

Nehemiah: freenotfree
Week 7 – freedom comes from reading

Transition: Last week we covered a specific topic that appears in various chapters in Nehemiah (as opposed to continuing to work our way through the text). That topic, of course, was giving. The idea of giving is visible at the end of chapter 7, but it is also seen in chapters 5, 10, and 13. Through an overview of these passages, it is evident that Nehemiah was a man who feared God and whose chief desire was to live for Him. And since he himself had experienced and benefited from God’s generosity, he lived generously and taught God’s people to do the same.

Context: The walls have been built. Watchmen have been assigned. The city is secured. People are giving. But the restoration project is not complete. The focus of the people now shifts from fearing for their safety and lives, to how the people of God ought to live. As we will see from our reading and study this week, when God’s people are starving for Him, He will meet them and fill them and restore them by once again instilling them with hope.

Opening Question:

- Think of a time when you were reading the Bible and it “came to life” for you. What was the passage? Describe the experience.
- Why do you think so many Christians struggle with regularly reading the Bible? What are some ways that you’ve found that help you to read it regularly?

Scripture/Storying: Nehemiah 8

Discipleship Questions:

- Read Nehemiah 8:1-12 again. How would you describe the state (hearts/minds/attitude) of the people as they prepared to meet with God? What sticks out to you as being especially important?
- Do you do anything special to prepare yourself for hearing from God (through the reading of His word)? If so, what do you do?
- Ezra and the Levites played a significant role in helping the people understand the Scriptures. When you struggle with understanding a difficult passage, what do you do?
- One of the responses of the people was to mourn and weep when they heard the word of God. Why do you think they were mourning and weeping? When has hearing the word of God affected you in this way? Why/when is it an appropriate response?
- Then the Levites (under the direction of Nehemiah and Ezra) came along and told them to stop weeping, but to rejoice instead. What was their reason? Why is holiness a cause for rejoicing? When has it caused you to rejoice?
- Read Leviticus 23:33-43 out loud. (This is what the Jews would’ve heard at the reading in Nehemiah 8.) They may have also read Deuteronomy 16:13-17. (Read that too.) What do you learn about this feast? Why was it to be a time of celebration and rejoicing? What stands out to you that would have made it a very special occasion?
- What celebrations do you keep? What celebrations help you to remember the goodness of the Lord?

Prayer time: Pray that God will increase your hunger for knowing Him through the reading and hearing of His word.