

Fasting that Pleases God

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- [0 : 0 0] The scripture reading is taken from Isaiah chapter 58 verses 1 through 14. Cry aloud, do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet.
- ! Declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the judgment of their God.
- They ask me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God. Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?
- Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight, and to hit with a wicked fist.
- Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself?
- [1 : 1 2] Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord?
- Is not this the fast that I choose, to loose the bonds of the wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
- Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh.
- Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily. Your righteousness shall go before you.
- The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.
- [2 : 1 5] If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness, and your gloom be as the noonday.
- And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and make your bones strong. And you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.
- And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations. You shall be called the restorer of streets to dwell in.
- If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of the Lord honorable, if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly, then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth.
- I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. In approximately eight hours, as a church family, we will begin our week of corporate consecration.

[3 : 47] And in this morning's sermon, my goal is to try to help us to prepare and posture our hearts as we prepare to seek the Lord, to seek him this week individually and as families and as a church family.

And Isaiah 58, which was just read, is the most suitable passage of scripture for us to consider as we go into this week of corporate consecration. But before we consider it, let's bow in prayer.

Father, we pause this morning and we ask that you would come even now and speak to our hearts from your word.

And Lord, we ask that you would speak to us in ways that will help us to prepare for this coming week as we desire to come before you in prayer and in fasting.

And Lord, would you do the initial work in our hearts by preparing our hearts and setting our minds to do just that this week.

[5 : 05] Lord, we pause to pray because we know that without you we can do nothing. And Lord, in particular, we need you to help us to go through this week of consecration in a way that is effective and a way that is pleasing to you.

And so, Father, would you use this morning's sermon to lay a true and a sound foundation for us as we engage this week.

Lord, use it for the good of all who participate. And ultimately, Lord, would you use it for the glory of your name.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Isaiah 58 is the most extensive record that we have in Scripture about how and why God intends his people to fast.

In Isaiah 58, as we follow the conversation between the Lord and his addressing the children of Israel, we come face to face with a sobering truth about fasting which is this.

[6 : 25] God calls his people to fast. But there is a fast that God condemns. And there is a fast that he commands.

But to put it more plainly, what we see in this passage is that fasting that is primarily focused on the denial of food while ignoring the denial of self does not please God.

And put yet even another way, what we learn from this passage is that fasting, that is, focused on the pursuit of what we want and not what God wants, is not biblical fasting.

And it will not please God and it will not produce the God-intended results. So in short, Isaiah 58 is about biblical fasting.

And since fasting is a part of our week of corporate consecration, I think it's fitting that we consider it because we want to practice biblical fasting this week.

[7 : 34] Not ritualistic fasting, not outward fasting as Israel was doing. And so this morning I have two simple points and they are number one, the fast God condemns.

We see that in verses one to five. And the fast God commends. We see that in verses six to 14.

So let's consider the first point, the fast God condemns. The passage opens in verses one to three with God summoning the prophet Isaiah and telling him to strongly and clearly condemn the people of Israel so that they would not miss what he is saying to them.

The Lord tells Isaiah that the situation is so serious that he needed to blow a trumpet, lift up his voice like a trumpet.

And the imagery here is times when the nation of Israel would be called to assemble together and there would be someone assigned to blow what they called a trumpet, which was a ram's horn, a shofar.

[8 : 52] And the idea was that whatever the people were doing, they were to stop and they were to gather because it was something important. It was generally a time of emergency, like a war, or something that affected the entire community.

And the Lord says to Isaiah, I want you to lift up your voice in that way. I want them to understand when you speak to them that this is no ordinary thing that you're saying to them.

This is no ordinary matter that you're bringing to them. Cause them to see the seriousness and the urgency of what I have called you to say to them.

God was angry at Israel and he was angry at their many sins. And we see them recorded back in Isaiah 57. But more than that, God was angry at their hypocrisy.

