

Tommy Meador / General Adult

Nehemiah / Nehemiah 8:1–18

Introduction

- Teaching in China - response by church leaders - never have I seen that kind of response - an hour of weeping and praying. I didn't teach them anything they did not know, but in awe of what Jesus had done as they reflected on His Word.
- **We suffer from Bible apathy. We have** unlimited access to study Bibles, commentaries, online sermons, podcasts, and books on every Bible subject. Yet with all the options to study God's Word, do we really want God's Word to change us?
- Great Awakening - seasons in our nation where people rediscovered the power of God through the Word of God. An awakening in Israel. Temple completed, wall rebuilt, people gathered in the land. God had brought them out of exile, and now they were eager as a community of faith for God's Word to be central in their lives.
- I want the Word of God to be central in your life and in the life of our church because the Word of God reveals who God is and how He calls us to live.
- The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to transform our lives.
- This morning, I want to show you three characteristics of people who are being renewed by God's Word.

Renewed people desire to understand God's Word.

- The people need more than a city. They need the Word of God. A rebuilt city could protect them, but only the Word of God could renew them.
- All the people gather at the Water Gate - on the Eastern side of the city, a place large enough for a public gathering. This is not at the temple where it would have been difficult for all the people to gather.
- The people initiated a time of worship centered on God's Word. Ezra nor Nehemiah stood up and said, "Time for Bible study." Instead, the people asked Ezra to bring the book.
- As the people started afresh after the rebuilding of the wall, they wanted to focus on God's Word because they had experienced the consequences of disobeying God's Word.
- Ezra had returned with the second wave of Jews to bring about spiritual reform in Israel ([Ezra 7](#)). He gave his life to teaching, copying, and interpreting Jewish law. "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." ([Ezra 7:10](#))
- vs. 5 - Built a wooden platform - Ezra physically stood above the people so they could hear him, but spiritually Ezra stood with the people under the authority of the Word he was reading.
- God's Word is authoritative for us. Our lives are to be lived under the Word of God. The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words, so to disbelieve or disobey Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. (Grudem)
- **vs. 3 - Read from morning until noon - 6 hours!** Reminding people of their story. Reminded of God's Law. People not falling asleep but attentive. Think about all the ways we're distracted from God's Word. Imagine the scene - 6 hours and no one checking their watch or their

notifications on their phones or thinking about where they would go for lunch.

- vs. 5 - People stood up - A symbol of reverence and honor - what they were hearing were not ordinary words but words inspired by God and given by God.
- Vs. 6 - Hands lifted up - worship - exalting God saying, "Amen, Amen!" Amen means, "Let it be so." Or, "This is true. I receive it."
- The entire scene is a scene of reverence, worship, and submission. This is the kind of response we should have when we consider that the God of all creation has revealed Himself to us in His Word.
- **Teaching team** - walk into the crowd and help people understand what they are hearing. (Understand 6x in passage)
- People hungry to know and understand God's Word. What about you? Are you hungry to know and understand God's Word?
- People who are growing in their understanding of God's Word:
 - **Remember what the Bible is.** To understand the Bible you need to settle what you believe about the Bible. God-given NOT man-given. (Inspired - [2 Timothy 3:16](#)) Sp listen! Without error - God did not make errors in giving us His Word. (inerrant). TGod is not capable of lying to us or giving us errors (infallible). Trust His Word! God's Word is sufficient - it's what we need to know God and how to live before Him. God's Word is clear - He makes it clear to us how to have a relationship with Him.
 - **Have the right posture before God's Word.** Humility and teachability. NOT studying the Bible to win a Bible trivia contest. You can know the Bible and still resist the God of the Bible. When you open Scripture, don't first ask, "Do I like this or agree with this?" Ask, "What has God said, and what needs to change in me?"

- **Don't neglect good habits and good help.** You're not going to understand God's Word if you don't spend habitual time in God's Word.
- What's your plan? Read through five books this year with the goal of understanding and obeying?
- Who's going to help you? Obviously, the Spirit of God, but also, a discipleship group or Life Connection Group to hold you accountable.
- What if you DON'T develop the habits? Or, DON'T have the right posture? Or, DON'T have the right beliefs about the Word of God?
- If you don't your will life will be shaped by something else... If you're a parent, think of the affect that could potentially have on your home.

Renewed people respond to God's Word with joy.

