

**SUMMARY AND REVIEW:**

1. Per last week's study guide, did any of you practice Sabbath? What did it look like? Was it refreshing? Hard?
2. When you hear the word "worship" what images, actions, and ideas come to your mind?

**INTRO TO THE TEXT:**

The Israelites have once again misunderstood God's heartbeat for his image bearers. They have made worship simply a ritual—a way to "get" something from him. They have seen the act of fasting as something on a check-list to earn God's favor. Isaiah 58:6 picks up with the Lord explaining to his people what true worship should look like. Just like the Sabbath is a reminder that we are no longer enslaved to a salvation of performance, God reminds his people that worship is meant to *free them to a relationship with him not enslave them to a performance for him.*

**READ** Isaiah 58:6-10 and 1 John 3:16-18

**ANALYZE THE TEXT**

1. What do we learn about God's heart for all people in these passages? Is this contrary to how you have viewed God in the past? If yes, how so?
2. Read Genesis 12:2-3 and Isaiah 42:6: What was the mission for the Israelite people? How do the above texts show we can live into this mission?
3. Read Isaiah 58:1-5. How were the Israelites actually living out their "mission"?
4. When reading the above passages, what parts of God's chosen "fast" convict you? Make you uncomfortable? Excite you? Why?

**A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER**

The Israelites were living in a time of political upheaval, social turmoil and national tension. In order to alleviate their emotional distress, they turned to fasting. Yet they weren't fasting for the right reasons (repentance and looking to a new resolve for the future.) Instead, they were using God like a genie to get what they wanted.

Scripture reminds us that God loves our worship, but worship is not simply singing, praying, attending small group, taking communion & fasting. Worship is also living into our first mission: being a blessing to the nations so that they can know the love of Christ. *Worship, therefore, is not only a Sunday activity but an everyday lifestyle.*

Raymond C. Ortlund said, *"God doesn't want us to live prayerless lives, running on our own steam. We need to be quiet before him, and fasting is a valid way to do that. But neither does God want us to prove our devotion to him by making ourselves hungry and miserable while disregarding our obligation to make others full and happy. If our Christianity, however sincere, doesn't move us to make our world a better place, it's not only unhelpful to others, it's unacceptable to God... Christianity must be deeply internal and personal. But if it stops there, it is just a spare-time hobby"* (387-388).<sup>1</sup>

Our God is a relational God. When we humbly engage in that relationship with him, this manifests true worship. Christ has come and we now live in an era where our mission is to show people a small glimpse of what God desires for his people: a world where no one goes hungry; no child is abandoned; no woman is taken advantage of. Our God is honored most when, out of gratitude and love for him, we emulate him. Ultimately, this means setting aside our own comforts and "lives" for the sake of others.

**APPLY:**

1. How has this passage changed your perspective on how you can better love and worship God?
2. What practical implications can you claim over your life? How can you implement these claims?
3. If someone asked you, "What is worship?" how would you respond after reading Isaiah?
4. How can we take these verses and, as a community, live into them without falling into the same trap the Israelites did with fasting (legalism in order to "earn" God's favor)?

**Suggestions for Further Reading:** *Forgotten God*, Francis Chan;

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* by Raymond C. Ortlund