

EZRA 8

PRAYER GUIDE

Welcome to Ezra 8! We are glad you are joining into this time of prayer for OPC|M. Our mission statement, "Knowing Jesus and Making Him Known," is not original to us; it is the invitation and vision God has given to every group of people who have ever followed him. You can hear the essence of this in how the psalmist prayed with his own people more than two millennia ago: "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face upon us – so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations" (Psalm 67:1-2). Nor it is original to us how we are gathering today before God to seek his kingdom, direction, and provision. Our very name for this day, "Ezra 8," comes from an often repeated scene in the history of God's people: "I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children" (Ezra 8:21). As we spend this time together, let us approach God with hearts, minds, and souls of **adoration** (for He is worthy to be praised), **confession** (for in our sin we constantly need His grace and renewal), **thanksgiving** (for He has done great things for us), and **supplication** (for our Heavenly Father longs to give us good gifts). The following will be our guide as we proceed.

ADORATION

10 Minutes

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. Psalm 145:3

The place to start in prayer is with the person of God. Indeed this is how Jesus began his model prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name." While God is accessible to us, he is beyond us, and as we begin to pray it is good to let our minds and hearts rest upon this fact. Some categories in which to think and pray are the following: God's character (holy, wise, sovereign), works (perfect, powerful, gracious), and words (faithful, consistent, life-giving).

- 2 Minutes: Silent, Private and Personal Praise
- 8 Minutes: Corporate Praise

CONFESSION

10 Minutes

"Lord, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O Lord, could ever survive? But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you." Psalm 130:3-4

When we get close to God, we quickly realize we fall short of his character and standards - both in our attitudes and actions. We tend to minimize these shortcomings, but to a holy God they are offensive and severe enough to warrant Christ going to the cross on our behalf. God desires us to come to Him, to acknowledge our sin, and to turn our face toward Him in repentance. When we do, we experience cleansing, forgiveness, and restoration. There are many examples of such prayers in the Bible. Here is an excerpt from Daniel's prayer: "O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and obey your commands. But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands... refused to listen... Lord, you are in the right; but as you see, our faces are covered with shame. This is true of all of us... because of our disloyalty to you. O my God, lean down and listen to us. Open your eyes and see our despair... We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy. O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act!" Daniel 9:3-19

- 2 Minutes: Silent, Private and Personal Confession
- 8 Minutes: Corporate Confession

THANKSGIVING

10 Minutes

We thank you, O God! We give thanks because you are near. People everywhere tell of your wonderful deeds. Psalm 75:1

God is the giver of everything good in our lives – especially the gift of himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. God also makes it clear that the particulars in our lives are the result of His power, goodness, and providence. In difficult circumstances this truth can be challenging to embrace; but being thankful to God in all things leads us nearer to him, and in this God blesses us with perspective and peace. God has done many things for us personally and as a church this year; let's remember and verbalize some of them.

- 2 Minutes: Silent, Private and Personal Thanksgiving
- 8 Minutes: Corporate Thanksgiving

SUPPLICATION

30 Minutes

Come with great power, O God, and rescue me! Defend me with your might. Listen to my prayer, O God. Pay attention to my plea. Psalm 54:1-2

God invites us to petition him for his leading and provision. Again, in his model prayer, Jesus showed us what we ought always to be praying for: *"May your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread... lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."* (Matthew 6:9-13). Let's lift up requests in the following areas:

OPC|M: That God would make us a healthy and a fruitful church

- Congregation: Faith, Unity, Health
- Leadership: Wisdom, Courage, Strength
- NEXT: Clarity, Unity, Provision
- Kids: Joy and Strength for Volunteers, Spiritual growth of Kids
- Students: New Students coming to know Jesus, Spiritual growth of existing Students
- Adults: Life-giving relationships, Unity, Depth and Endurance of Faith

Community: That God would bless this area with a hunger for God so that individuals, families, and the community at large may experience abundant life with God (*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* John 10:10).

Nation: That God would instill a reverence for Himself in our hearts/minds so that we may experience His healing and blessing (*But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Malachi 4:2*). That our leaders will lead in holiness and wisdom (*Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor. Ps. 72:1-4*).

World: That God would bring his Kingdom to every people and place (*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20*); and that God would bring His physical and spiritual blessing/protection over His Church.

Closing Comments *To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 24-25*