

Not for Sale – Bible Study & Journal Companion

Week One

First Encounter: Day 1 Reflections

This is NOT a light book. We do not read many books that carry a “warning” label. So before we even begin to look at the travesty of human beings for sale, we need to take a look at the issue of “suffering avoidance.” Our typical reaction to suffering is a paradox: wanting to gawk at suffering when it is at a distance yet avoid it when it comes a little closer or when we begin to dig a little deeper into what it’s about and how we can help. (Ever noticed how we are all drawn to stare as we pass an accident on a road but rarely stop to offer assistance?)

How can we possibly look at human indignities without falling into a dark hole of despair? How can we cling to hope in the midst of the darkness that comes up when we look at painful events? What is the motivation for doing this?

For many of us who feel compelled to be involved in justice, Isaiah 61 is a motivating passage. Verse 4 describes a vision of a future we would love to see: “Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins...they will repair the ruined cities.” (NASB)

As we long to rebuild and repair the devastated places, we must start with ourselves right here and now. It will be a hard journey that requires courage to take a deep look into our own souls. May you be blessed with real depth and connection with the Spirit as you journey together!

Begin the journey by delving into both the Bible and our reader, *Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It*. Read the Introduction of the book, pages 1-18.

Day 1: Focus on the Biblical Text: Psalm 73 (excerpts)

1 Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills... 12 This is what the wicked are like— always carefree, they increase in wealth. 13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence... 16 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny... 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever... 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds. (NIV)

Comment [ITS1]: Fia, there seems to be little structure in terms of font or point size throughout the study, so I just thought it would

Comment [ITS2]: Fia: Are you going to put all Biblical quotes in italics? If so, we do not need quotation marks.

Comment [ITS3]: Fia: Please find some way to make each reading quite noticeable, because the original authors didn't really guide the audience toward passages in Dave's book. Thanks!

Day 1: Thoughts into Action

This passage from Psalms provides a remedy for a heart that is overwhelmed and distressed when considering the “success” of the wicked. We are taught here by the psalmist to enter into “the sanctuary,” to gain God’s perspective on all things.

As you come face to face with the acts of the wicked as described in this book, you will need to continually hand your anxieties and distress over to God and allow God’s peace to rule your heart and mind. Remember, we do not have control over other people; we only have control over ourselves – how we respond, how we love others and ourselves. When we try to control others (their emotions, their actions or their thoughts), our lives become chaotic and God loses God’s rightful place in the center of our hearts. Let us rejoice that we have and can know a peaceful and loving God who will deal with us all in mercy, compassion and justice!

Activity: Write a personal psalm that expresses your frustration over human trafficking, then lay it at the feet of the One who sits on the throne of the universe.

Comment [ITS4]: Fia: If this is going to function like a workbook, maybe there should be space to write the personal psalm.

Day 1: Prayer of Response

Today, Lord, I just want to sit at Your feet and gaze into Your face. But You also invite me, from the safety and security of Your throne of grace, to turn my eyes back onto this earth You created. The people You love. Those You suffered for. Let me be a humble servant unto You, doing my part, seeking freedom in my own life as well as in the lives of others. I long to see Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.

Second Encounter: Day 2 Reflections

Often, when addressing an issue of such intensity, many questions begin to flood our minds. How do I look at global slavery and not get overwhelmed? How I can approach this scourge with hope? There are so many human crises out there, how can I be sure this is something I need to attend to as a follower of Jesus Christ? And what on earth do I have to offer? I am only one individual - what could I possibly do?

What are some additional doubts or questions that come up for you?

If you feel reservations about getting involved, you're in good company. Think of a few of your favorite Biblical characters and recall the excuses they threw out to disqualify themselves. Jeremiah, for instance, immediately following an extraordinary call from on high said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child" (Jeremiah 1:6, NIV).

Let's address the excuse of "but I am only..." remembering both those in Bible and those in the Introduction of *Not For Sale* who were all rather ordinary individuals who did (or are doing) extraordinary things.

