



ISAIAH 58

**The Fast
that
God Prefers**

***21 Insights into
the Father's Heart***



The Fast That God Prefers

Isaiah 58

*21 Days of Insights into God's heart
through fasting*

Amazing Grace Worship Center

www.amazinggracewc.org

How to use this Devotional

Simply read one page each day.

Note the corresponding Scriptures for the particular days you read.

Spend time reading those Scriptures and perhaps a few of the surrounding verses. Think on the Scriptures and the point of the particular day's devotion as you go throughout your day. This is called meditating on the Word of God. This practice will help to renew your mind as the Bible instructs us to do.

Make notes on any parts of the Scriptures and the daily devotion that the Holy Spirit highlights to you.

There may be one or more particular days of the devotional that seem to "hit home" with you. Those are likely areas the Holy Spirit wishes you to center upon. Spend time in prayer with God about those particular points.

Use the Notes section of the devotional to list any insights the Holy Spirit brings to you, answered prayers and blessings of God throughout the fast and the year.

And if you came to enjoy a daily thought based on Scripture, there are many wonderful devotionals available for purchase that help to set your mind on the right course each day. I highly recommend continuing the practice. Here's a list of some of my favorite ones:

Closer to God Each Day by Joyce Meyer
Staring Your Day Right by Joyce Meyer
Experiencing God's Presence by Chris Tiegreen

Much prayer has gone into this devotional, so I know as you as you embark on this 21-day journey with God, your life will be greatly enriched. Happy fasting!

Genia Blankenship

The Fast that God Prefers

Day One: Motives

Read Isaiah 58:2-5 in the Amplified Version

Isaiah speaks of Israel superficially wanting to know God's ways. Israel had made fasting a ritual while their hearts remained unchanged. God asks Israel in verse 5, "*Do you call this a fast and a day pleasing to the Lord?*"

Think for a moment why you have committed to this 21 day fast.
Is it because you were trying to perform an annual religious rule of duty?
Is it because you felt you would be looked down upon by church leadership if you didn't participate?
Is it because you are seeking God for breakthrough?
Is it because you desire a closer walk with your Heavenly Father?

Although self-discipline through fasting can be beneficial, and supporting the vision of your church is appreciated, fasting is more of a personal experience with God. Although this fast is a corporate fast, more importantly, you are on a three-week journey with God.

During this fast, take time to ask the Holy Spirit to inspect the motives of your heart as to why you are doing this fast.

God does not care that we keep a ritual.
He cares that we pursue Him.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help your motives for this fast to reflect your pursuit of your Heavenly Father.

Use the area below to list your motives for committing to this 21 day fast:

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Day Two: Fasting for More of Him

“But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.” Matthew 6:33 AMP

When we commit to fasting at the beginning of each year, we demonstrate to God that we are choosing Him above everything else as priority. In the first weeks of the year,

Think about it: Isn't God's presence worth more than any food? Isn't His way of living better than any other way to live?

we place the fast that God prefers above what our flesh prefers.

How do you feel when your spouse, your children, or your family give you priority in their lives? Perhaps it makes you feel more connected to them, perhaps more loved. It definitely makes an impression on you.

By prioritizing God at the first of year, we are actually deepening our connection with Him.

When we seek first His kingdom and His way of living, we are going after His heart.

Fasting is never about rule-keeping. God doesn't care about that.

God cares about the relationship. Fasting is a key of pursuing a deeper relationship with God.

Jesus explained in Matthew 6:33 that when we put God first, God promises to take care of everything else we need.

Many people fast for breakthroughs, and there is nothing wrong with this action. These needs can certainly be brought before God in prayer during a fast.

The point Christians often miss is that breakthrough comes from an increase of God's Presence in our lives. When we seek God and His kingdom above all else, we get Him and He solves everything else.

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Day Three: The Value of You

For the Lord takes pleasure in His people...". Psalms 149:4

Have you ever considered why Jesus endured the Cross?

Many Christians view the cross as a display of God's sovereign power over Satan and his demons. And it was.

Many Christians also view the cross as the entry gate to their ticket to heaven. And it is.

But, God could have established His sovereignty and power without Jesus having to endure the cross.

Jesus didn't spill His blood just to save us so we could go to heaven. His sacrifice was much more than that.

Jesus went to the cross, not only to redeem us, but so He, the Father and the Holy Spirit could once again enjoy an intimate relationship with us as intentionally planned from the beginning.

