mission if the mission is what drives us. What holds us is our absolute love, passion and revelation of Jesus Christ. That will allow us to die for what we believe.

Isaiah 6:

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!”

Our Christology – our revelation of Him - determines our missiology. And in a sense our mission should be determining the Church. Yet many are just about the Church and tag on mission to keep the people happy and put Jesus in the mix somewhere. But we'll never walk in our inheritance that way.

I've listened to many preach on this text of Isaiah 6 (and so have I) and they talk about the commissioning of Isaiah. But this was not the commissioning of Isaiah as he, by the time of this event, had been preaching for 18 years already. What he needed was a revelation of Christ again and it's that which undid him and changed his ministry.

The first five chapters of Isaiah have him prophesy “woe to you”. Then the Lord reveals Himself and Isaiah moves to “woe to me”. The church needs some “woe to me” if we're going to reach people. When we see Him, we're undone, and then we're far more effective in reaching the world as we quit judging.

So what did Isaiah see that undid him?

1. He saw the revelation of Jesus as King

Verse 1 says, “I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.”

- A personal revelation of this King is indispensable. When we see Jesus it awakens our love and drives out weariness and oppression. It literally lifts stuff off of us when we see Jesus. This has to be personal revelation, not read in a textbook. We cannot minister to others from a textbook.
- The knowledge of God has to come from a continued – not once-off – experience of God. He is the very source of our being, our lives, our ministries; we have to be grounded in Him as we move into our glorious inheritance.
- Our ministry cannot flow out of any other relationship except our relationship with Christ. Our ministry will always bring death if it's not about the one who brings life.

We cannot just go through the motions and lead God's people into their inheritance. We cannot lead them on someone else's revelation. God is asking for us again to trust for an ongoing revelation.

- Isaiah saw the King in his sovereignty. In this scripture's context we see that Judah had moved their trust away from God and onto their king. But now their king had walked away from God and was removed. Isaiah then sees God as the real King. It undid him. His Lordship is over all time and space; and He is unfailing in all eternity.
 - He is the same forevermore (Hebrews 13).
 - He is still the King and has all power.
 - He still loves just as much.
 - He is still just as committed as He always was .
 - He has never changed in his provision, protection or promise.
 - He doesn't have to promise again, He promises once because He is never going to change.
 - He will always be sovereign and He is in control, regardless of how we feel.
 - He won't allow man to mess up what He is doing. He will find man to run with His vision.
 - Everything we have to deal with will not stop what God has set out to do.
- Words break down as Isaiah tries to explain what he saw. It was overwhelming. God is unexplainable. Let people experience Him, don't just explain Him. We must experience His glory to truly know who He is.
- He saw God's holiness. That's when he said "woe to me". His holiness refers to his absolute ethical perfection, distinguished from all His creation.
- Notice the order, harmony, dignity, stateliness and sheer awesomeness of the majestic splendour around His throne. Many people want that and want to see that picture but God had a purpose in revealing himself – so that Isaiah could also see the reality of himself.

After Isaiah saw the King he then saw himself.

2. He saw himself

- After seeing the Lord he realised that he was a man of unclean lips and a work in progress. Although we believe in justification by faith, we must remember that we

are also a work in progress.

- God doesn't get us to this point of realising our sinfulness to break us down but to get us to understand the people we're trying to reach – that, actually, we are just like them and they are just like us. The longer you seem to be a believer and in ministry the more you seem to become exclusive and judge the world. But when you see Him in his glory again then it's no longer “woe to the world” but “woe to me”. The concept of sin becomes a reality, it's not just a concept anymore.
- Isaiah saw his inadequacy. It's good to see this at times, not to put us down but to understand that we cannot do this. Isaiah realised that he is finite, mortal, incomplete and fallible. We need to realise this in order to reach others.
- The danger of the educational experience is we as ministers feel we are competent for ministry. Not that there is anything wrong with study but we need to continually encounter God. No matter how much knowledge and tools we have, and how prepared we are, we are totally inadequate without the power of His presence and Spirit flowing through our lives.
- The paradox of ministry is that we must work to become able; yet we are unable. We must realise that we can't in order that we can, with God through us. This will motivate you. God can do this and that's how we'll take on new territories.
- We'll never get a real picture of ourselves or others if we're not living in the presence of the King. You'll either think more highly of yourself or critically of yourself but when you see Him you see things in a totally different way.

After seeing the Lord and seeing himself, Isaiah then was able to see others in a new way.

