

PULPIT COMPANION

A TRUE FAST

ISAIAH 58:1-9

DR. TYRONE PARTEE



FEBRUARY 15, 2026

09:45 AM

1811 S.7TH STREET, SAN JOSE, CA

WWW.MARANATHACC.COM

W

C

—

D

F



What if the very spiritual practices we've been performing have become empty rituals that God never intended?

This powerful message from **Isaiah 58** challenges us to examine whether our fasting, prayer, and worship are truly transforming us or simply making us look religious. The text confronts a sobering reality: God's people were fasting, seeking Him daily, and appearing eager for His presence, yet heaven remained silent. Why? Because they were collecting religious activity without releasing righteous action.

Like a pond that collects water but never flows, becoming stagnant and contaminated over time, we can accumulate sermons, songs, and spiritual moments without ever allowing God's work in us to flow outward. A true fast, God reveals, is not about skipping meals while our hearts remain unchanged. It's about loosing chains of injustice, freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked. It's about breaking every yoke that binds us and others. The message calls us to move from performance to power, from ritual to righteousness, from looking holy to living holy.

Over the next 40 days, we're invited into a fast that requires something from us: genuine humility that leads to genuine healing, discipline that breaks unhealthy patterns, and obedience that flows into service. This isn't about what we deny ourselves, but what we deliver to others. When we give bread, God gives breakthrough. When we lift burdens, God lifts blessings. A true fast doesn't end in worship; it walks out of worship serving others.





SCRIPTURES FROM PULPIT AI

Explicitly Mentioned:

1. **Isaiah 58:1-9** - The primary text read and expounded throughout the sermon, dealing with true fasting

Alluded To or Thematically Connected:

1. **Leviticus 16** (Day of Atonement) - Referenced when discussing the Old Testament Day of Atonement and its significance
2. **John 7:37-38** - Alluded to in the discussion of "streams of living water" and the river imagery
3. **Matthew 16:24 / Luke 9:23** - Referenced in the call to "deny yourself"
4. **James 1:27** - Connected to the theme of true religion being about caring for the vulnerable
5. **Matthew 25:31-46** - Alluded to in discussions of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for others
6. **Psalms 51:10** - Related to the call for a clean and pure heart
7. **Romans 12:1-2** - Connected to the theme of transformation and being changed

Relevant Supporting Verses for Main Themes:

1. **Joel 2:12-13** - "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping" (theme of true repentance)
2. **Zechariah 7:5-6** - Questions about fasting for God versus self (theme of motive)
3. **1 John 4:20** - "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar" (theme of authentic faith)
4. **James 2:14-17** - Faith without works is dead (theme of faith that serves)
5. **Micah 6:8** - "Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly" (theme of true righteousness)





DEVOTIONAL

Day 1: From Stagnant Waters to Living Rivers

Reading: Isaiah 58:1-5; John 7:37-38

Devotional: Like a pond that collects water but never flows, our faith can become stagnant when we practice rituals without transformation. God calls us beyond religious performance to a life that flows with His living water. A pond looks peaceful but eventually becomes contaminated when nothing moves through it. Similarly, we can collect sermons, songs, and spiritual experiences yet remain unchanged. God desires a river faith, one that receives His mercy and lets it flow outward, that accepts His justice and extends it to others. Today, examine your spiritual life. Are you a pond collecting blessings, or a river flowing with transformation? Ask God to restore the flow He intended, moving you from ritual to righteousness, from stagnation to life-giving movement that refreshes everyone you encounter.

Day 2: The Discipline of True Humility

Reading: Isaiah 58:3-7; James 4:6-10

Devotional: God confronts His people with a piercing question: "Why have we fasted and you have not seen it?" Their answer reveals the problem—they performed religious acts while exploiting workers, quarreling, and striking others with wicked fists. True fasting is not about skipping meals; it is about surrendering pride. God is not impressed with our hunger pangs but with our humility. A bowed head without a changed heart remains rebellion. The fast God chooses breaks chains of injustice, frees the oppressed, and breaks every yoke. Before you deny your appetite, deny oppression in your life. Before you skip bread, break the bondage binding you. This week, identify one area where pride has prevented your healing. Surrender it completely. Remember: if it does not humble you, it will not heal you.