The next time you see a cross, think about how valuable you must be to God. You were redeemed because of love.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." Hebrews 12:2

You were redeemed for fellowship.

And although this fast shouldn't be compared to the hardships of the cross, the sacrifice you are now making is understood by Jesus and the Father.

While you endure this momentary unpleasantness, look ahead to the joy of accomplishing this fast.

You are investing in your relationship with God.

You are aligning your heart with His.

You were already of great value before you decided to commit to this fast.

Just think how proud your Heavenly Dad must be that you have decided to pursue Him. Let this insight into your value propel you in the days ahead to keep going, enduring this small inconvenience for a few days, but reaping the reward of God's heart for many days to come.

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Day Four: Delighting in Fasting

*“Then you will take pleasure in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the high places of the earth...” Isaiah 58:14 AMP*

*“Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”
Psalms 37:4*

I doubt many Christians would associate the word “delight” with fasting. But the delight does not come in the fasting. The delight comes in pleasing God.

Although we do not have to fast to please God, He acknowledges our fast as a means of pursuing Him.

Let's face it. We do not fast to please ourselves. And we shouldn't fast to please our church or anyone else.

We should fast because we wish to put God first and this pleases Him.

It is a way of taking pleasure and delighting in God.

And look what happens when God becomes our delight...

- We will ride on the high places of the earth
- We get the desires that are so deep in our heart we may not have even spoken them.

There are multiple ways other than fasting to make serving God our pleasure and delight.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you how you can take pleasure in God and delight in Him in your daily life.

Use the space below to record any ideas you are impressed with:

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Day Five: Unclutter

There is a song many churches sing that has the following lines in it:

*“Stirring up deep, deep wells.
Stirring up deep, deep water...”*

In John 7:38, Jesus said, *“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”*

How do we stir up these wells of living water inside our spirit?
Fasting is an essential way to do this.

When we abstain from food for a period of time, our spirit becomes uncluttered by worldly things—not necessarily sinful things—just worldly. Things and issues that keep us from effectively hearing the leading of the Holy Spirit.

For example, have you ever watched a movie and you were excited, saddened, or scared afterward? That is because the movie affected your emotions, which is part of your soul.

Fasting helps to quiet our souls so our spirits can take precedence in everyday life. And when our spirit is having a more active role in daily life, we become much more sensitive to hearing the Holy Spirit’s leading and direction.

And once you experience interaction with the Holy Spirit, as well as closeness to the Father and Son, your perspective on fasting will change dramatically. Rather than drudgery, fasting will become a way you honor God. And, in turn, because you have uncluttered your spirit, blessings will flow like you’ve never experienced before.

Take the space below and list any areas of your life you feel the Spirit may be leading you to take action to help Him unclutter your spirit:

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Day Six: Performance

“Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and You do not see it? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?’” Isaiah 58:3 AMP

Israel was picking a quarrel with God because they felt that God should honor them and answer their prayers because of their fasting.

Many Christians have a similar mindset. Because they feel they have performed well, they feel God owes them.

Coming to church, fasting, praying and reading the Bible are all wonderful disciplines. But God has always looked at a person’s heart as to why they do what they do. Our actions are not what matters to God—our motives behind our actions are what are important to God.

“...On the day of your fast when you should be grieving for your sins you find something you desire to do.” Isaiah 58:3

The problem was with Israel’s heart. While they were supposed to be humbling themselves in a fast to God, they were still indulging themselves by acting however their flesh desired.

They had the outward part right—the look of humility—but inwardly, they had not changed.

As you continue this fast, ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart.
Are there any sins that you’ve continued to participate in?
Are there any traits of your heart that you know are not pleasing to God?

Ask God to show you how you can align your heart with His.
Ask Him to help you overcome anything that has been in His way of connecting with you.
Ask Him to help you not only perform well, but that you inwardly have a change of heart, too.

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Day Seven: Being Part of a Church Family

"And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Hebrews 10:25 NLT

There are individuals who love God who believe they can have a meaningful relationship with Him without being part of a church family. But as you can see from the verses above, this is not what God prefers.

We were created to be interdependent. We were created for family. And when we chose to do life the way God intended, His blessings have the proper channel through which to flow into our lives.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20 KJV

God chooses to work through His church making some apostles, some prophets, some pastors, some evangelists, and others teachers (Ephesians 4:11), all moving in different gifts of the Spirit.

