



Becoming a well-watered garden

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...

- Isaiah 58:11

The Practice of Fasting



The Jews were called to fast on the day of atonement (Yom Kippur)

*“²⁹ “And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, **you shall afflict yourselves** and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.”*

- Lev 16:29

Some Reasons for Fasting



Repentance

When Jonah proclaimed judgment over Nineveh, the king called for fasting and repentance (Jonah 3:5).



Lamentation

Nehemiah wept and fasted for days when he heard about the broken state of Jerusalem (Neh 1:4).



Intercession

Queen Esther asked the Jews to fast and pray for three days before she pled for their lives (Est 4:16).

*Not Exhaustive

Fasting in the Christian Life

- ✔ **An Expectation:** Jesus said “*when you fast,*” implying a standard expectation for disciples (Matt 6:16).
- ✔ **Accompanying Repentance, Lamentation, Prayer...**
- ✔ **As a Spiritual Discipline:** Helps to break the constant cycle of consumption. It also creates time and resources to turn our attention toward God and the needs of others. Traditionally, resources saved from food were given to those who lacked basic needs



Isaiah 58:1 opens with a clear declaration that Israel had sinned.

“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.” - Isaiah 58:1



The Problem of Hypocrisy

² Yet they seek me daily *(A1)*

and delight to know my ways, *(B1)*

as if they were a nation that did
righteousness and did not forsake
the judgment of their God; *(C)*

they ask of me righteous judgments; *(B2)*

they delight to draw near to God. *(A2)*

- Isaiah 58:2



The Problem with their fasting

‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and
you take no knowledge of it?’

- Isaiah 58:3



The same term used in Lev 16:29
translated “afflict yourselves”



The Problem with their fasting

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The Problem with their fasting

...Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and **oppress all your workers.** ⁴ 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

- Isaiah 58:3b-4



The Problem with their fasting

“⁵ 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?”