DEVOTIONAL

Day 3: Breaking the Yokes That Bind

Reading: Isaiah 58:6; Galatians 5:1

Devotional: "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?" God's emphasis on "every yoke" is intentional and personal. What yoke have you been carrying? How many days, months, or years have you dragged this burden? Christ came to break every yoke, the yoke of unforgiveness, bitterness, shame, guilt, and fear. A true fast demands we release what has held us captive. Some of us hold onto what others said about us, rehearsing past mistakes until they become our identity. But God declares you are redeemable, restorable, and forgivable. Today, name your yoke specifically. Confess it before God. Then make the decision to release it and walk in the freedom Christ purchased for you.

Day 4: Faith That Flows into Action

Reading: Isaiah 58:7-9; Matthew 25:34-40

Devotional: God removes all ambiguity about what pleases Him: share your food with the hungry, provide shelter for the wanderer, clothe the naked, and do not turn away from your own flesh and blood. Then, and only then, will your light break forth like the dawn and your healing quickly appear. Notice the sequence: obedience precedes breakthrough. Fasting that stops with you was never God's design. He is not after empty stomachs but full obedience that brings life. Your fast should produce faith that feeds, frees, and fixes what sin has fractured. This week, do not just fast, feed somebody. Do not just pray, pour out for somebody. Do not just worship—walk it out in service. When you give bread, God gives breakthrough. When you lift burdens, God lifts blessings. Turn your fasting into serving, and watch heaven respond.





DEVOTIONAL

Day 5: A Fast That Lasts Beyond Forty Days

Reading: Isaiah 58:8-12; Romans 12:1-2

Devotional: "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I." This is the promise for those who embrace a true fast, God's responsive presence. But this fast must produce lasting change, not temporary performance. God calls us to a fast that lasts past forty days, transforming our lives permanently. Make one repair: restore what is broken in your relationships. Break one yoke you have benefited from: stop enabling unhealthy systems or profiting from silence when you witness injustice. Turn fasting into consistent serving. God wants your hands, not just your hallelujahs. He is asking for a fast that lives holy, not just looks holy. As you conclude this devotional journey, commit to supernatural change. Let this be the season you move from talking to touching, from shouting to serving, from simply fasting to freeing others. Lord, make this a true fast that lasts.

Reflection Questions for the Week:

1. What "pond" in my life needs to become a "river" of flowing faith?
2. What specific yoke am I ready to break during this fast?
3. Who needs me to turn my worship into witness through practical service?
4. What relationship needs repair, and what step will I take today?
5. How will I ensure this fast produces lasting change beyond forty days?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE:

A True Fast

Opening Prayer:

Begin with prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to receive truth and transformation during this 40-day fast season.

Key Scripture:

Isaiah 58:1-9

Icebreaker Question

Question: Share about a time when you committed to something (a diet, exercise, habit change) but found yourself going through the motions without real change. What did you learn from that experience?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. A True Fast Confronts the Flow

- The difference between a pond (stagnant, collecting but not moving) and a river (constantly flowing, refreshing, life-giving)
- Ritual faith vs. forward faith
- God wants us to move from collecting religious activity to releasing righteous action

2. A True Fast Requires Humility

- "If it doesn't humble you, it won't heal you"
- Fasting isn't about skipping meals; it's about surrendering control
- A bowed head without a changed heart is still rebellion

3. A True Fast Moves from Ritual to Righteousness

- God wants full obedience, not empty stomachs
- Faith that feeds, frees, and fixes
- Fasting should produce visible change in how we serve others





SMALL GROUP GUIDE:

A True Fast

Discussion Questions:

Section 1: Understanding the Flow

1. The Pond vs. River Analogy

- In what areas of your spiritual life do you feel more like a pond (collecting but not flowing) than a river?
- What religious activities have you been collecting without allowing them to flow out into action?

2. Confronting Stagnation

- The sermon mentioned collecting "sermons, songs, fasts, moments with God, but nothing ever moves." What resonates with you about this statement?
- What would it look like for mercy, justice, or compassion to "flow out" of you this week?

