

All Nations Church
Life Group Study
True Fasting
Week of March 20th, 2022
Study by Wayne Arcand

When we talk about fasting, we often think in terms of abstaining from food or a favourite activity for a period of time. Isaiah 58 is the account of God speaking through the prophet Isaiah to convict and instruct his people. In this study we will learn what God considers true fasting and how we can apply these principles to our life.

Isaiah 58 (NIV)

True Fasting

58 *“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.*

²For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.

³‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves,

and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.

⁴Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

⁵Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves?

Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

⁶“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—

when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness^[a] will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

⁹Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,

then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

¹¹ The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

¹² Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations;

you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

¹³ "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

¹⁴ then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

1. Isaiah 58:1-5:

- a. What is the overall tone of these verses?
- b. In verse 1, how is Isaiah to confront God's people?
 - i. What is he to confront them about?
- c. In verse 2, what does the phrase "they seem eager" tell us about the people.
 - i. What does the phrase, "as if they were a nation that does what is right..." tell us about the nation?
- d. In the first half of verse 3, the people are asking a question.
 - i. What is the question?
 1. What are they not experiencing?
 - ii. What is God's response?
 - iii. Consider two phrases in this verse, "why have we humbled ourselves", and "you do as you please".
 1. What do these phrases tell us about the way the people were living?
- e. What is the admonition from verse 4?
- f. What does verse 5 tell us about the habits and attitude of the people the Lord is addressing?
- g. In summary, why were the people fasting?
- h. How well does this verse reflect the teaching of James 4:1-3?

2. Isaiah 58:6-14:

- a. Consider the opening words of verses 6 and 7, “*is not this*” and “*is it not*”. What do these phrases tell us about what follows in those verses?
 - b. This passage is filled with a number of conditional statements. These statements have an outcome based on an action.
 - i. Identify the conditional statements identifying the action and outcome.
 - ii. Identify those which have a positive outcome.
 - iii. Identify those which have a negative outcome.
3. *Acts 13: 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*
- a. What activity accompanied fasting in these verses?
 - b. What was taking place in their spiritual life? Why?
 - i. How would this bring about the result God desires for us in Romans 12:2?
4. What have you learned in this study that can have an impact on your life?

For Reflection:

Are you setting aside time to spend with the Lord each day? Our lives are filled with activity. We often feel we are wasting time or not being productive if we are not engaged in doing something at all times. In Psalm 46:10, the LORD says, “Be still and know that I am God”. Would you make a commitment to set aside a period of time to fast, worship, pray and be still that you might experience a new level of closeness with the Lord our God? True transformation to become all that we are called to be can only happen through a close personal relationship with God our Saviour.