



Title : THE FAST AND THE FUTURE

Date: September 26, 2021

WORSHIP: Sing one or two songs (either from You Tube, or someone leading worship). If you're in a public place, café or on video messaging, three to four people can share testimonies of answered prayers.
Q: What are you thankful to God about this past week?

WELCOME:
Intro: God has a plan for every person alive on this earth! God has a plan especially for our children He has entrusted to our care. But in order for God to fulfill His will, we have to do our part as parents, as church leaders to lead them to God!
Ice Breaker: Sometimes parents and children don't see eye to eye. What do you think are the differences between the older and the younger generation? (Facilitators could share values, ways they were raised, personality clashes, Canadian values versus Filipino culture, etc.)

Main Text: EZRA 8:21-23
Key Verses: 21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.
Quote: "Fasting in the biblical sense is choosing not to partake of food because your spiritual hunger is so deep, your determination in intercession so intense, or your spiritual warfare so demanding that you have temporarily set aside even fleshly needs to give yourself to prayer and meditation." - Wesley Duewel

WORD & Discussion Questions:
Three reasons why we need to FAST & focus for THE FUTURE Generation
1. We are to fast and seek God for our families most especially for God to accomplish His divine plans over our children v. 21
 Ezra, proclaimed a fast, a symbol of submission before God, of humility that without God's help in their four-month long journey from Persia to Jerusalem will not be successful. He showed to the people that they need to depend on God. Prayer and fasting is the key to this generation's survival. We live in a generation where we need to fight for God's divine plans for our children.
Q: What are the challenges you see parents are facing today when it comes to raising children?
2. Without God's help our human efforts for our children to encounter God are not enough. v.22
 Ezra on his way to Jerusalem refused the offer of King Artaxerxes for an army escort because he said that they are relying on the power and faithfulness of God to protect them on their way. He said, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him."
 Instead of relying on the king's help he sought God's help through fasting. As a church, we can all humble ourselves before our God and seek His help particularly for our children, our sons and daughters to encounter God! We need to pray for our sons and daughters to experience a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit. We need to pray that even in today's world, God is still relevant and relatable to them more than ever before.
Q: What is the difference between your parenting style today compared to your parents?
3. The challenges ahead of us is great but we can have the assurance that our God will answer our prayer. v.23
 We need to fast and earnestly pray: that our children will desire for the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit on their lives so they can be who God created and planned them to be.
 that our sons and daughters will hunger not for the things of this world but to hunger for God. *Read Jeremiah 1:4
Q: What specific things do you want God to do in the lives of your children?
Conclusion: By the powerful hand of God, Ezra's mission to bring the people over to Jerusalem was a success! There was no casualty in Ezra's group. Their sons and daughters made it back to Jerusalem and there they worshipped the Lord, the God of Israel. It's time for us as parents (and would be parents) who are leaders in our homes, it's time for us leaders in our communities and more so, it's time for us leaders in the church to arise and take our stand in prayer and fasting for our sons and daughters (the next generation). No matter how young or what age our children are, they need us to fast and intercede so that they would know how to put their trust and confidence in power of God.

Leader's Notes:
 1. Start and end on time.
 2. Facilitate discussions.
 3. Give all attendees opportunities to share. Encourage participation.
 4. Remind everyone that whatever shared in the group will be kept within the group.
 5. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit if there's someone who you can lead to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and be born again.

WORK: The Challenge & Closing prayer
Q: How can we pray for you today?
Q: Who among your loved ones or friends you think need an encounter with Jesus today? Can you list at least five names?
 Please take time in your smaller groups to pray for one another as well as pray for the names of people on your list. If there are specific needs, take time to lift them up to God in prayer as well.