We see their hypocritical conduct referred to in verse 2. God was angry because in the midst of their sins, Israel was still pretending to be serving the Lord.

[9 : 59] That is how far they had fallen that they were, on the one hand, doing wickedness, and on the other hand, giving a show that they were serving the Lord.

Look at what he says to them in verse 2. He tells Isaiah to say to them in verse 2, Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God.

They ask of me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God. So they were going through the daily rituals, giving the impression they were seeking God.

And all that time, they were displeasing and reading their Bibles, pretending. They were delighting to know his ways.

And they were really only pretending to seek and delight in the ways of God because they were outwardly disobeying him. In verse 3, God transitions and he addresses the complaint.

[11 : 08] He addresses the particular complaint that they were bringing against him. They accuse God of not paying attention to them. And they said, even though we fasted, you're taking no notice of us.

And here in this statement, we see the arrogance of the children of Israel at that time, the way their sin had blinded them to speak the way they were speaking.

They were not talking to one another, complaining, saying, you know, God isn't listening to us. No. They were addressing God himself directly. They were getting in God's face with all of their sins and saying, we have fasted and you have not done for us what we want you to do.

And they had reduced fasting to a manipulative act, believing that if they fasted without regard to anything else that was going on in their lives, God was supposed to act and do whatever they wanted him to do.

And it shows they misunderstood fasting. They failed to realize that even when there's genuine fasting, when there's genuine repentance before the Lord, God is not obligated to pray all the prayers that we pray, even when we are genuinely convicted, even when we are genuinely fasting before him.

[12 : 41] We don't obligate God to us in any way. God is obligated to no man. All that we receive from him are good, gracious gifts. We fast and we repent because we recognize our need to do so by the grace of God.

And we don't do that to win God's favor, to get something from the Lord. It's kind of like a child who does something wrong and comes to his parents and say, you know, please forgive me.

And they say, you're forgiven. They say, give me \$20. I want to go out to the mall. And most parents, blood, blood pressure would rise if a child responded to them in that particular way because the two have nothing to do, one has nothing to do with the other.

But Israel's situation was far worse. Far worse. Israel was outwardly seeking God daily, seeming to delight to know his ways as if they were a nation that was righteous and didn't forsake the word of God and it was all an outward show before an all-knowing God, before whom nothing is hid, not even the deepest thought of our hearts.

And so, God addresses their complaint in the latter part of verse three through to verse five. Look again at how he answers their complaint.

[14 : 18] He says, behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist, fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord? God? In his response, God actually lays out for them the fast that he condemns, the fast that they were engaged in.

He says, that's not the fast that's going to cause your voice to be heard on high. And I think the best way to summarize God's answer to Israel's complaint is that fasting that has no effect on how we live our lives, even as we are fasting, does not please him.

And it's reminded that biblical fasting is more than just a denial of food. God is not pleased with fasting in which we seek our own pleasure and not God's, in which we oppress others and we quarrel and fight.

[15 : 53] He's not pleased with fasting that is merely an outward physical, pious look affecting our bodies that people can see that we're fasting, wearing all the outward trappings of fasting, but it has no inward effect on our souls.

And what the Lord is addressing is that when we fast, it is supposed to affect us. He's telling them the reason that I have not taken note is that you are just going through the motions and you're not fasting in a way that honors me.

Ritualistic fasting that does not affect us will not affect God. God condemns ritualistic fasting that does not move us towards him, but we want it to move God towards us.

He condemns ritualistic fasting that is focused on manipulating him and not obeying him. And so he gives this sober warning in verse 4.

And brothers and sisters, maybe you all hear this because if we don't hear this, we're going to go through the motions this week and all we're going to have to show for it at the end of the week is perhaps we've lost some pounds.

[17 : 21] He says this in verse 4. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. And we see that the whole idea of biblical fasting is always mixed with prayer.

