

How to Change Your Life Today

Well, shoot. The great thing about blogging my way through Seven is that it's kept me motivated and accountable. The bad thing is that I've been stuck—absolutely, unquestionably stuck—in two little chapters in Isaiah. Which has been life-changing for me as a human, but as a writer has me circling the same ground every day which I fear might seem redundant. And yet—this is the ground.

The ground. This is the ground where ethereal principle messes with Bo's to-do list. For me, there is nothing worth more than these 14 light bulb verses in Isaiah 58. So, here's today:

“If you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. ... You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again” (Is. 58:9-12, MSG).

This passage makes me want to cry tears of happy gratitude because it's chock-full of the thing I love most: answers. When our lives feel faded and dim, these words tell us exactly how to flip the switch. Exactly. It's not a bit fuzzy or deep. We don't need a master's in Hebrew to get it. It's brilliantly clear.

Feeling in the dark? On the sidelines? Out of touch with the purposes and heart of God? Here you go:

- Treat people like people instead of like profit.
- Stop pointing fingers at other people's problems.
- Be very generous with the hungry and hurting.
- Care deeply about those who are discouraged.
- Be available to your own family.

Then, says Isaiah (translated masterfully by Eugene Peterson), the lights will turn on. Then you'll start to see what you've never seen before and feel what you've never felt before—and these things will be good, like He is good.

I know. It seems a lot is missing from this list, doesn't it? No tithing. No quiet time. No attendance charts. But I suspect when we start by doing the right things in the right way, the rest of the doing becomes clear as well. Because this list? Is discipleship. It describes a person who is growing the very heart of the very God inside His chest. It paints the picture of a person ignited by a supernatural spark for the purpose of warming a stone-cold world.

I firmly believe that the more we begin to think and act and love like God the more we think, love and act like God. Profound, no? The more we give, the more we discover we have to give. The more we love, the more we find worth loving. The more we do life His way, the more we understand His way.

Maybe it's the hunger talking, but I'm feeling simple enough to believe in this list today. And the only problem I see with it—the only teeny, tiny problem—is that every single bullet point is easier to memorize than it is to, you know, do. I'd rather read the whole book of James than do James 1:27.

I'd rather plunk 10 percent in the offering plate than open up a room in my home to someone who has nowhere to go. I'd rather speak at conference than put my computer away at the dinner table. So, this is me on day seven of *Seven* saying, "Mercy, I have a long way to go! A long, long way."

But I'm so thankful for these days of going without, because they have helped me see the places in my soul that were already starving and I didn't even know it. And I am determined to weave fasting into my life in a more systemic way. I hate it and I need it. Not for divine arm-twisting, but for personal soul-shifting.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of the newly released *Beautiful Battliefields*. She was on the last day of a week-long fast with her church. She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Ore.