

FOCUSING

EZRA 8:21-23 (JAN. 18)

In our last devotional, we learned that fasting is a way to draw near to God by setting aside distractions and depending on Him. Fasting is giving up something and filling with God. In Ezra 8, we see another important reason for fasting: focusing on seeking God's guidance and protection.

Read Ezra 8:21-23. As Ezra prepared to lead God's people on a long and dangerous journey, he did not rely on soldiers or strength. Instead, he called the people to fast and focus on God's guidance and protection. Their fasting was a way of saying, "God, we need You." By choosing to go without food, they focused their hearts and attention on the Lord, asking Him to guide them and keep them safe.

Ezra and the people prayed during their fast, and Scripture tells us that God listened and answered them. This reminds us that fasting is not just about giving something up- it is about turning our focus toward God. When we fast, we quiet our bodies and minds so we can better listen to Him, trust Him, and follow His direction.

Fasting helps us remember that God is our protector and provider. As we focus on Him, we learn to place our confidence not in other people or ourselves, but in Him.

FAMILY DISCUSSION:

Discussion: Early Childhood

- Who did Ezra and the people talk to when they needed help?
- When we need help, who can we pray to?
- Fasting means taking a break from something. Why do we fast?
- Can God take care of us wherever we go?
- What is one thing you want to ask God for help with?

Discussion: Elementary

- Why did Ezra call the people to fast before their journey?
- What does it mean to trust God instead of ourselves?
- How does fasting help us focus more on God?
- What are some distractions that can make it hard to listen to God?
- What is one situation where our family could pray and fast to seek God's guidance?

INTERACTIVE PRAYER TIME:

Dependence Prayer: Each family member shares one thing they need God's help with.

Giving Up Prayer: Each person names one thing they can give up for God.

Filling Up Prayer: Each person names one thing that they can do to fill up with God.

Focus Moment: Sit quietly for one minute, asking God to help your family trust Him.

Guidance Prayer: Pray together for God to lead and protect your family in daily life.