

what you see isn't always what you get: isaiah talks about true fasting

Isaiah 58:1-11

Read Isaiah 58:1-11

Look for the contrasts between what the people were doing and what God asked them to do. In the left column below, list the kinds of things God's people were actually doing. In the right column list the actions God wanted them to take.

what PEOPLE did

what GOD wanted

Isaiah 58:1-11

¹"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?"

⁴"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. ⁵Your 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.

⁶Is 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?

⁷"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? ⁸Is 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?

⁹Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

¹⁰Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. ¹¹"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, ¹²and 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.

¹³The 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."

»mon

Many times we see people getting hurt but don't know what to do about it. Learning to do what is right sometimes means we have to go out on a limb for someone. Pray today for the courage to stand up for others.

»tues

Have you ever experienced an injustice? If so, you know the pain it can cause. Justice is not always attainable (at least in this life). Even so, we should always speak out against wrongs done to others. Ask God to intercede for those who are being treated unfairly.

»wed

What groups or individuals at school would you consider oppressed? exploited? left out? Simply saying hello to these people might encourage them. Ask God to allow someone who has been excluded from the crowd to cross your path.

»thurs

Broken homes are almost the norm these days. If your family has been split up in some way, then you can relate to the hurt of others in this situation. Ask God today for a sensitive heart toward those who come from a broken family.

»fri

Are there any elderly people in your neighborhood or church? If they have been widowed, they might be lonely. It's OK to plead with God to comfort them. A visit from you might be just what they need. Pray today for an older person you know.

»sat

Pray for compassion and justice in your community.

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow

Isaiah 1:17

Evil's Winning, God

HOW LONG, O GOD?

It was in all the papers.
In the pictures
he was even smiling.
Claimed innocence.
They let him off.
Some savvy lawyer spotted
a technicality.

HOW LONG, O GOD?

It's in the news every night.
They're strafing whole airports now.
Bombs in lockers.
Suicide missions.
They even claim
You're on their side.

DON'T YOU CARE?

It tore my heart just yesterday.
The woman is paralyzed now.
And the maniac threatens
that when his sentence is over
he'll kill her.
Will You simply stand back
and let it happen?

Can't You do something—now?

psalm 37:1-4

do not fret
because of those
who are evil or
be envious of
those who do
wrong;

For like the grass
they will soon
wither; like
green plants
they will soon
die away.

trust in the lord
and do good;
dwell in the
land and enjoy
safe pasture.

delight yourself
in the lord
and he will
give you the
desires of your
heart.



THE FREEDOM RIDERS

In 1961, the Freedom Riders set out to end segregation by riding various forms of public transportation in the South to challenge local laws or customs.

The first Freedom Ride began on May 4, 1961. Led by James Farmer, the freedom riders departed from Washington, D.C., on Greyhound and Trailways buses. Their plan was to ride through Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, and end with a rally in New Orleans.

On their journey, the Freedom Riders had at least one interracial pair sitting in adjoining seats and at least one black Rider sitting up front (where seats were usually reserved for white customers only). The rest of them would sit scattered throughout the rest of the bus. One rider would follow the South's segregation ideals in order to avoid arrest and to contact CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) to help get those who were arrested out of jail.

During the summer of 1961, Freedom Riders campaigned against other forms of racial discrimination, too. Black and white Freedom Riders sat together in segregated restaurants, lunch counters and hotels. This was especially effective when it targeted large companies, which, fearing boycotts in the North, began to desegregate their businesses.

Despite beatings, imprisonment, and enduring other hostile acts of violence, the Freedom Riders made a difference; they motivated blacks and whites throughout the United States to fight for desegregation using nonviolent and direct action. Their campaign impacted the Southern Christian Leadership Coalition's Birmingham Campaign of 1963, which curtailed segregation of public facilities.

The 50th anniversary of the Freedom Rides was celebrated in 2011, and a Conference/Reunion of Freedom Riders was held in Chicago April 28 — May 2, 2011.

Amazing Grace

**AMAZING
GRACE, HOW SWEET
THE SOUND
THAT SAVED A WRETCH
LIKE ME!**

**I ONCE WAS LOST, BUT
NOW AM FOUND—
WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I
SEE.**

**'T WAS GRACE THAT
TAUGHT MY HEART
TO FEAR,
AND GRACE MY
FEARS RELIEVED;
HOW PRECIOUS DID
THAT GRACE APPEAR
THE HOUR I FIRST
BELIEVED.**

**THROUGH MANY
DANGERS, TOILS, AND
SNARES,
I HAVE ALREADY COME;
'T IS GRACE HAS**

**BROUGHT ME SAFE
THUS FAR,
AND GRACE WILL
LEAD ME HOME.**

**WHEN WE'VE BEEN
THERE TEN THOUSAND
YEARS,**

**BRIGHT SHINING AS
THE SUN,
WE'VE NO LESS DAYS TO
SING GOD'S PRAISE
THAN WHEN WE'D
FIRST BEGUN.**

When John Newton was a young man, he'd have never thought that he'd be the writer of one of the most popular hymns of all time. His lifestyle at the time was about as far from that of a Christian as a man of his time could get. But, after all, that's what the song is all about—the story of God's amazing grace.

Newton's father was a sea captain in the Mediterranean. His mother, a godly woman, died when he was only six years old. At the age of 11, after only a few years of formal education, he left school and joined his father's crew. John Newton apparently succumbed early to the temptations of a sailor's life—drinking, gambling, and immoral living. Things got so bad that he was eventually rejected by his father, fired by his employers, and thrown in jail.

