

COMING HOME

A STUDY OF EZRA



WEEK 7: PROVISION AND PROTECTION

Read the Text

Ezra 8

21-23: Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, “The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.” So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

31-32: Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way. We came to Jerusalem, and there we remained three days.

Main Point

When God calls you to do something, what is your response when you face fear or opposition? In this chapter, we see how **God calls ALL of us into His work** – even the underdog; and even when fear or opposition are imminent. We learn from the

Israelites that the most unassuming people can be used for God's purpose, while sometimes the most religious are actually the most resistant. Through the response of the Israelites, we see how **our response to God's calling should always start with fasting and prayer**. As the Israelites walk in obedience (albeit with struggle and missteps along the way), **we see God's provision and promise become fulfilled**. After 70 years of exile, God brings His people home.

Reflect Together

1. **Who is God?**: God calls all of us into His work. The Israelites show us by example that before we enter into that calling, we should start with fasting and prayer. Why do you think that is? What do you think God's purpose is for having us start with those spiritual disciplines?
2. **What has He done?**: We see God provide for His people by bringing them out of exile and showing favor to them along the way. Where in your life have you seen God provide and fulfill His promises? What role did prayer and/or fasting play in that?
3. **Who are you?**: Just because God calls us into something doesn't mean it's going to be easy. How do you typically respond when fear or opposition invades your path of calling? What does that response say about your hope and trust in the Lord?
4. **What are you to do?**: How is God inviting you to trust Him more with the plans and calling He has for you? What would that look like? Is there a specific example that you're dealing with right now where you could seek His guidance?

Abide Together

What role does fasting and prayer play in your MC right now? How can your MC incorporate these practices into your time together? Consider spending an evening going through Doxa's [Praying with Others](#) spiritual formation guide.

Mission Together

Throughout this series, we've talked about discerning God's calling on our lives. This can be a big life change, or the smallest day-to-day detail! Update one another on any specific realizations of God's calling on your lives. What is God calling you to do? Is there a relationship He wants you to pursue? A service opportunity? Some sort of sacrifice?