At the burning bush, Moses received a powerful calling with a specific purpose to bring God's people, the Israelites, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:4, 10 NIV). After receiving multiple miraculous signs from the Lord, Moses was overwhelmed with the calling and responded from his weakness: "O Lord, I have never been eloquent I am show of speech and tongue" (Ex. 4:10, NIV). God said to Moses that He is the one who made Moses' mouth, and He will be the one to fill it. "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Ex. 4:12, NIV).

If you can speak to God, you can speak on behalf of God as a voice for the voiceless. Even though Moses recruited his brother Aaron to speak on his behalf, Moses did go and do what God asked him to do. Moses was an ordinary man, with ordinary fears, that made himself available to be used by God. His decision to go and do resulted in the accomplishment of extraordinary things.

Then there was Gideon. In Judges 6:14, he received a great calling from God to save Israel from the Midians. "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" (NIV) Sometimes the best way to start your service is to start with what you have. For Gideon, it was his strength. However, Gideon was focused on his weakness and what he didn't have rather than what he had. "How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (Judges 6:15, NIV). In verse 16, the Lord said, "I will be with you" Because Gideon said yes, 300 ordinary men defeated thousands of well trained military men. Ordinary people perform extraordinary activities with God on their side. Too often people's tendency is to wait until the circumstances are just right before taking action. God did just the opposite with Gideon. God downsized Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300. Start with what you have and where you are.

Ordinary people can do extraordinary things when they make themselves available for God's purposes.

Day 2: Focus on the Biblical Text: Isaiah 61

¹*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,*

²*to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor** and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,*

³*and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.*

⁴*They WILL rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; They will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.*

⁵*Aliens will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.*

⁶*And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.*

⁷*Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.*

⁸*For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.*

⁹*Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed."*

¹⁰*I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

*11For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.
(NIV)*

***Note: Jesus quoted these words in Luke 4:18, 19. Take a moment to read the chapter surrounding this quote. The 'favor of the LORD' is something we can all admit we would love to have!*

Day 2: Thoughts into Action

How Do We Proclaim Freedom for the Captives?

How does this passage in Isaiah lead you to understand our place as abolitionists in the face of global slavery today? Picture Jesus standing in a factory amongst hundreds of unpaid workers, speaking these words over the whirring machines. How does that strike you?

Imagine yourself taking some of the actions listed in the first verses of Isaiah 61...really! Close your eyes, let it sink in. Put yourself into a situation that fits the description below. Let the Spirit guide your thoughts and inspire your heart.

1. giving good news to the poor
2. binding up the broken hearted
3. freeing captives and prisoners
4. bringing light into darkness
5. comforting someone who is mourning a great loss
6. bestowing a crown of beauty, removing the ashes

Activity: Explore what impacted you the most. Can you express this tangibly or physically? Create something: poetry, a short story, painting, song, dance, prayer, etc. How are you moved to express this stirring in your soul? Write a short reflection on your expression.

Day 2: Digging Deeper

Do you identify with any of those to whom the good news is being preached? Circle the ones you most identify with:

- Poor
- Brokenhearted
- Captive
- Lost in darkness
- Mourning
- Grieving

- In despair

As followers of Jesus, we receive many good gifts, but they are not gifts to be hoarded. We are to lavishly and freely give away that which we have received, sometimes even to give beyond what we feel we have been given. (Read Matthew 10:8) Ask Jesus honestly and humbly to show you what He has given you that you could give away. With your heart open, lay down ALL of what you are hoarding. The miracle is this: When we give it away, we don't lose it! That's REALLY good news!

Day 2: Prayer of Response

As you conclude today's time in the Word, close your eyes and meditate on this question: What's holding me back from taking action?

Is it my perceived weaknesses? Am I afraid to get involved? Do I feel ill-equipped? Am I baffled by where to start? Is my emotional brokenness keep you from moving forward?