Fasting without prayer, I've heard it said, you're just on a hunger strike. You're just going without food, protesting something before God, waiting for him to act in the way that you want him to act.

But the Lord is helping us to see that the intent behind fasting is to cause our voice to be heard on high. And that means that we are not just fasting, but we're also praying as well.

But if our fast is not affecting our own souls, if it's not causing us to bow in true conviction and repentance, then the Lord says, our voice will not be heard on high.

He will ignore us. Indeed, He will rebuke us. What is clear is that the Lord was not ranting against them because of an occasion where they were missing the mark in fasting.

[18 : 41] What is clear is that this had become Israel's practice. Israel was doing this over and over again. This word that the Lord called Isaiah to bring to them was in light of a historical observation of how they were practicing biblical fasting.

And there are some of us who have gone through corporate consecration or other times we have fasted. And I wonder if the Lord were to assess our own historical approach to fasting.

If the Lord were to consider how our own fasting has affected us as we've engaged in it, what would his commentary be? Would he have similar words for us as he did for the nation of Israel?

Would he say to us, when you fast, it's business as usual. When you fast, you're still harsh with your wife. When you fast, you're still rebellious towards your husband.

When you fast, you're still screaming at your children. When you fast, you're still dishonoring and disobeying your parents. When you fast, you still deal harshly with your coworkers and your staff.

[20 : 05] And when you fast, you're more consumed with your will and what you want than my will and what I want. you're more concerned with how many meals you miss and how long you can fast, rather than to truly humble your soul, to truly be convicted of sin, and to desire to grow in godliness.

God's grace. And brothers and sisters, if the Lord might say those things or similar things to all of us or any of us, by God's grace, let us do all that we can to make this fast different.

Let us begin to acknowledge those things. let us begin to ask the Lord for the grace to change, for the grace for our fast to affect us, that it will not be ritualistic, but that it will result in outward change.

God desires to answer that prayer, and God will answer that prayer. Let's cry out to the Lord and say, God, would you work in my heart and in my life this week?

That I am not just going through the motions, that the only thing that can be measured is what's happening on the outside of me, that my heart is not being changed.

[21 : 50] Brothers and sisters, that is what the Lord is after. And fasting is his idea, and he understands why he has called us to do it, and he understands the way that he calls us to do it.

So that's the fast that God condemns. A fast that is an outward show with no inward change. So what is the fast that he commends?

We see it first in verses six and seven. Notice what the Lord again says in verses six and seven about the fast that he commends.

Is not this the fast I choose? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

[23 : 02] In short, the fast that God commends deals with our hearts. It is one that affects our hearts and not just afflicts our bodies. You see in verse six that the fast that God commends addresses ingrained wickedness, injustice, and oppression.

God is referring to how some of them were treating their fellow brothers and sisters. And the point is that biblical fasting has a sanctifying effect on our souls.

Fasting alone, if we're just skipping meals and not eating, and we have ideas about that, but if it's not biblical fasting, if it's not God word and bringing ourselves before the Lord and saying, oh God, would you work in my heart, would you convict me of sin, would you help me to change, if it's not having a sanctifying effect in our hearts, brothers and sisters, it's not biblical fasting.

And the irony of it is that we can be proud of our fasting. when God detests it.

When it doesn't move God, it's impressing us and perhaps impressing others, but it's supposed to have a sanctifying effect in our lives.

[24 : 37] And notice the strength of the words that the Lord uses. He doesn't mince his description of the sin.

He talks about breaking the bonds of wickedness and oppression from the lives of his people. And this reminds us that these issues are hard issues.

Bonds of wickedness and oppression, though they may be manifested indeed, first they are hard issues. And that is where God seeks to work and he seeks to address us and he seeks to convict us.

In verse seven, we see that the fast God commends addresses lack of compassion. Again, a hard issue. Brothers and sisters, biblical fasting will cause us to be more sensitive to the hungry and the homeless and the naked and will convict us if we are turning a blind eye to them.