- Isaiah 58:3b-4



**Motivated by
Self-Gratification**

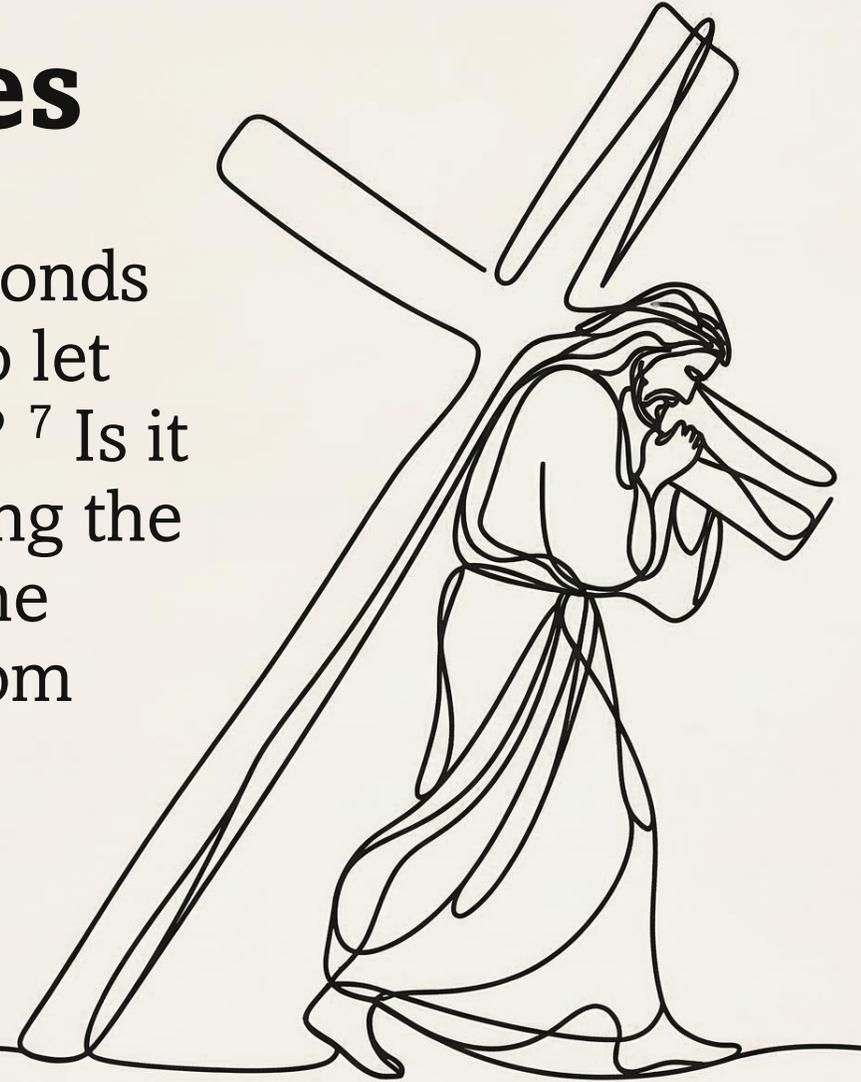


**Acted in ways
inconsistent with their
acts of devotion to God**



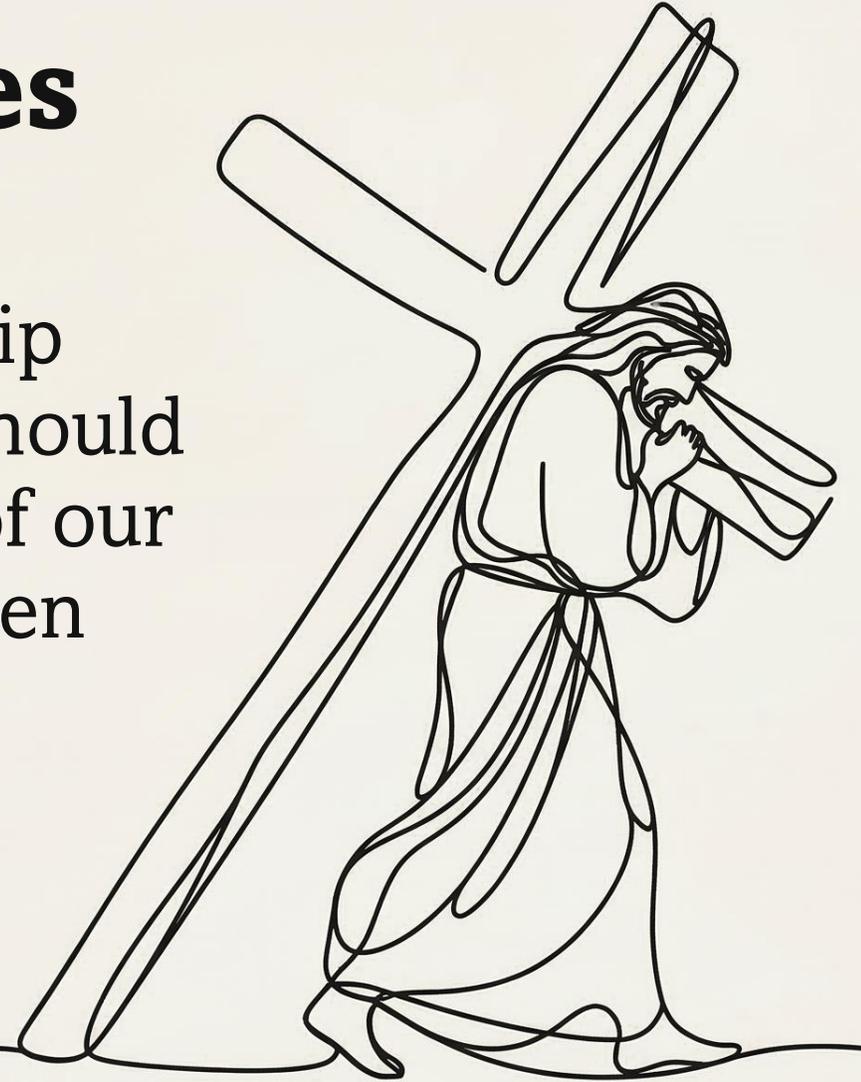
The Pattern that God desires

“⁶Is not this the fast that 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? ⁷ 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?” - Isaiah 58:6-7