God, I ask You to seek me and search me, to reveal if there is any wicked way in me, and – if you find anything, please remove it. Rebuild my spirit, soul, and body so that I might be one with You, able to hear you clearly. I surrender all that I am and all I'm not to you, and I offer myself in service as an instrument of grace and restoration to the broken hearted, the vulnerable, the voiceless, and the invisible people.

Third Encounter: Day 3 Reflections

What do I do when I want to look away? Run and hide? In nature we talk about “fight or flight,” the physiological response that provides our body with the adrenaline needed to respond to a fearful experience. What about in the spiritual world? Does fight or flight apply to you?

Day 3: Focus on the Biblical Text: Isaiah 53

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Day 3: Thoughts into Action Confronting the World's Suffering

Take some time to listen as the Spirit of God searches your heart to see what makes you the most uncomfortable about looking at suffering. It takes courage to look in the face of suffering. Where can we find that kind of courage? How do the words in Isaiah that are a prophetic description of Jesus encourage or enable us to look at suffering?

How do you feel when someone shares his/her suffering with you? Think about a time when someone shared his/her suffering with you and you didn't know quite what to do.

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with His comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer” (2 Cor 1:3-6, NLT).

Think about a time when you've shared suffering and someone has responded in a way that brought you comfort. How hard is it to give that gift of comfort to another? How easy is it to just do nothing?

Consider the title for the Introduction of *Not for Sale*. “Finding Slavery in My Own Backyard. This claim – “slavery in my own backyard” - seems to be one of the most challenging concepts to North Americans today. People want to reject this. Perhaps it’s because North Americans cannot fathom such atrocities in one’s country. Yet, there are 200,000 to 300,000 people enslaved in the United States today, trafficked into the U.S. from 49 countries. Some naysayers are saying that slavery today is not really a problem. But there are TRUE stories that cannot be denied. This book is full of them! For additional evidence, go to the website www.SlaveryMap.org where you can read about more than 200 documented cases. This ever-evolving site tells the story of human trafficking cases that have occurred all across the country.

Even if some of the estimated statistics in *Not For Sale* are worthy of debate, the idea that there are any slaves in North America in the 21st century is appalling. Something must be done. Will you join the army of justice seekers and take **action**?

This question is often asked: What is a modern-day slave? The U.S. State Department defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery” (*Trafficking in Persons Report 2008*). Dr. David Batstone writes:

"Girls and boys, women and men of all ages are forced to toil in the rug loom sheds of Nepal, sell their bodies in the brothels of Rome, break rocks in the quarries of Pakistan, and fight wars in the jungles of Africa. Go behind the facade in any major town or city in the world today and you are likely to find a thriving commerce in human beings. You may even find slavery in your own backyard." (p. 1)

How about your “backyard”?

Think for a moment of some of your favorite places to eat or shop or receive a manicure. Is there a possibility that workers in any of those environments, or anyone involved in the "chain" of bringing those goods to that point could be doing the work against their will without compensation for their labor? Is it a thought that has ever crossed your mind before?

Activity: Write a short paragraph defining your “backyard.” Do you tend to think locally, regionally, nationally or internationally? Do you believe there’s slavery in your backyard? If no, how can you be sure? If so, what do you think should be done about it? Write your reflections on these central questions.

Day 3: Digging Deeper

Let's look again at how this illegal activity in a North American city came to light, again, straight from *Not for Sale*:

Comment [ITS5]: John, I don't want to keep going over edited text, but week 2 seems to be focused on this idea, too. Any concern about repetition?

Comment [ITS6]: Fia, we need to be consistent in how we use the title of the book. I use italics when I write it, but the original authors used bold for the title. I tried to change all the bolds, but I may have missed one. Please just make it consistent based on what you think works best for the overall design.

"A local resident, Marcia Poole, happened to be passing by in her car...and witnessed a bizarre scene: several men toting a sagging roll of carpet, with a human leg hanging out the side" (p. ??).