Section 2: Humility and Healing

1. Personal Surrender

- Pastor mentioned that "some of us want attention from heaven without submission on earth." Where do you see this tendency in your own life?
- What's the difference between performing religious duties and truly surrendering to God?

2. Breaking Yokes

- Isaiah 58:6 talks about loosing "chains of injustice" and breaking "every yoke." What personal yokes (burdens, bondages, habits) have you been carrying that need to be broken?
- How long have you been carrying this yoke? What's kept you from releasing it?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: A True Fast

Discussion Questions:

Section 3: From Ritual to Righteousness

1. Faith That Serves

- The sermon states: "Fasting that stops with you was never God's design." How does this challenge your understanding of fasting?
- What's one practical way you can turn your fast into service for someone else?

2. Uncomfortable Obedience

- Pastor challenged us to "stop enabling unhealthy systems" and "stop profiting from being silent." Where in your life (work, family, community) do you see injustice that you've remained silent about?
- What would it cost you to speak up? What might it cost others if you don't?

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes of silence for each person to reflect on these questions individually:

- What is God asking me to release during this fast?
- What repair do I need to make in a relationship?
- Who is one person I can serve or bless during these 40 days?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: A True Fast

Practical Applications for the 40-Day Fast

Week 1-2: Make One Repair

- Identify a broken relationship that needs restoration
- Take action: text, call, apologize, or meet face-to-face
- Don't wait for the other person to make the first move

Week 3-4: Break One Yoke

- Identify one system or habit you've benefited from that enables injustice or dysfunction
- Take one concrete step to stop participating in it
- This might mean speaking up, changing a habit, or setting a new boundary

Ongoing Throughout the Fast: Turn Fasting into Serving

- If you skip a meal, feed someone else
- If you save money, bless someone financially
- If you gain time, use it to pray for others or serve in practical ways
- Keep a journal of how you're serving others during the fast

Group Commitment Exercise (10 minutes)

Have each person share one specific commitment they're making during this 40-day fast in one of these three areas:

1. **REPAIR:** "I will reach out to _____ to restore our relationship."
2. **RELEASE:** "I will break free from _____ that has been binding me."
3. **SERVE:** "I will bless/serve _____ in this specific way."

Write these down and exchange them with an accountability partner in the group.

Accountability Questions for Future Meetings

Use these questions in your next few gatherings during the fast:

- How is your fast going, not just what you're abstaining from, but what's changing in you?
- Have you made the repair you committed to? What happened?
- What yoke are you actively breaking right now?
- Who have you served this week as a result of your fasting?
- Where are you struggling with discipline? How can we support you?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE:

A True Fast

Key Scriptures to Meditate On This Week

- Isaiah 58:1-9 (the main text)
- Isaiah 58:6 - "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice..."
- Matthew 6:16-18 - Jesus' teaching on fasting
- James 1:22 - "Do not merely listen to the word... Do what it says."

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Pray together using the prayer from the sermon:

"Lord, make this fast real. Make it real in my mind, in my mouth, in my hands, in my relationships, in my home. Break me before you bless me. Humble me before you honor me. Shift me before you send me. We're going into a true fast, bowing low and leaving what needs to be left behind. Lord, make this a true fast that lasts."

Additional Resources

- **Recommended Reading:** "The Fasting Edge" by Jentezen Franklin or "Celebration of Discipline" by Richard Foster (chapter on fasting)
- **Group Challenge:** Consider fasting together as a group from one specific thing (social media, complaining, negativity) and checking in weekly
- **Service Opportunity:** Identify one community need your group can address together during these 40 days





SMALL GROUP GUIDE: A True Fast

Notes for Group Leaders

- **Be Vulnerable:** Share your own struggles with going through religious motions without real change
- **Create Safety:** Some may share deep wounds or broken relationships, ensure the group maintains confidentiality
- **Avoid Comparison:** Remind the group that everyone's fast will look different; the goal is transformation, not competition
- **Follow Up:** Check in with members individually during the week, especially those who shared vulnerable commitments
- **Celebrate Progress:** In future meetings, celebrate the repairs made, yokes broken, and people served

Remember: *A true fast isn't about what we deny, it's about what we deliver. It's not about looking holy, it's about living holy. Let this be a fast that lasts beyond 40 days and changes us permanently.*