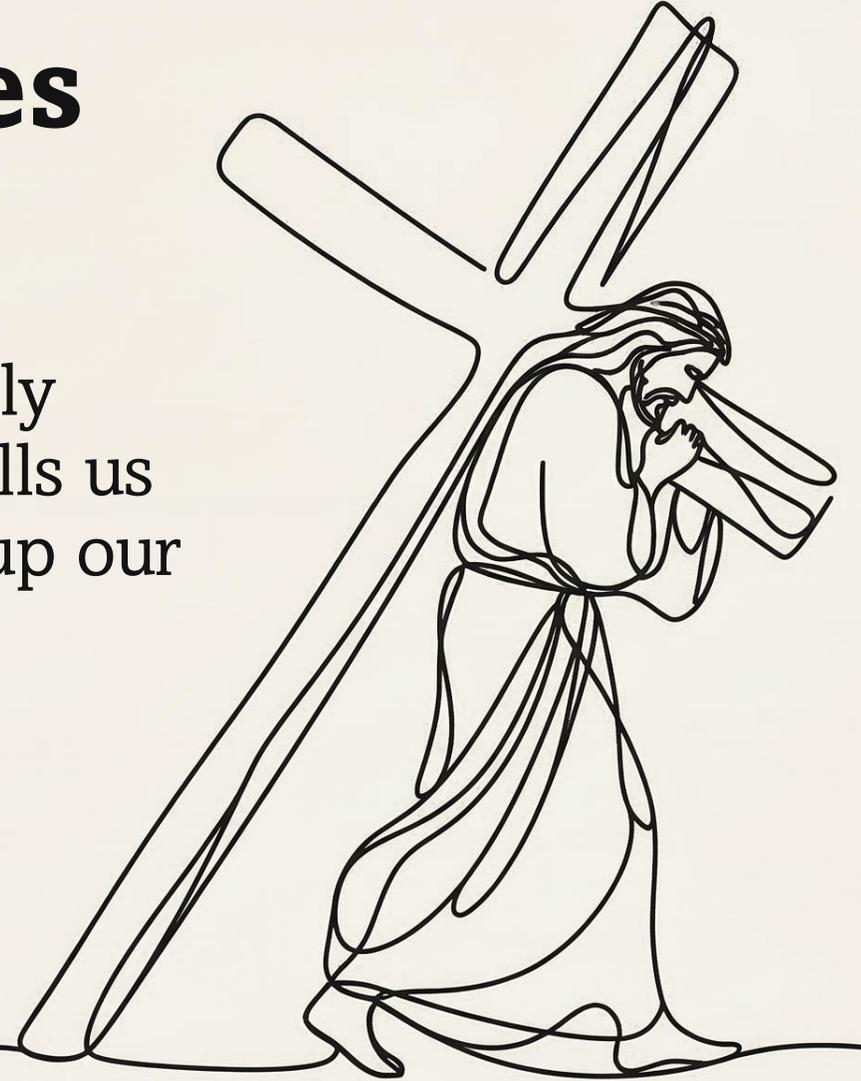
The Pattern that God desires

The expressions of our vertical relationship with God (e.g. worship, fasting, prayer), should never be divorced from the expressions of our horizontal relationships with our fellow men (e.g. care, justice, love for others)



The Pattern that God desires

The pattern which God calls us to follow not only needs us to love God and love others. It also calls us to be willing to pay the price to do so - to take up our cross and follow him



The Promise of God's Presence

IF... (v6-7)



You loose the
bonds of
wickedness and
share your bread
with the hungry...

THEN... (v8-9a)



Your **light** shall
break forth like the
dawn... Then you
shall call, and the
Lord will answer...

IF... (9b-10a)



You take away the
yoke from your
midst... and satisfy
the desire of the
afflicted...

THEN... (10b-12)



Shall your **light**
rise... You shall be
like a well-watered
garden, ... and your
ancient ruins shall
be rebuilt...

The Metaphor of Light in Isaiah

Isaiah 9:2

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Isa 42:6 (spoken to the Servant of the LORD)

"I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."

Isa 60:1, 19

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you... the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."

How Can We Do Better?



Opportunity

Lord, help me see and
seize the opportunities
to exercise my love for
You and others.

How Can We Do Better?



Opportunity

Lord, help me see and seize the opportunities to exercise my love for You and others.



Willingness

Lord, help me to be willing to pay the price so that I can love You and love others more

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Lord, help me to be willing to pay the price so that I can love You and love others more



Practice

Lord, repeat the process so that I will love You and love others as naturally as I love myself.

May you become a garden that never runs dry.