When believers come together with the Presence of God upon their lives and allow the gifts of the Spirit to have liberty to work, the atmosphere is electrifying!

As you fast, make yourself available to join with other believers as often as possible so you can not only be encouraged by a spiritual family, but also for you to experience a greater atmosphere of God's presence.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

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Day Eight: There is Power in Numbers

Have you ever noticed that miracles like healing, deliverance and salvations often occur in a place where believers are gathered together?

Many great revivals such as the Toronto Blessing, the Pensacola Revival and the Bay of the Holy Spirit Revival are marked with remarkable miracles and experiences.

Why is this?

Although God can, and at times does, show up where He pleases, He has chosen to work through His people, and has promised to be among their numbers when they are gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20).

And although it is a wonderful thing to have God's Presence upon us as individuals, a greater effect can happen when we gather with other believers who also carry His presence.

When believers come together, having spent time in God's Presence, and each person brings the Presence of God into a room, the supernatural probability for the miraculous increases.

As author Chris Tiegreen puts it, "The Spirit in many is stronger than the Spirit in one."

As you prepare to attend your church this weekend, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can prepare to carry God's presence into your church.

Just think what could possibly happen if others in your church are doing the same!

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Day Nine: Prioritizing God's Day

"Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Exodus 20:8 NLT

*"If you turn back your foot from [un]necessary travel on] the Sabbath,
From doing your own pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a [spiritual] delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable,
And honor it, not going your own way...
Then you will take pleasure in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the high places of the earth...". Isaiah 58 13-14*

Have you ever wondered why Israel was commanded to observe the Sabbath day?
And why God included keeping the Sabbath as a part of the 10 commandments?

Is it because God likes rules and wants to make sure people keep them?

No, God is about relationship, not rules.

God knows how our attentions can get focused on daily life to the point we are overwhelmed.

Even God rested on the seventh day from His work of creation.

God has designed us to need refreshing in His presence.

This is why He explains in the verses above that we shouldn't always be busy with our own travels and pursuits on the day He has set aside for us to experience time with Him.

Many Christians feel distant from God, unable to hear His voice and follow His leading. They are overwhelmed, stressed and dismayed, needing to be refreshed so badly. Christians complain of being unable to sense God's presence, but the one day a week God asks of us to come into His presence to experience Him is often overlooked and unattended by many.

God asks us to set aside one day a week to focus on Him so He can fill our thoughts and refresh our spirit.

If you want a deeper relationship with God, it will take spending time with Him.

It will take prioritizing His Presence.

God is not about the rule. He wants a relationship with you.

He longs to spend time with you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you if you have been neglecting His presence, and then purpose to prioritize the time God asks of you.

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Day Ten: Riding Upon High Places

“If you turn back your foot from {unnecessary travel on} the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a {spiritual} delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable, And honor it, not going your own way Or engaging in your own pleasure Or speaking your own idle words, Then you will take pleasure in the Lord, And I will make you ride on the high places of the earth, And I will feed you with the {promised} heritage of Jacob your father...”. Isaiah 58:13-14

There is a common trend in modern times for churches to have only one to two services per week devoted to coming into God’s Presence.

Reasons for this decrease of amount of time spent attending God’s house vary, but this decrease does pose a question...If people considered attending church a delight, would churches have to stop having services one or more times a week?

There is a church that has 5 services a weekend because 10% of their city of over 80,000 people attend this church, and it isn’t possible to get everyone in at only one service.

Sounds like people in this church consider the Sabbath a delight.

God asks some very specific things from us in regards to His Sabbath in the verses above. The main gist being that we do not spend the Sabbath doing things that gratify our personal desire, but rather that we make being in God’s Presence the delight of this day.

Attending church should never be something we simply do and mark off our list so we can go on to do what we really want to do that day.

Your emotions may not quite agree with this idea, but they can catch up.

Joyce Meyer explains that if you will do what you know to be right according to God’s Word, your emotions will eventually catch up with your heart.

God wants us to attend His house because we love Him. He doesn’t want the day He asked us to visit with Him to be considered a burden. So, He gives us the liberty to decide whether or not to delight in Him on the Sabbath day.

But He does promise wonderful things if we will delight in spending time with Him on His day.

According to the verses above, he will make us “ride on the high places of the earth.”

When God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, the Bible explains He made Israel to ride on the high places of the earth (Duet. 32:12-13). In other words, God brought Israel out triumphantly.

