

GRACEPOINT CHURCH

Weekly Devotional

Forward in Faith: Prayer and Fasting
By Rev. Ian France

Scripture

Ezra 8:21-23

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

Observation

Chapter 8 of the book of Ezra lists the exiles who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra. There were 1496 men in this number but no Levites were among them. So, he sent men back to Babylon to fetch some Levites and some responded. Ezra proclaimed a fast for himself and his companions so they could humble themselves before God and they prayed to Him for His protection whilst they travelled. Ezra did not want to appeal to the king for soldiers and horsemen to give them protection because he had told the king that God's hand was upon them and He would protect everyone who looked to God. But God's anger would be against those who turned from Him. So, they fasted and prayed and God answered their prayer. They needed protection because there were real dangers ahead. They were carrying a great deal of treasure back to the temple and so they turned to God. The group started their journey on the 12th day of the 1st month to go to Jerusalem and they arrived safely in Jerusalem 4 months later.

Icebreaker:

What are your hopes and dreams for 2026?

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Application

- Return: Where would you like to return to? What place does this location have in your heart? What happened to encourage you to leave? What role did God have in your decision at that time?
- Rebuild: Where do you feel God is leading you in this New Year? Have you wandered away from His plans for you? What would it mean for you to follow God's guidance during 2026?
- Fasting and prayer requires humility: Do you practice fasting? What challenges you about it? What would it take for you to do this? What would you fast? Are you willing to humble yourself before God and fast?
- Making room for God in your future: How do you feel about prayer? Do you depend on God above all other support you may have available to you? Why/why not? When do you turn to Him for help? Are you prepared to listen to Him as He guides you into 2026 and then follow His lead? Do you have any hesitation in doing this? Why?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Spend some time committing 2026 to God in prayer together. Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

Take steps this week to follow these two spiritual disciplines. How will you fast? When will you pray? Make a note of what happens and share it with the group in prayers of praise next time you meet.

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/ezra-8/>

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