

What To Do When You've Blown It | Part 3

Lesson 5

Isaiah 58:1-14

November 20, 2022

What God Wants

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 6:16-17, Jesus makes a powerful statement on fasting for the Lord: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But, when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

So, fasting done properly is good, but God hopes/wants for much more! J.I. Packer's classic book "Knowing God" notes, "It is our shame today that so many Christians....go through this world in the spirit of the hypocrites in our Lord's parable, seeing human needs all around them, but (after a pious wish, and perhaps a prayer, that God might meet those needs) averting their eyes and passing by on the other side....there are many whose ambition in life seems limited to building a nice middle-class Christian home, and...leave the lower-class sections of the community, Christian and non-Christian, to get on by themselves." Let's see what God really wants from us by reading Isaiah 58:1-14.

***Memory verse: "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?"
—Isaiah 58:6***

Pray, and read Isaiah 58:1-14. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

OBSERVATION: What does the passage say?

1. God is speaking to Isaiah who is to relay a message to the people of Judah. What is the message he is to shout aloud? (Isaiah 58:1)
2. What do the people think they are doing, and why are they disappointed? (Isaiah 58:2-3)
3. What is the result of their fasting? (Isaiah 58:4)
4. What does God think about their approach to fasting, and what does He actually want them to do? (Isaiah 58:5-10a)
5. If the people follow God's direction, what are five or more good things that will happen to them? (Isaiah 58:10b-14)

3. If we help the poor and oppressed, what does God promise? (Deuteronomy 15:10; Proverbs 28:27; Isaiah 58:8-9, 10-12; Luke 14:13-14)

APPLICATION: How do the passages apply to your life?

1. What have you done for the poor, needy, or downtrodden? Have you: a) ignored them and hoped they'd go away; b) donated to Union Gospel, Portland Mission, or a similar group; or c) gotten to know them, learned about their situation, and helped? What do you think God would say about your response?

2. Re-read the memory verse, Isaiah 58:6. "...to loose the chains of injustice" points to the need to work to abolish ways in which the liberty of others is diminished or eliminated. "...to untie the cords of the yoke" refers to the need to eliminate ways in which people are treated poorly. Correspondingly, helping the poor is more important than helping oneself. Feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and providing clothing to those in need are more important to God than living well oneself. Thinking of where you live and contacts you have, how can you help to "loose the chains" and "untie the cords"?

3. Write a prayer asking God to show you how you, specifically, should help those in need.