Comment [ITS7]: Each quote from the book needs a page number.

Pause. At that moment, what would you do? Avert your eyes? Drive faster, fearing for your life, not wanting to get involved in what was clearly a dangerous situation? What if you were alone, driving with two young children in the car? What if you were already late to something?

What did Marcia Poole choose to do? "She slowed down her car to take a closer look and was horrified to watch the men attempt to force a young girl into their van. Poole jumped out of her car and did everything in her power to stop the men" (p. ??).

Pause. How do you react to Marcia's action? Was that the safest choice? *Honestly*, what do you think you would have done in the same situation? Are our ideas bigger and more active than our legs? Do our fears dilute our courage?

Let's read on...

"Unable to do so, she stopped another passing motorist and implored him to dial 911 and report a kidnapping in progress. The police arrived in time to arrest the abductors" (p. ??).

We may feel compelled to think this was an isolated incident, or that this was because Reddy was a "foreigner" and that no American would ever participate in such action. But our very recent and documented history tells a different story. Recall the story from the Introduction about the pastor in Massachusetts who enslaved a young Tibetan girl in his home, for example.

Comment [ITS8]: John, I do think this is a powerful – yes, disturbing and deplorable but powerful – example that should remain here.

What drives the sale of human beings today? Like any other commercial market, the trafficking of persons is driven by supply and demand. As we read in *Not For Sale*, "It is cheaper to produce goods when you don't have to pay the laborers. Therefore slaveholders are highly competitive and their profit margins are higher." (p. 9)

Dr. Kevin Bales and his book *Disposable People* is referenced in the Introduction: "Slaves in Pakistan may have made the shoes you are wearing and the carpet you stand on. Slaves in the Caribbean may have put sugar in your kitchen and toys in the hands of your children. In India they may have sewn the shirt on your back and polished the ring on your finger" (p. 9).

Comment [ITS9]: All book titles should be formatted consistently.

It's pretty uncomfortable to realize that the toy table you just purchased for your sweet little pre-schooler to play on and use to develop into a curious and healthy little girl was made in China, perhaps in a factory under terrible conditions using toxic chemicals and paying no wages. When there's no other option for toy tables, what do you buy? Nothing?

Do your shoes have a story to tell? How about your shirt? Or the last toys you bought?

How do we live justly in this world today? Is the answer to reject *everything* that is slave-made? Are boycotts the answer? Or do we just resign ourselves to the idea that ‘we can only do so much?’ We’ve heard people say things like, “You just have to be okay with it, knowing that your influence only goes so far.” What do *you* think?

How much are you willing to learn about the way material things in your life are produced? How far are you willing to go to purchase only those things that have been made under fair and just circumstances? Are you willing to change where you shop and become a values-based consumer?

What can we do? It is easier not to know and not to care, but that is not a Christian response. Perhaps we might start asking “what would Jesus buy” rather than solely asking “what would Jesus do”. In Mark 11:15-17, Jesus responds to injustices happening in the Temple. “When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, and He stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace.” He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,’ but you have turned it into a den of thieves” (NLT).

Both buyer and seller were driven out of the Temple. The sellers intentionally adjusted the scales for selfish financial gain, charging as much as 10 times the normal fees. The money changers were demanding 25 percent fees for the currency exchanged for all the guests visiting Jerusalem during the Passover Feast.

Are you contributing to the modern-day money changers’ exploitation when you buy from supply chains that use slave labor for their gain and yours?

Jesus’ act of justice in the Temple demonstrated His messianic authority. It was actually the second time Jesus cleaned out the Temple. The tendency for people in Jesus’ time and today is to live for personal gain and selfish advantage. Unless the heart of humanity is transformed by Christ, exploitation will emerge. One day Christ will bring justice to all the injustices of the world. Until that day, will you face the world’s suffering and be God’s instrument of grace and mercy, helping to rescue and comfort those who are in need?