God still wants us to triumph in this earth. We were created for dominion. God not only wants us to survive in this world—He wants us to thrive!

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Day Eleven: Being Fed with the Promises of Jacob

“If you turn back your foot from {unnecessary travel on} the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a {spiritual} delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable, And honor it, not going your own way Or engaging in your own pleasure Or speaking your own idle words, Then you will take pleasure in the Lord, And I will make you ride on the high places of the earth, And I will feed you with the {promised} heritage of Jacob your father...”. Isaiah 58:13-14

Another promise God says will be ours if we will delight in keeping the Sabbath is that we will be fed with the heritage of Jacob.

God promised to bless Jacob’s descendants, and all families of the earth through him (Gen. 28:14).

God promises to feed us with the same heritage.

The word “feed” is used in the present tense. Jacob’s blessing was for the present and the future, and so it ours.

God promises to make us ride on the high places of the earth, and be fed with wonderful blessings when we delight in His presence.

What a wonderful way to live!

Challenge: Make attending God’s house a priority for the remaining days of this fast. Don’t let anything keep you from prioritizing God’s Presence. Then, look at the ways God makes you to ride upon the high places and how He blesses you.

_____ Sign your name in the blank as a commitment to prioritize God’s house.

_____ Date you made the commitment.

Use the space below and on back to record how God blesses you for delighting in Him in the upcoming days:

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Day Twelve: Treating Others with Compassion

*“In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure,
And exploit all your laborers.
⁴ Indeed you fast for strife and debate,
And to strike with the fist of wickedness.
You will not fast as you do this day,
To make your voice heard on high.” Isaiah 58:4 KJV*

Throughout God’s word, it is evident God does not base our right standing with Him upon our outward actions, but on the attitudes and motives of our hearts.

In the verse above, God explains to Israel why He does not accept their fast, and why their prayers are not being answered—because of their treatment of their servants and neighbors.

God places an extremely high value upon people.
When we learn to share in His value of others, it pleases Him.

Employers in Israel were mistreating their employees and neighbors were involved in strife and debates with each other while fasting.

Because Israel’s heart was not compassionate and forgiving to one another, God would not accept their fast, nor hear their prayers.

While you fast these 21 days, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anyone whom you need to display more compassion to.

Is there anyone in your life you have been involved in strife or debate with?

Take this fast and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to make amends with anyone whom you’ve had a quarrel with. Look for an open door of opportunity God provides to make peace with this person or individuals.

You may just find that by taking this step to please God through your relationships that He also takes care of those who have unjustly treated you.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Proverbs 16:7 KJV

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Day Thirteen: Freeing Others

*"Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?" Isaiah 58:6*

God gets very specific in the verses above to show us elements of a fast He prefers. Each one of these actions God wants us to perform involves how we treat others.

Loosening the bonds of wickedness deals with the bondage we place upon people that, perhaps, were once bonds of justice for a crime they committed against us. The problem is once that justice has been paid, continuing to "tie" them to their past of what they have done and keeping them in these bonds in our heart.

Undoing the heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free and breaking every yoke deals also with the state of our hearts. God prefers that we do right by those with whom we have dealt harshly.

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anyone whom you continue to make "pay" for things they've done to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anyone with whom you've dealt harshly.

During this fast, ask God as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

As you chose to delight in God by obeying His Word, you will find your feelings toward others will begin to right themselves. You will discover you are no longer holding grudges.

You will discover that not only have you freed someone else, but that you are also free.

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Day Fourteen: Meeting the Needs of Others

*“Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry
And bring the homeless poor into the house;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not to hide yourself from [the needs of] your own flesh and blood.” Isaiah 58:7 AMP*

God continues to explain the fast that He prefers, and, once again, these matters deal with actions that come from our hearts.

As these verses indicate, providing food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, clothing for those in need, and providing for our own family members is very important to God.

Ask yourself these questions:

What have I done lately to help provide food or clothing to those who need it?
Is there anyone in my family that has needed my help?

There is a saying people sometimes use to justify their lack of compassion: “They made their bed. Now, let them lie in it.”

Jesus used a few simple words to help us understand how to treat others, “*He who is without sin, let him first cast a stone...*”. (John 8:7)

Perhaps our actions haven't led us down as difficult a path as others, but we certainly aren't perfect ourselves.
Instead of judging how others arrived at places in their lives, let us help them get to a better place.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anyone whom you need to have more compassion for.