Biblical fasting would result in us being responsive, as responsive as we can to feeding the hungry, welcoming the homeless into our homes, clothing the naked, but none of this will happen until our hearts are first affected and changed with compassion for them.

[26 : 00] And friends, only God could do that. We can fast, we can pray, we can cry out to him, but only God can change our hearts. We cannot change our hearts.

only he can reorder our affections and cause us to delight in that which is good and detest that which is not.

And here's the reality, all of God's people, all of us without exception can have compassion for the needy, all of us. We don't need to have resources to have compassion.

That's something that we are to all share in common. Yes, when it comes down to the on the ground meeting of those needs about which we have compassion, our situations may vary, but all of us can have a heart towards the needy, the homeless, the hungry, the naked.

And the whole idea when you consider what the Lord is saying to Israel is almost as if they were storing up their food to eat after their fast. Now, you don't need to put up your hand on this, but I am pretty sure that some of us have relished the thought when we are fasting about what we are going to eat after fasting.

[27 : 27] I have. But how about if we perhaps take some of that food that we are not eating, and try to consider someone, maybe a family, maybe an individual, that we can bless with that food.

The Lord is saying that when we are fasting, if our hearts are not being moved in these ways, if we are not being affected in these ways, he says it's not biblical fasting, it's not the fast that I approve of.

God is going to need to change. We don't want to go through the motions this week. We want God to affect us, and we want God to change our hearts and cause our hearts to be rightly aligned with priorities that we should ordinarily have.

One of the reasons that we continue to engage in this week of corporate consecration is because it is kind of a time of adjustment, it's a time of realignment, it's a time to lay a foundation that we would become aware of and affected in godly ways, that sometimes just being busy and living our lives through the year, we get distracted and we get off center, and this is a way to come back, to be centered on these things for God to affect our hearts and ways, and then by the grace of God, when we go out of the fast, we try to maintain these particular priorities.

The fast that God commends is a fast that affects our hearts and changes our behavior. And the reason for that is because God is not just interested in us abstaining from food, he's interested in us mixing our fasting with prayer and with a repentant heart that will affect how we live.

[29 : 31] In verses 8 to 14, through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord lays out the spiritual effects that we will receive when we engage in the fast he commends.

And here, these are principles. We don't go in here and say, well, I'm going to do A, so God is going to do B. No, these are broad principles. And it isn't that when we fast, every single one of these things happen to us, because we're all in different situations, different circumstances, and we may have different needs, but God just generously lays out the kinds of things that happen when his people fast.

He lays out for us the hopes and expectations that we can have. And some of these, no doubt, will resonate more with us based on where we are, our circumstances, more than others.

And I pray as we go through them, that your own heart is being stirred in particular ways where you would say, God, would you meet me in that way as I fast this week? In verse 8, we're told that God will graciously intervene in our lives with guidance and even healing.

Again, in verse 8, we're told that God's righteousness will function as a guide and will protect us. We're told in verse 9 that he will answer our prayers.

[30 : 59] He says, then you shall call and the Lord will answer. You shall cry and he will say, here I am. When we fast the way, God would have us to fast. He says, you do that, you get my air when you cry out.

I'm going to say, here I am to you. In verse 10, the Lord promises that light will come to us when we walk through dark and gloomy times.

In verse 11, he promises to guide us continually, meeting our needs in times of drought and strengthening us so that we would flourish like a well-watered garden.

And in verse 12, he promises amazing and far-reaching restoration, not just to us, but to many generations. And here we can understand that the fast that God commends can result in blessings for many generations.

But we can engage this week corporately together as a church, and what God does among us will be far-reaching beyond us and will touch generations to come.

[32 : 15] May God do that this week. may God do something that is generational in this church this week. And especially may God do it in our children who, to whatever degree, are participating in this week, even if it's just observing their parents engage this week.

people. But notice that these wonderful results that the Lord promises for biblical fasting, he couches in the midst of them three relational issues about what he is concerned about.