The Not For Sale Campaign is launching www.Free2Work.org in early 2009 to provide consumers with information about company supply chains. There are also numerous organizations selling slave-free goods and those made by survivors of human trafficking. Check out the Freedom Store at www.notforsalecampaign.org or simply search the Internet for organizations like The Emancipation Network. It is possible to take a stand for justice through your purchases.

Day 3: Prayer of Response

Do the reflections on *Not For Sale* stir up tension in your soul? Maybe it's time for another trip to "the sanctuary." Dialogue with the Spirit of God over the tension you're experiencing right now. Talk to your Father about what you're thinking and feeling. Listen to God's whispers and discern His heart for injustice. Conclude your prayer time with a readiness to act in light of God's heart.

Fourth Encounter: Day 4 Reflections

As we continue to confront our hesitation to look deeper into suffering, let's find further scriptural references to abolitionist work.

The Biblical passage for this encounter on "true fasting" isn't soft and sweet, not the type of words you'd typically find in an encouragement card. But we think you're up for a challenge.

We will be looking at a spiritual dynamic that is powerful. This passage talks about the symbiotic relationship of our crying out to God for relief of our own grief and its connection to how we care for others.

Day 4: Focus on the Biblical Text: Isaiah 58

- 1 Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the house of Jacob their sins.
- 2 For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.
- 3 "Why have we fasted," they say,
"and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?"
Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
- 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
- 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD ?

- 6 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?
- 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
- 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
- 9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
- 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
- 11 The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
- 12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.
- 13 If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the LORD's holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,
- 14 then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land

and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken. (NIV)

Day 4: Thoughts into Action

What Does True Fasting Look Like?

Recall a time when you have cried out in desperation for God to bring relief or release in a challenge that you were facing.

There is a great deal of teaching on the role and discipline of fasting in both the Old Testament and New Testament. Jesus affirmed its importance by example at the outset of His ministry. Fasting is a necessary spiritual habit but not a mandatory one.¹

Activity: What is your “gut reaction” after reading through Isaiah 58? Write it out...or draw/scribble/create images.

Day 4: Digging Deeper

- Re-read verse Isaiah 58:1

What comes to mind when you hear the term “rebellion?” Which rebellious acts of the Hebrews are eluded to here?

The Hebrews seemed to have a hard time recognizing their rebellion. Why is it so hard to admit we're rebellious or that we've missed the mark?

Are we so afraid of punishment that we have forgotten there is hope? Sometimes we would rather ignore where we “miss the mark,” when all we have to do is admit our sins of omission and of commission and simply get up and begin to make new choices. Then it won't take long to begin to see glimpses of hope and transformation, in ourselves as well as in others.

- Re-read Isaiah 58:2

What does this verse point out in your life? Are there ways you, or perhaps the Church, could stand “accused” of *seeming* eager to know God's ways but actually forsaking His commands? What are some ways that you think you or the Church might stand accused?

- Re-read Isaiah 58:3a

Have you ever felt like God hasn't “seen” you or “noticed” your prayers? When? Describe as much of this experience as you can. Possibly create a collage of words and pictures that best illustrates your “state of soul” during this time.

- Re-read Isaiah 58:3b-4

These words bear repeating: “On the day of your fasting, you exploit all your workers... You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high....”

What is your response to this, either negative or positive? Do you want to rise up and say, “I don’t exploit my workers. I don’t have any workers!” Think again. The immigrants who pick your produce that you buy – they are working for you. The child who stitched together the shoes you are wearing – she was working for you.

Day 4: Prayer of Response

How does this fit with how you see, know and understand God? And what about the truth that we can “then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16)?

Remember, in the midst of this passage, to continually enter into God’s sanctuary. Soak yourself with the awareness of God’s love, care and compassion. Then see how justice is a natural outcome of God’s love in public. How is your private prayer and fasting resulting in you becoming God’s tool to repair the brokenness of the poor and hungry? Now is the time to humbly submit before God and ask Him to use you to be His instrument to set the captives and the oppressed free and loose the chains of injustice.