- vs. 9 - The people responded to understanding the Word of God by weeping over their sin. They were convicted. Conviction is a deep awareness of where you have wronged God. [Hebrews 4:12](#) As they heard and understood the Law, they were brought face to face with their sin.
- Maybe the reason why you don't seek to understand is because the last thing you want in in your life is conviction. But, you can't have renewal without conviction.
- God loves you enough to convict you, forgive you, and correct you. ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)) Their understanding of the Word produced grief over their sin, but Nehemiah would not allow their grief to become the final word. This holy day was to be marked by rejoicing in the Lord
- vs. 9 — Nehemiah told the people to rejoice! It was not time to mourn. Why? This was a holy day; a sacred assembly before the Lord on the first day of the seventh month. This month would include the Day of Atonement and the Festival of Booths, but on this day God's people

were called to celebrate His goodness and faithfulness rather than remain in mourning.

- We rejoice because we have experienced God's faithful love through the work of the cross. All of your sins are forgiven in Christ! How much more should we rejoice?
- For us - Conviction leads to sorrow over sin, but that sorrow ultimately leads to joy as we understand the work done for us in Christ and the future we have with Him.
- Rejoice in God's Word because it gives you what you need - conviction that leads to a renewed relationship with God. Conviction drives us to Christ.
- **When the Word of God convicts you, don't run from God. Run to Christ!** This morning, some of you are convicted of sin. Will you try to hide it? Run from God? Or, run to the One who has already forgiven you and confess it to Him. Bitterness? Confess it and forgive. Pride? Confess and humble yourself. Sexual sin? Confess it, bring it to light, and cut off what feeds it. Neglect of your family? Confess it and change your priorities. Conviction is an opportunity to run to the grace of God to renew your fellowship with Him. Respond to His conviction!
- Conviction is not meant to merely make you feel bad for your sin. Conviction is meant to move you toward repentance and back to fellowship with Christ.
- **Let the Gospel produce rejoicing in you!** We tend to beat ourselves up and get down on ourselves because of how often we fail. In those moments when you feel defeated, remind yourself of the truth and rejoice. How do you rejoice? Thank God out loud. Tell someone what you're thankful for. Talk about what God is doing in your life.
- You'll enjoy God far more when you have the right view of the Gospel: what's been done for you vs. what I have to do to make God happy. For

some, no rejoicing in the Word because we still see God's Word as what we have to do rather than what's been done for us in the Gospel.

Renewed people obey God's Word.

- This wasn't a one time event - the second day they studied. Moved from large group, to small groups, to homes (vs. 13). Fathers wanting a better understanding of the Law so they could teach their families ([Deut. 6](#)) - What if this is what happened in our church? What we talk about hear simply spilling over into our homes?
- Vs. 14 - Live in booths? Weird - hadn't done that in years. But, annual festival where Jews built temporary shelters to remind them how God had provided for them and protected them in the wilderness. God provided for them in the wilderness when they had no permanent home and then faithfully brought them into the Promised Land. It was a reminder that their security did not ultimately come from walls or cities, but from God who faithfully carried them through the wilderness.
- 15th of month - "Let's do it. Get the word out." This generation of Jews had not celebrated the festival of booths as a full community like this since the days of Joshua, but it's what the Law said. If God says it, you do it. Immediate obedience.
- Is that your attitude? If God says it, do it. ([1 John 2:4-6](#)) Or, is your attitude, "I'll obey when nothing else works out for me." Obedience = last resort to try to get God to work like we want instead of an immediate response to His grace.
- Your obedience demonstrates:
 - You believe God loves you.
 - You believe God knows what's best for you.
 - NOT - I have to get God on my side or off my back.

- **Where are you trying to negotiate with God rather than simply obeying Him?** Negotiation = “I’ll forgive when that person apologizes.” or, “I’ll give more when I get a raise.” “I’ll serve more when life slows down.” “I’ll have that hard conversation when I feel ready.” Delayed obedience is a form of disobedience.
- **What step of obedience do you already know God is asking you to take?** Not... What do I need to learn from God’s Word next, but how do I need to respond to God’s Word right now? What do you need to confess? Who do you need to forgive? What conversation do you need to have? How do you need to start leading your family?
- Israel’s problem was never merely a lack of information. They had the Law. Their problem was that they could not faithfully keep it. [Nehemiah 8](#) gives us a beautiful picture of obedience, but by chapter 13 they are failing again. The Old Testament leaves us longing for someone who will obey where we have failed.
- Jesus - obeyed God fully - Temptation - He responds with the Word - [Matthew 5](#) - He came to fulfill the Law - Sermon on the Mt. - You can’t do this without me! And we can’t.
- Jesus went to the cross as a perfect sacrifice - took our punishment — rose again - and gave us His Spirit who now works in us so that we can obey God in response to his grace.
- This morning, if you have not placed your faith in Jesus Christ, turn to Him by faith in repentance from your sins.