

## **Earnestly Seeking God for Restoration through Prayer and Fasting**

One author has said of fasting that it is "rooted in the history of God's" people. It's a practice that is affirmed and established in the pages of Scripture and as well as in the experience of believers throughout history. In Ezra 8, we find one of the many examples from Scripture of God's people fasting as Ezra calls the them to seek God through fasting as they prepare for their journey to Jerusalem. Let's take a look at Ezra 8 and then consider what role fasting might play for each of us as we continue to trust God for restoration.

### **Read Ezra 8:15-36**

1. How would you summarize the flow of events in these verses?
2. In verse 21, Ezra proclaims a fast. Why?
3. What seems to be going on in verse 22, when Ezra says that he was ashamed to request from the king protection for the journey?
4. Verses 21 and 23 indicate that Ezra called the people to a fast so they might seek God. What is it about fasting that helps in seeking God?

### **Read Isaiah 66:2; Psalm 35:13**

5. What is it about fasting that humbles us? And why is humility important in our seeking of God?

Brian said:

One way to prepare spiritually is to be clear about why you are fasting. The heart of fasting is always about seeking God. It's not about earning brownie points from God. It's not about twisting His arm by showing Him how serious you are. It's not about impressing others. It is about seeking God. Make sure you are clear about this. If you are not doing it for this reason, it would probably be better to not fast.

6. How can we be sure that we are fasting out of right motives?

Brian said:

Though fasting is never commanded in the New Testament, it is clearly modeled and affirmed. And so when we look at this example from Ezra it is clear that Ezra 8 affirms that fasting is a way to seek God for what we need. And since this is true, I want to suggest that fasting may be something that you want to consider as you seek God for what you need on your journey to restoration.

7. Do you have any experience with fasting? If so, what has been your experience with this spiritual discipline? How has it helped you to seek God?

8. As you consider fasting as a way to seek God, what are your thoughts about giving it a try?