He's repeating these throughout the passage. He's repeating these throughout this message that Isaiah is supposed to give to the people. In verse 9, the first relational issue is how they related to one another.

Will we be accusing one another and slandering one another and oppressing one another and doing other things that we know are sinful even as we engage in this time of fasting?

In verse 10, he addressed how they related to the poor and the needy. Again, will we be selfish and blinded to the plight of the poor and the needy even as we fast?

[33 : 35] Brothers and sisters, if our hearts aren't being affected in this way, we're not fasting the way God wants us to fast. And by God's grace, may it be that our hearts aren't just affected for five days, but may God truly do an endowment in our hearts that we will be sensitive and our hearts will be moved towards the needy in an ongoing way.

again, there's no price, there's no cost, we don't need any assets to have a heart for the needy. And then finally, and most importantly, God addresses how they related to God himself in verse 13.

what's our attitude about the Lord's day? What does our attitude about the Lord's day say about our attitude towards God?

It is his day. May our time of fasting change our attitude towards the Lord's day because it ultimately reflects our attitude towards the Lord himself.

So what should our primary focus be as we are engaging this time of fasting? I think it should be clear by now that it shouldn't be focused on the results we want, the answers we want to prayers, the ways we want God tend to be in our lives.

[35 : 26] He's promised that he's going to do those things. They don't need to be our focus. Instead, our focus needs to be on God, what do you want? God, how do you want to work in my own heart?

And then as the spirit works and as the spirit convicts, may we repent? And may we ask God for grace to change? change. I want to encourage us, let's think about ways that we really desire to change.

I've thought about some ways that I desire to change, some of my own besetting sins, and husbands and wives have conversations.

Maybe there are observations that can come, that can help us to bring particular things before the Lord in prayer and fasting this week that can help us to grow in grace and grow in godliness.

One of the ways that I want to grow is I want to grow in being more gracious in my speech. Not just my verbal speech, but also my written speech. I'm on Facebook, and one of the occupational hazards of Facebook is that you encounter fools by the minute.

[36 : 50] And I want to be more gracious to fools and people who are fighting the things of God and seeking to belittle believers and marginalize them and treating them as if they have no rights.

I do want to change. And if that comes across in a flippant way, that's not my intent this morning. I share that this morning because I really desire to change. And I did think about whether I would share that or not, and I decided in the moment that I would share it.

That's one way you can pray for me, that I would be gracious in my communications with others, especially those who disagree with me. And again, brothers and sisters, let's remember that God isn't obligated to us.

He's no man's debtor. He's no man's debtor. He owes us nothing. All that we have are good gifts that comes from his gracious hands.

You would think that after this chapter long, we call it chapter long, but it wasn't in divisions then, but after this very long, extended rebuke of the nation of Israel, challenging them, telling them the fast that God hates and condemns, telling them the fast that God loves and commends, that they would have changed.

[38 : 30] But they didn't change. Why didn't they change? Why didn't they respond and offer the kind of fast that the Lord called them to?

The reason is that Israel needed more than just this stern rebuke, this trumpet like rebuke. Israel needed more than that.

What Israel needed was a redeemer. And it was only through that redeemer that their hearts could be changed. And see, one of the things that we have to recognize in Scripture is you make a mistake in believing that everything God calls people to do, God calls to do it.

you look at in that moment, you automatically assume if God calls them to do it, they can do it. Many times you'll see this played out in Scripture. As a matter of fact, this is the way the witness of Scripture unfolds.

God calls us to do what we cannot do to help us to see who we need to help us to do it. He calls us to do these things so that we have no other refuge, we have no other option than to go to Jesus Christ and cast ourselves on Him.

[39 : 58] And we see this foreshadowed in Isaiah 59. Isaiah continues to rebuke Israel straight into chapter 59, straight through verse 15.