Ask the Holy Spirit if there is anyone or any group of people you need to help today.
And be sure to take a look in your own family.

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Day Fifteen: Clarity & Joy

“Then your light will break out like the dawn.” Isaiah 58:8 AMP

“And if you offer yourself to [assist] the hungry

And satisfy the need of the afflicted,

Then your light will rise in darkness

And your gloom will become like midday.” Isaiah 58:10 AMP

God has great rewards for those who will participate in the fast that He prefers.

When we take the time ourselves to provide food for the hungry and help those who are afflicted with sickness or other issues in life that are tormenting, we will be filled with clarity and joy.

As the verses above indicate, we may have been in a dark time in our own lives, but when we focus on the needs of others instead of just ourselves, God will cause the darkness to lift and new vision to come to us.

Our “gloom” or, in today’s terms, depression, will lift and our lives will be like the sun shining down at its brightest time of the day.

Have you been struggling lately with difficult times?
Has depression seemed to creep its way into your existence?

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to turn your heart toward serving others, for in the serving is the key to your own victory.

Then, ask Him to show you opportunities to be a blessing to those in need.

Expectantly look for the sun to begin to shine and illuminate the gloomy places in your life.

Joy is on its way!

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Day Sixteen: Healing & Protection

*“And your healing (restoration, new life) will quickly spring forth...
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.” Isaiah 58:8*

Not only will clarity and joy come to us when we help others, but we will be healed and protected as we do as God has asked in regards to our treatment of others.

In The Bible, ten lepers were healed as they went to show themselves to their priest as Jesus commanded. (Luke 17:14)

Sometimes healing comes as we are doing what God prefers.

God explained that He preferred a fast when we feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless, clothing for those in need, and meet the needs of our family.

As we do, we not only rescue others from trouble, we are rescued at the same time!

Past wounds and actual physical conditions are healed and restored—quickly. What takes therapists, doctors and psychologists months and years to do is quickly solved by simple acts of obedience to God.

If you are dealing with wounds and hurts on the inside, ask God to come and place His healing touch on those areas as you complete the fast.

Have you ever felt like the enemy pulled a sneak attack on you?

Many times in life situations overtake us with no warning at all. And although the first response is to fear, remembering the verse above can bring peace.

As we remain in right standing with God, our righteousness goes before us, which is the righteousness we have been given through Christ Jesus.

And as we remain in relationship with Him, the glory of the Presence of God becomes our rear guard.

We are divinely protected on all sides!

Even though you may be facing problems, remember that God has your back

Challenge: For the remainder of the fast, keep a journal of how God works out your problematic situations. You may find you want to continue noting His deliverances all year.

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Day Seventeen: The Dynamite Trio: Praying, Fasting & Giving

In Matthew 6, Jesus lists three actions that are duties of every Christian:
“When you pray...when you fast...when you give...”

At AGWC, we call these three actions, praying, fasting and giving, the dynamite trio. When practiced together, they have effects like dynamite!

Have you prayed about something, but nothing has changed? This dynamite trio can create such a blast that things have to change in your life.

The disciples faced something like this in Matthew 17:21 when a father brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples. With his son being suicidal, this father was desperate for breakthrough.

The disciples were unable to help him, however but Jesus intervened and the boy was delivered.

When the disciples questioned Jesus why they could not cure the boy, Jesus explained to them this type of breakthrough required prayer with fasting.

Many people have coupled fasting with prayer for breakthrough in areas of their lives that seem to hold them in chains.

Do you have an issue in your life from which you cannot seem to break free of?

During the remaining days of the fast, take that issue to God in prayer daily as you complete the fast. You may be surprised at the freedom the fast can bring in this area.

So, what about giving?

For some Christians, giving is more of a sacrifice than fasting.

Giving requires us to release something into God’s hands for His purposes. It costs us something—just like fasting.

When we yield our will to serve God, our flesh quietens so God’s blessings can flow.

Jesus explained in Luke 6:38 that when we give, we will receive even to an overflowing amount.

But, the first step is to give.

At the end of each fast at AGWC, we receive an offering of the first fruits to give you a chance to complete putting the dynamite trio into action in your life.

Prayerfully consider what you should give.

The Fast that God Prefers

Day Eighteen: A Good Life & Quick Answers to Prayer

“Your righteousness will go before you [leading to peace and prosperity]...”. Isaiah 58:8

Another promise God explains can be ours has to do with us living a good life. A good life, however, often results over a period of time.

