

Student Work

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## True Fasting

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Anneke Wind

February 5,  
2017

## Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 112:1-9 \[10\]](#)

[Isaiah 58:1-9a](#)

[Matthew 5:13-20](#)

[1 Corinthians 2:1-12](#)

A few years ago, I took part in a “technology fast.” I was not allowed to use any kind of electronics for 24 hours—that meant no TV, no computer, and no phone. As someone who uses these things daily, it was difficult. There were a few times when I almost failed and reached for the computer to look something up. I itched to scroll through others’ posts on the internet, or to watch my favorite show on Netflix when I was bored. I was truly shocked by how hard it was for me to give up these things.

Back in the Old Testament, the Israelites fasted by giving up food, not technology. However, just like I could not go through 24 hours without cheating, they struggled with their fasting, too. They often could not do it perfectly. Isaiah calls attention to their inability to perfectly keep the fast in Isaiah 58:1-9. He said, “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists” (v. 3-4). Having to give up something that you are used to having around can really take a toll, and the Israelites felt that in their fast.

But Isaiah also reminds us of what *true fasting* is: denying ourselves and helping those in need. Shifting the focus from ourselves to others is an act of selflessness, which can be difficult sometimes. It is not always easy to put some things aside to give help to someone who needs it, but it’s also something we are called to do as new creatures in Christ. Denying ourselves and our wants opens up our time to serve others; Isaiah added that, when we serve, “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” (v. 7-8). By giving our time to others in need, we are glorifying God and letting His light shine in the world. We show His love through our actions, by striving to live as He did.

We know that we can’t always do what is commanded of us—everything we do is tainted by sin—but we can rest in the assurance of Christ and his perfect sacrifice for us on the cross. He denied himself completely, both in his life and in his death. He never turned from those in need, and showed the ultimate denial of self in his death. And now, in light of that sacrifice, we can live and serve in his name as new creatures in Christ. Our new identity allows us to glorify Him each and every day by helping our neighbors.

“Your will be done” was Jesus’ prayer to God in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:42). Let that be our prayer as we go out and serve, today and every day.