Fifth Encounter: Day 5 Reflections

Let's continue with this amazing passage from Isaiah 58. In this encounter we'll get to look more closely at the beautiful promises from this text.

Day 5: Focus on the Biblical Text: Isaiah 58:6-7

"Is this not 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. Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter -- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (NIV)

What does this passage tell you about the heart of God? What is your response to God's heart?

Day 5: Thoughts into Action Why Is Fasting So Hard to Do?

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that seems so contrary to our North American lifestyle. But what kind of "fasting" is God looking for?

Is there resistance to the discipline of fasting that rises up in you? Bring that resistance into the light. Which of your personal values does it bump up against?

What does "loosing the chains of injustice" look like in our world today, both domestically and internationally? A few questions to focus your reflection:

- What chains of injustice exist?
- What yokes?
- Are there captives to be set free?
- Are there hungry to be fed, wanderers to shelter, naked to clothe?
- How do you most commonly respond to those in need?
- If you don't know of any situation or anyone who is in this type of need, what can you do to connect with someone who fits this?
- Is this something you will sincerely seek to do? When?

Activity: Write your definition of "loosing the chains of injustice" in today's world.

Day 5: Digging Deeper

And now for the promise, the joy that comes if we choose to be the people who care about what God cares about and works toward His purpose. There is HOPE!

Re-read Isaiah 58:8-9: “Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer, you will cry for help and he will say: Here am I.”

Imagine that you were in the midst of a time of anguish and that the Lord answered you this way with great speed and power. How would that change you? How would that affect you?

Great news, you’re in “famous” company. Look back at Isaiah 61: “You will be called oaks of righteousness...” What would you be called right now? Would you be a great oak or possibly a pine, a poplar tree, or something weaker? What name would you bear, in all honesty? Does this name resonate with who you are and who you long to become? Does it proclaim the anointing of the Spirit on your life?

Here's a list (not exhaustive) of biblical Characters who “missed the mark” yet experienced redemption. Pick one or two whose “rebellion” you identify with and prepare to share their story of redemption.

- Nicodemus (John 3:1-10; 7:37-52; 19:38-42)
- The rich young ruler (Not many of us North Americans think we're “rich,” and the Bible does not actually use the term to describe this young man. Still, there may be similarities between you and the young ruler in Matthew 19:16-26.)
- The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-28)
- Judas (Matthew 10:4 and 26:14; John 12:4; 13:2, 26; 14:22)
- David (1 Samuel 13:14; 2 Samuel 11:2-5, 26; 12:1-15; Psalm 51; Acts 13:20-22)
- Aaron (Exodus 32:1-8; Leviticus 9:8-24)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:3; 2:1; 3:3-4; 4:1-11)
- Peter (Mark 3:16; 14:37, 66-72; Acts 2:14-40)
- Moses (Exodus 2:11-15; 3:1-6, 11-15; 7:10, 14:21-31)

Day 5: Prayer of Response

Jesus, I know I’m not alone in missing the mark. Thank you for Your forgiveness. I do long to be one who fights injustice. I ask that you continue to open my eyes to recognize my own story of redemption. Empower me and increase my faith to bring your song of redemption to those who are presently voiceless. I pray You help me to help them sing again. Keep me from the indulgence of wallowing in sorrow for what I haven’t done. I rejoice that you will change me through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sixth Encounter: Day 6 Reflections

One final encounter with Isaiah 58. Can you tell we really believe this passage holds a key that will help transform our heart and this blight on God's creation called human trafficking? Keep going...you're almost through!

Day 6: Focus on the Biblical Text: Isaiah 58:9-14

“... If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you always;
He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my
holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the LORD's holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,
then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance
of your father Jacob.” (NIV)

- The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Day 6: Thoughts into Action Claiming God's Promises

Mark all the promises in red. Mark all the "conditions" upon which those promises depend in blue.