As you look back on your life, you can likely see God’s hand in many events and circumstances that have turned out for your good.

After all, God promises that all things work together for good to them who love Him. (Romans 8:28)

If there are circumstances in your life that are challenging right now, choose to believe God will work those out for your good as He has promised.

“Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say, ‘Here I am’.” Isaiah 58:9

When we align our heart with God’s in the treatment of others as verses 6 & 7 explain, God makes an amazing declaration in the verse above.

We will call and He will answer

Could it be that there is a correlation between how we treat others and how quickly our prayers are answered?

These verses seem to indicate so.

One thing that is obvious about God—He values people.

When we learn to value people, it seems to put us more aligned with His heart. And when alignment takes places, blessings flow more quickly and easily into our lives.

In the upcoming days, take special care of your treatment of others.

Use the area below to note any quick answers to prayer you may receive.

It just may be the key to answered prayer you've been looking for.

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Day Nineteen: Finger-pointing

"If you take away from your midst the yoke [of oppression], the finger pointed in scorn [toward the oppressed or the Godly], and [every form of] wicked (sinful, unjust) speech..." Isaiah 58:9

Many times when we point a finger at someone, we are about to give our opinion about that person.

Usually, it is because they are doing something we do not approve of.

What normally follows after the pointing is our opinion.

Should we really give it?

There is a rule of thumb Kenneth Hagin lived by that is worth noting:

If what you are about to say about another individual makes them look badly, then it is likely best left unsaid.

God created people and He cares deeply for them. Even with all their faults and shortcomings—He still loves the person.

Remember all the mistakes, slip-ups, shortcomings and all out mess-ups God has been so gracious to forgive you of instead of pointing His finger of judgment at you.

Let's take on His nature and do the same for others.

Read on to discover what promises await when you do...

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Day Twenty: Promises

When we take care how we treat others, as well as how we speak about others, there are many promises of blessings that God explains will be ours...

“And your gloom will become like midday.” Joy instead of depression (verse 10)

“And the Lord will continually guide you...”. Guidance for daily life (verse 11)

“And satisfy your soul in scorched and dry places...”. Contentment in difficult times (verse 11)

“And you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”... Refreshed and enthusiastic (verse 11)

“And your people will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up and restore the age old foundations [of buildings that have been laid waste]; you will be called Repairer of the Breach, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” (verse 12)

Verse 12 deals with the effects upon our communities of following the fast that God prefers.

Where breaches of covenants have occurred, we can repair those areas. Our towns and cities can come back to life again.

This makes sense when you think about it.

If we make sure people are not oppressed, but are free to live with liberty;

If we will be aware of the needs of others around us and begin meeting those needs;

If we will not point fingers or talk critically of others, but approach correction in love...

The world would look much different.

Cities would look much different.

Families would look much different.

Churches would look much different.

The voids people feel in their lives come up to mostly one thing—a lack of love in their lives.

Ask the Holy Spirit what is one simple act you can do today for someone else to make sure they know they are loved by God.

One action may seem small, but those actions have a way of multiplying.

And when you do something for someone else, how does it make you feel? Perhaps like verse 10 explains...a little less gloomy and more like the sun is shining in your life?

The Fast that God Prefers

Day Twenty-One: It Was About the Heart

During this 21-day devotional, we have explored a fast that God prefers. At no point in Isaiah 58 did God lay out a menu of the type of foods He prefers.

Rather, this fast is all about our actions toward others, our speech toward others, and our prioritizing His Presence.

The fast that God prefers is actually not about food at all. It is about the heart.

God addresses a question Israel had asked Him in verse 3: *“Why have we fasted’ they say, ‘and You do not notice?’”*

Israel had the rituals of fasting down to a science, but they had neglected what God preferred...the attitude of the heart.

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, He actually replied with two:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Matthew 22:37,39

At the center of both of these commandments is love. The Apostle Paul encourages us to pursue love as our highest aim in life (1 Corinthians 14:1).

There are many voices in life promising fulfillment, success and victory, but there is only one true source from which comes a life worth living.

Our Heavenly Father, who dearly loves His children, is that Source.

And He asks that we love Him and each other the way He loves us.

Although we may never arrive at complete perfection in these areas, there is a host of blessings that await us just for trying.

And with each step in the right direction toward others and pursuing God, our hearts align His heart.

God is love.

Love is what He prefers.

NOTES



