

The Kind of Fasting God Honors is Clear!

Isaiah 58: 1-14 (6-14)

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I. Historical Background

In the Book of Isaiah chapter 58, Isaiah is speaking to the descendants of Jacob, God's covenant people. These were not outsiders. These were church folk. In chapter 57, God confronts their attachment to idolatry. Judah had grown comfortable with the appearance of holiness. They talked about justice. They showed up for worship. They knew the language of faith. From the outside, it looked solid. But it was surface level.

One of their main public displays of devotion was fasting. They denied themselves food and made sure people noticed. They looked humble. They sounded spiritual. But their hearts were disconnected from the God they claimed to seek. The Lord saw through the performance, which is why He commanded Isaiah to cry aloud and address their sin directly. God was not trying to embarrass them. He was trying to expose what was broken so it could be healed.

Israel's calling was never just about being blessed. They were chosen to be a light to the nations and to model what life under the true God looked like. The surrounding nations served other gods and lived by different standards. Through Israel, God was advancing His kingdom purposes and unfolding His plan of salvation for the world. Their obedience was meant to reflect His character. But when the light starts living like the darkness, the mission gets blurred. That is the tension in chapter 58.

II. Biblical Context

Scripture consistently reminds us that God's ways are not our ways. He is sovereign. He is the Creator. And every creator sets the standard for how what they made is supposed to function. In the same way, God sets the standard for His creation. His design is not optional. Over time, if we truly belong to

Him, our lives should begin to align with His character. That requires unwavering faith, reverence, commitment, and obedience.

When you scan the Bible, you see a clear pattern. When people obeyed God and stayed faithful, there was clarity, purpose, and blessing. God's guidance shaped their growth. But when the relationship became fake, casual, or driven by appearance, the result was frustration and distance. That is exactly where the Israelites found themselves time again. They feel confused. They feel ignored. They are fasting and asking why God is not responding.

Yet, God's correction is actually grace. He does not cut them off. He explains the problem and shows them the way back. His patience proves that even when we drift, there is always a road back to healthy fellowship with Him. And the message becomes clear. The kind of fasting God honors is clear.

III. The Lesson: The Kind of Fasting God Honors Is Clear

1. vv. 6&7. The Kind of Fasting God Honors

God reminds them to practice the fast He chose. They were used to fasting on their own terms. They added extra drama but missed the point. It is unreasonable to expect closeness with God while ignoring His commands. That truth applies to us too.

God's kind of fasting targets two areas. It confronts systems of injustice and it confronts self. In verse 6, Isaiah mentions chains, cords, and yokes. These are tools of oppression. In their day, injustice was woven into legal systems and economic practices. Power was used to crush vulnerable people. Chains represent restriction and control. A yoke represents heavy burdens placed on others by those in authority. The cords are what tighten the pressure.

God says to loose, untie, and break them. In other words, do not participate in structures that thrive on **injustice** (unfair, biased, prejudiced, etc.) **bondage** (slavery) and **oppression** (subjugation). If God is a deliverer, His people cannot be comfortable benefiting from someone else's bondage and suffering. Fasting that ignores injustice is sinful, empty and contrary to what God requires from His people.

Then verse 7 shifts the focus *inward*. It moves from broken systems to selfish hearts. God calls them to personal action. Share your bread. Provide shelter. See the naked and cover them. Do not hide from your own family. These are daily, practical acts. This is not complicated theology. It is about compassion. The *fast* God honors is not just about what you refuse to eat. **It is about who you refuse to ignore.**

2. vv. 8 -12. The Divine Design and Godly Parameters

This section is full of if statements. If you fast the way I have chosen, then light will break forth. Then healing will come. Then righteousness will lead you. Then the Lord will answer when you call. Judah wanted unconditional blessings, but God shows conditional alignment. There are parameters in covenant relationships.

Notice what happens when fasting shifts from performance to obedience. God says when you actually lose the chains, feed the hungry, stop oppressing people, and clean up your speech, then light breaks in like sunrise. Clarity comes back. Healing begins to grow fast. Your righteousness goes before you, meaning your integrity leads the way and God's glory covers your blind spots. The same people who complained that God wasn't answering now hear Him say, "Then you will call, and I will answer." Why? Because alignment restores intimacy. When you stop pointing fingers and start pouring yourself out for others, even dark seasons won't overwhelm you.

God promises continual guidance, strength in dry places, and a soul that stays satisfied even when circumstances are tight. He says, you'll become like a watered garden, not surviving off random blessings, but sustained by a steady source. And it doesn't stop with you. Obedience now rebuilds what was broken before you. Families get restored. Foundations get strengthened. You move from being known for religious routine to being called a repairer of the broken. *That's the shift*. When devotion produces justice and compassion, God releases light, intimacy, strength, and legacy all at once.

3. vv. 13 & 14. Delighting in the Lord

These verses reveal that they treated the Sabbath casually. They came and went as they pleased. Instead of shaping their schedule around God, they

tried to squeeze Him into their agenda. Calling the Sabbath a delight is a heart check. They were going through the motions but did not actually enjoy God.

True worship is not just duty. It is a delight. God does not want people who simply endure Him. **He wants people who enjoy Him.** Verse 14 brings the promise. When we honor God rightly, delight follows. Judah was fasting to make God move. God shows them that alignment produces intimacy. **When your life fits His design, joy becomes natural.**

He promises elevation, victory, and inheritance. Riding on high places speaks of stability and triumph. Feasting on the heritage of Jacob is covenant language. It points back to the promises God made to His people. Those promises were never just history. They are about relationships. And that relationship still calls for obedience and trust.

IV. Conclusion

When we step back and look at this chapter, we see that God was never impressed with the show. He was after the heart. Judah fasted, prayed, and gathered, but their lives were out of sync with His character. **They wanted intimacy without obedience, blessing without justice, and closeness without change.**

Through Isaiah, God makes it plain that real fasting is not just denying food. It is denying the flesh to gain spiritual clarity. It is breaking chains, lifting burdens, sharing bread, making room for the vulnerable, honoring His standards, and delighting in Him above personal agendas. God is loving, but He is also intentional. He has design, order, and parameters for how His people are to live.

If we truly belong to Him, there will be evidence over time in how we treat others and how we honor Him. True fasting reflects His heart, His priorities, and His kingdom. When our devotion produces freedom, generosity, justice, and joy in Him, we know we are aligned with His will. The kind of fasting God honors is clear.