What is your response to seeing the promises connected to conditions or actions we are called to do? Is this only the "Old Covenant" (see James 2:14-26)?

Exchange the tension this raises in you for God's perspective.

Day 6: Digging Deeper

"...In a sun-scorched land you will be like a well-watered garden..." (Is. 58:11) This text is full of amazing hope! Other glimpses of hope appear in *Not For Sale*. Re-read the story of Kru Nam, who heroically rescues children from exploitation in Thailand (pp. 13-15).

What was the main obstacle she faced in her attempt to establish her safe house (p. 15)? Do you recognize the term NIMBY- Not In My Back Yard? How would you feel if a home for rescued slaves were opened up on your street? Next to your house? If not there, where *should* they be?

How would you feel if any of the following were walking in your neighborhood?

- The African-American homeless man in dirty clothing
- The Caucasian prostitute who curses as she speaks
- The Latino man living in poverty who is obviously uneducated

What are the hidden values that we operate under? Which of these matters most/least?

These reflections bring us to a very fundamental question: What is the value of a human life? Does the ability to be a consumer (i.e., buy practically whatever you want whenever you want it) affect the value of a human life? We obviously will answer NO to this question when presented with it, but how do you behave in the community around you? Take these examples and thoroughly examine your thoughts and feelings in complete honesty. (This is not a time for judgment; it is simply a time of examination. We must examine the implicit and subconscious beliefs that drive us.)

There are many other heroes that you meet in *Not For Sale*. What do all these heroes have in common? Batstone writes, "Not one of them went out looking for slavery. Each simply reached out a compassionate hand to a refugee in need or a homeless street child, and it exposed him or her to the ugly undercurrent of human trafficking" (p. 15).

Try as we may, we can't separate theory from practice. We can't fight slavery if we're not willing to walk the "darker" streets and engage with those whose life has been troubled.

This sounds scary. Anyone thinking they would like to quit now? Why should we continue? Remember Isaiah 53. Christ came to bring us His redemption song and now His redemption song has become our song; we are called to bring the song of redemption to those who are song-less, actually voiceless.

Comment [ITS10]: A hypothetical always requires the plural verb.

Comment [ITS11]: Fragment but I'm leaving it for emphasis

And look at Paul when he explains that he has learned the secret of being content in any circumstance – riches or poverty (Philippians 4:11-13). He doesn't change when the circumstances around him do. He merely responds as the Spirit leads him. Can we say the same?

Day 6: Prayer of Response

Reflect on this quote out of **Not For Sale** as a focus point for your closing prayer: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men [and women] do nothing."

--Edmond **Burke**

Comment [ITS12]: This is a minor point, but there are Burke scholars who dispute that he ever said it. I'm leaving it, though, because it appears in NFS.

Seventh Encounter: Community Gathering

** I have no idea how to draft a lesson to be led by a Bible study or Sunday School teacher. Should we cut and paste the whole discussion of the John passage (the fruit and the vine) or would John/Wex like to construct a short lesson that ties up the Intro of the book?

** I think it would be great if participants shared the personal psalms they constructed early in the week and spent time sharing their impressions of their favorite Bible character who “missed the mark” (day 5).

** WEX: This is where the suggested engagement activities should go. Both Dave and I agree that we need to give the participants something to DO each week that goes beyond prayer.

ⁱ Fasting is the intentional abstinence from all food for a specified time. One may fast as a part of mourning, repentance, prayer, and the worship of God. Generally, the impetus situation is at an elevated height, the person's physical needs pale in light of the individual's concern for the matter at hand. Fasting is a sign of humility before God and results in ministry to others. In Isaiah 58, God instructs that fasting is more about a person's heart than their outer piety. Fasting is not for show but for sacrifice. An expanded view of fasting can include abstinence of things and activities so that one will use the time it would take for a meal or activity to focus on one's relationship with God. Biblical fasting is accompanied by inward obedience and submission to God (His nature and commands).