Newton served on several ships, ending up in the most degraded occupation of the time—the slave trade. First he worked on the islands and mainland of the West African coast, buying people who had been captured for slavery and selling them to visiting traders. Then he became a trader himself and captain of his own slaving vessel. Newton lived this degrading life for several years. In later life he once referred to himself as that “old Africa blasphemer.”

Then on March 10, 1748, during a violent storm in which he almost lost his life, John Newton was converted to a believer in Christ. After that, Newton continued as a slave ship captain for two more years, attempting to justify his work by improving conditions as much as possible. Eventually, however, he realized that his occupation was incompatible with Christ's call, and he became a crusader against slavery and the slave trade. Later in life, Newton joined forces with William Wilberforce and other political leaders in the fight to abolish the slave trade. His testimony was influential in convincing British Parliament of the inhumanity of slavery. And in 1807, the year Newton died, Parliament finally abolished slavery throughout its dominion.

Grace was the theme of Newton's life as a Christian. Grace is the giving nature of God; it is the love and forgiveness of God that we don't deserve.

John Newton never forgot what he was. And he never forgot the sea. Once, when he was pastor of St. Mary-Woolnoth, near London, he entered the pulpit in a sailor's uniform—Bible in one hand, hymnbook in the other. Late in life, when his memory had lost its sharpness and his health was failing, he cried out during a sermon, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour."

Two stanzas of "Amazing Grace" that are often omitted in today's hymnbooks tell more of Newton's story:

**THE LORD HAS PROMISED
GOOD TO ME, HIS WORD MY
HOPE SECURES; HE WILL
MY SHIELD AND PORTION BE
AS LONG AS LIFE ENDURES.**

**AND WHEN THIS FLESH AND
HEART SHALL FAIL,
AND MORTAL LIFE SHALL
CEASE, I SHALL POSSESS
WITHIN THE VEIL
A LIFE OF JOY AND PEACE.**

The inscription on his tombstone in the Olney churchyard summarizes his life: "John Newton, Clerk; once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."

**NOW THAT YOU KNOW
THE STORY BEHIND THE
SONG, FIND A VERSION OF
IT ONLINE. LISTEN TO IT
AGAIN AND REFLECT ON
THE MESSAGE IT BRINGS.**

Choose Your Master: Money, Sports, Music or Messiah?

People are fanatics about many things these days. Listed here are some popular obsessions that often become masters. You probably know someone in the grip of one. There are comments and/or questions under each category. Answer the questions in the blanks.

Money

How does MONEY, or the pursuit of MONEY, grip people today?

What are some of the things that people do in their quest for more and more MONEY?

What does the Word of God say about the love of MONEY (see 1 Tim. 6:10)?

How can you keep money from becoming your master?

Sports

Teens often want to be like their favorite athlete. SPORTS icons have become popular role models. They are paid big dollars to succeed in athletics, but there is less emphasis on succeeding in other areas in life. Often the desire for popularity, recognition, and respect become all consuming.

Is there anything wrong with a passion to be like the top athletes of the world?

What does the Bible say about acknowledging God regarding our plans and desires (see Prov. 3:6)?

How can you prevent yourself from becoming too obsessed with your favorite athlete?

Messiah

MESSIAH, or the Anointed One, gave His life as a sacrifice for sin, not only for the nation of Israel, but for the whole world. Listen to God's Word: **"And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again"** (2 Cor. 5:15).

Have you asked the MESSIAH to be your master?

In what ways are you allowing Jesus to be master in your life?

Music

MUSIC is very influential in our society, and so many artists glorify the wrong things.

If their lyrics are positive, is it okay to idolize the musicians you listen to?

Have you become obsessed with the lives of MUSIC artists? How so?

No matter where you live, such problems do exist, even if they're subtle or hidden, and there are things you can do to seek justice and show compassion. Do you see any of these problems in your neighborhood or school?

Racism: Kids from different racial and ethnic groups who are denied “entrance” into groups and activities because of their cultural background.

[illegible]

The first step of caring is getting informed.



The following are organizations that deal with these problems on a large scale. If the work of any of these groups interests you, their websites will give you info on how to get involved.



**Boys and Girls Club
of America**
www.bgca.org

To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.



Concerned Black Men
www.cbmnational.org

Serves to fill the void of positive black male role models in many communities by providing mentors and programs, while providing opportunities for academic and career enrichment.



David C Cook
davidccook.org

Provides pastors, local church leaders, families, and children around the world with vital discipleship resources.



**Habitat for Humanity
International**
www.habitat.org

Devoted to providing minimum-cost housing to low-income people throughout the world.



IMPACT
www.impactmovement.org

The Impact Movement is a ministry of discipleship, evangelism and service, taking the truth of Jesus Christ to the campus, community and world by producing leaders of African descent who are spiritually focused, financially responsible and morally fit.



*Changing Lives, Minds, and
Communities through Jesus Christ*

Prison Fellowship
www.prisonfellowship.org

Seeks the reform of the criminal justice system based on the biblical teachings of reconciliation, restitution, and restoration.



**The National Council of Negro
Women, Inc.**
www.ncnw.org

Serves to lead, develop and advocate for women of African descent as they support their families and communities. The NCNW provides research, advocacy, national and community-based health, education and economic empowerment services and programs in the United States and Africa.



**Students Against Drunk
Driving (SADD)**
www.sadd.org

Seeks to increase public awareness of the dangers of drunken driving and urges students to take action against this crime. (This organization is not church-related).



**Compassion
International**
www.compassion.com

In response to the Great Commission, Compassion International exists as an advocate for children, to release them from their spiritual, economic, social, and physical poverty and enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults.



Youth With a Mission
www.ywam.org

With offices all around the world, YWAM has hundreds of different ministries within their three strands: Evangelism, Mercy Ministry, and Training/Discipleship.