

WEEK ONE

Mike Howerton - Lead Pastor

Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare. Jeremiah 29:6,7 NLT

Tell my people Israel of their sins! Isaiah 58:1b NLT

...they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. Isaiah 58:2 NLT

i. God cares about the _____

'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!' Isaiah 58:2b,3a NLT

'I will tell you why!' I respond. "It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord? Isaiah 58:3b-5 NLT

ii. Religious form might make _____, but God desires _____ for our lives

iii. The purpose of religious form was to INFORM our hearts

“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. “Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble.

Isaiah 58:6,7,9b,10 NLT

*“Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. Then when you call, the Lord will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. **Isaiah 58:8,9,10b,11 NLT***

*Work for the good of the city where I’ve taken you as captives, and pray to the Lord for that city. When it prospers, you will also prosper. **Jeremiah 29:7 GWT***