You can read it on your own. You'll see that he continues to rebuke them and rebuke them and rebuke them. His indictment of them continues. And then there's a transition starting in verse 20.

Sorry, in verse 16. It ends in 20. You can turn right over to the page and look at it starting in verse 16. He, meaning God, saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to intercede.

Then his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head.

He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will he repay wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies, to the coastlands he will render repayment, so that they, so they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west and the glory of the Lord from the rising of the sun for he will come like a rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives.

[41 : 32] Notice the wonderful promise now in verse 20. And the Redeemer will come to Zion to those in Jacob who turn from transgression declares the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, this Redeemer is Jesus Christ. And we are no different from the people of Israel's day. The people of Israel's day, of Isaiah's day, sorry, they needed a Redeemer.

Jesus is that Redeemer. We need that Redeemer. He is the only way to make our fasting before God acceptable. And He does not just make our fast acceptable before God.

He makes us acceptable before God. He makes us acceptable before God even when we fail in our fasting. And this is where we are compared to where Israel was.

We now have the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has perfectly fasted, the one who in the desert 40 days and 40 nights offered up to God a perfect fast, resisting the devil and resisting every temptation and yielding himself to the will of God.

[42 : 54] And so that even when we fast fasted and we fail, there is one who has fasted and who has not failed and he has offered the perfect fast before God for all of us.

And let us remember that this week. I remember the very, very first fast I ever did was intended to be for the day. It lasted an hour and something.

And I did the unwise thing of fasting outside of the kitchen when my mother was cooking. And after about an hour, I was in there eating eggs and something else. But thank God that Jesus resisted when Satan said, you can turn those bread into stone.

He says, man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And I don't say this to say, well, we could just, you know, slip short through this week.

No. Let us engage this week faithfully, honestly, humbly, trusting the Lord, asking the Lord to work on us and to change us and do all those things to us.

[44 : 13] But as we do, let us remember that the Redeemer has come. The Redeemer has gone before us. The Redeemer has fasted perfectly before God, resisting all the temptations, every shade of them that we will face even this week.

And he has done that on behalf of all those who belong to him. And so, by God's grace, let's engage this week seeking God's face in fasting and prayer and looking to our Redeemer who has come to help us.

Israel didn't have a Redeemer when they were being called to fast in that way. The Lord looked and he saw there was no one to intercede, there was no one to help them. And so he sent his Redeemer by his own strong arm and thank God this week that Redeemer will be with us.

and thank God this week we are better positioned to do in fasting what Israel was not able to do because at that time the Redeemer had not yet come.

I want to close this in prayer and I want to pray for us. I'm just going to ask you right now. Maybe you have thought about how you're going to engage this week and I want to pray for you in that way.

[45 : 50] Maybe you haven't yet and you just need to be asked of the Lord to speak to you and to show you how to engage this week. I want to pray for you as well.

So let's pray together. Father we are so grateful this morning for your work that is a finished work.

through Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. And Lord this morning as we in a few hours will be engaging in a week of corporate prayer and fasting.

Oh Father I pray that you would meet us in this congregation. Those who are present, those who are watching their lives. God all those who are part of this congregation. would you help us to engage in however our circumstances allow us to engage this week.

Father God I pray for those who have already settled in their hearts what their engagement would look like this week. Would you provide abundant grace to help them with that.

[47 : 10] Lord those who are still pondering would you direct them and help them to land at a place that will be meaningful and helpful for them. Lord would you give wisdom to parents and heads of households in particular to lead this week.

And God may you most of all work in all of our hearts that we will engage in a fast that you commend. That we will engage in a fast that is not just an outward ritual but a fast that is a genuine experience that changes and affects our souls.

Lord would you convict us of ways in which we need to grow and ways we need to repent. And may we humble ourselves this week remembering that you resist the proud.

but you give grace to the humble. God move upon us and move among us this week we pray for our good and for your glory.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.