

a resource for
orphan
sunday

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An Initiative of
**The Christian Alliance for Orphans
& The Cry of the Orphan**



Week 1: Harsh Reprimand

Read Aloud Isaiah 58

This chapter of God's word starts out with some fairly harsh words to a church. Truthfully, I'd like to skip over the "declare to my people their rebellion" and head straight for the "and you will be like a well-watered garden" part. This week, however, we are going to camp out right in the midst of the reprimand.

Re-Read verses 1-5 as a group

At first glance this people group seem to be a great church! They seek after God and even ask Him for just decisions. . .yet Isaiah paints a different story in the next lines.

- Do we see people or even ourselves who "seek after God and seem eager to know His ways" and assume that they are ok?
- Does the characterization of them as a nation that has forsaken the commands of it's god cause me to pause and reflect "is this me?"?
- Discuss "seem eager" – how can we "seem eager" and not really BE eager

Identify the Rebellion

Identify what this chapter lists as possible "commands" that have been forsaken and then go to scripture to prove that they involved sin. Have the group find verses that match up to the rebellion.

1. Do as you please
2. Exploit all your workers
3. Quarreling and strife
4. Striking one another with wicked fists

Discuss

Have you ever felt like the people listed in this chapter.~like you were doing the right thing but felt unnoticed or unseen by God. In view of this scripture can you think of reasons this may have been?

Introspection

Read Psalm 139:23-24 and Play the song “Empty Me” by Chris Sligh.

Allow time for quiet introspection asking God to reveal to your heart where you have “seemed eager” but have not been following the commands of your God.

Specifically ask about the commands we have discussed today.

Ask the group if they’d like to share specific areas the Lord brought to their minds. Remind each one as they confess of 1 John 1:9 and the cleansing that comes.

Dismiss with the challenge to memorize the first 5 verses.

Challenge them to fast one meal this week and spend that time in prayer, actively seeking out how to pray and fast not as a religious activity, but one that connects them to the Father’s Heart.



Week 2: I Have Chosen!

Recap

Last week we looked at verses 1 – 5. Isaiah started with a reprimand saying, “Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.” And he also says, “Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?”

Read Aloud Isaiah 58: 6-7

What does Isaiah have to say next?

He begins verse 6 with a clear directive. Isaiah is saying, “Is this not the fast I have chosen...”

What are the implications of that?

What does your fasting look like (what should it look like)?

We often find ourselves doing our own thing when God wants us to focus in a totally different direction. Look at Paul’s words in Romans 7:15, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

When have you done things you know God did not want you to do?

What was the result of that in your life?

Let’s do an exercise

1. List the things He desires – you can start with verses 6&7 but feel free to branch out
2. Find every scripture/story from God’s Word that you can find which supports it
3. Make it practical...ask the questions "who are the oppressed?" "how can I help?"

Thoughts

In many cases, God gives us clear direction on what he would have us do in areas of prayer, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines. There is no guesswork!

Consider Romans 12:2, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Where do you go from here?

First memorize Isaiah 58: 6-7

Consider your next fast – start with one meal but “HYPER” focus on the things that we know are important to God (if you have experience you can do more than one meal)

Share that experience with the group next week

Know that disciplines don't come easy and don't be too hard on yourself as you begin



Week 3: If and Then

Recap

Last week we looked at verses 6-7 and found out a few things about what GOD cares about. How did the idea of God's heart for the poor, hungry and oppressed impact you this week?

Read Aloud Isaiah 58, asking each member to notice and underline the uses of the words "if" and "then"

Discuss the implications of these words

God is clearly laying out promises for those who follow His principles.

Are these promises we want to see in our own lives?

Do the "if" principles scare us more than the "then" principles inspire us?

What is holding me back from seeking this out in my own life?

Let's do an exercise

1. Find every "IF" principle. Pay careful attention to verses 5-7 which do not contain the actual word "if" but imply it by the use of the word "then" in verse 8. Underline every "IF" principle as you find it.
2. Find every "THEN" promise. Circle them as you find them, with an arrow pointing back to the "IF" principle.

Choose

Discuss each of the IF principles asking questions about where we succeed and fall short in applying them. Which ones scare us the most? Which ones seem most costly?

Discuss each THEN principle. Which one would you most like to see in your life?

Doctor's Orders

Just like a doctor would write out a prescription for you IF you want to get better THEN you better take this medicine. Do the same for yourselves. First, identify the THEN that you'd like to see in your life. Now, back it up and determine to see that IF principle incorporated into your life. Write it out and share it as a group. If needed, spend time brainstorming ways to do this

Listen to "Solution" by Hillsong United

Dismiss with the challenge to memorize the rest of the chapter as well as ACT on their prescriptions and spend a day in prayer and fasting for the poor, hungry and oppressed this week.



Week 4: The Conclusion

Sing the song “Hungry” – Kathryn Scott

Read Aloud Isaiah 58

Over the past 3 weeks, we have looked at man’s approach to fasting and God’s approach. We have studied the “heart” of God. We have looked through the lens of Isaiah to see that God is passionate about the poor, the oppressed, the naked and the homeless. We have learned that God our natural instinct is to pursue our own desires and selfish motivation even within the context of practicing spiritual disciplines. We have also learned that God is merciful and gives us grace. That grace empowers us to know His heart and to feel His compassion. We get to be part of God’s love for the lost.

Discussion

What were some of the “wrong” beliefs you held?
How does God’s love show through in my fasting now?
What was the turning point for you?

Reflection

Take a moment to journal 4 key takeaways from this study

How it has changed your approach to the discipline of fasting
How has it changed your perspective on God’s heart
How will you share this experience with others
What do you still need to give to God

Sharing

Take a few minutes to share with the group what you have learned.

The Poor

There is an unavoidable focus in scripture on the poor. Isaiah 58 is a “spotlight in the eyes” spiritually speaking it is a wake-up call that God wants us to identify and empathize with the poor. The Bible contains over 2000 verses on the poor.

How has this study changed your perspective on the poor and your role with them?

Close in prayer and commit to a weekly group fast