3. He saw others

- Isaiah realised that all people are unclean and that he lives with people who are unclean – he realised that he fits into that category as much as anyone else. It wasn't just about him now.
- The Kingdom isn't the Church versus the world. When you see God and your own sinfulness you realise that although we live in different places or nations we are equal, we are all unclean. See Rom 3:23.
- It's hard to point fingers at people when you're aware of your sin and what you are

what you've been delivered from. Church planters, know this, you're only clean because of Him and when you realise that then you can bring what you have to others – what you've been washed with, what you've encountered and what you've been set free with.

- We're not going to take these new regions God has for us if we go in there with a judging attitude – where we act as if they need us and that we're the solution. Rather, we're going to win regions when we go there realising that we are all unclean and that God undoes us all. We'll win when we have a heart to show others what it is we have experienced.
- What I love about this event in Isaiah 6 is that God doesn't just reveal himself to Isaiah to show him how unclean he and everyone is and leave him there. Rather, God shows Isaiah redemption – He gets the angel to touch his lips with a hot coal and proclaim him as clean. If God just left us in that place of being undone and seeing others undone, what hope do we have? But He brings redemption.
- This message of redemption must ring out from the Church like never before. Often it becomes an evangelistic project. But I don't need an evangelist telling me about winning souls when my lips have been made clean. We must be a people who don't talk about the finished work of Christ but a people who walk in the finished work. We can't just talk and preach it, we must walk in it.
- Jesus finished it all on the cross! Everything that Jesus needed to do has been done. A lot of the Church is living in an unfinished work of Christ, as if it hasn't been finished. The times of just telling what He's done have passed – He's looking for a people who walk in what He's done. Isaiah could have gotten his lips touched and told people about it but we've been redeemed to go and help others to get redeemed.
- The best way to worship Jesus for what He did on the cross is to walk in what He's done. This honours the King most. Most believers stay at the foot of the cross. It's hard to win the world when you stay there. Yes, without the cross we have nothing, but it's not about the cross but about a King who died on the cross and isn't there anymore. The cross is the entrance point to the finished work that Jesus accomplished.
- We've been given the keys *of* the kingdom, not the keys *to* the Kingdom. Now we've entered, now we walk in it. We walk in salvation, healing, freedom etc.

- Get rid of performance. Kill it. Because Jesus destroyed it on the cross. The Church is such a performance driven people because we live by the law of the land and what the world says is successful and so forth. But Jesus destroyed religion and all the stuff we do to prove and earn. Religion is killing the Church.
- We need to see the sound of grace filling South Africa again – not one-sided stuff but real grace. We need to liberate the Church to liberate people.
- The touching of his lips was painful. Redemption is wonderful but there are things you need to deal with. It's a process. His grace can cleanse and restore us and cleanse and restore everyone.

After first seeing the Lord, then himself, then others, and after Isaiah experienced redemption and revelation, he then realised his true purpose.

4. He realised his true purpose

He heard the voice of the Lord say, "whom shall I send and who will go for me?" I don't believe he was coerced into this but he also didn't have an option. Why? Because he saw what he saw and experienced what he experienced. We don't go because someone has to do it. We go because we've seen what we've seen. We're living in redemption and Jesus' finished work and because of that we say, "Here am I, send me."

- The commission comes after all of this seeing. Once we see the Lord, see ourselves, see others and recognise redemption then we can go and be what He has called us to be.
- When most people think of mission they think of the Great Commission. I want to suggest to you from Scripture that mission started in the heartbeat of God, not with the Great Commission. It started with a God who is compassionate. Isaiah saw and understood that there is a God who cares. Mission is not something great that we've come up with but it's the very heart of God. When we encounter God afresh and continually see Jesus in His glory and we understand how compassionate He is to us, this motivates us. God is mission minded and He has given us a compelling message. When you see Jesus and His glory it gives you passion for that message.
- This message cannot be compromised. It's incredible truth that can't change. It doesn't need to be added to and it doesn't need anything taken away from it. It's a distinctive and compelling message like no other. So we can't try to make it like another one. This message is good enough and it works anywhere in the world. For

the regions we're yet to break open for this Gospel, it works there and will work there because it's God's message.

- This commission has been authorised by the power of Christ. Jesus said ALL authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. Have you ever thought about that? Then, after that statement He says, "Now you go."

This is all accomplished by the plan of Christ. This isn't man's idea. It's his plan and it's assured by the presence of God. He says He will be with us always. If that's so, why would we not go?

When any church loses their spirit for the Great Commission they surrender the very reason for their existence. God is a mission's God; the Bible is a missions book; the Gospel is a mission's message; the Church is a mission's people and when it ceases to be we betray our trust. The Church has many responsibilities but our only one mission is the evangelising of the world.

My prayer is that we would be undone and that we would see the Lord, just like Isaiah did, and it would change us like it changed him. Then we will go and accomplish things for Jesus as He empowers us.

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