

“Steps To Spiritual Renewal (Nehemiah, Part 7)”

Text: Nehemiah 7:1-8:18

In the first 6 chapters of Nehemiah the focus was on reconstruction. The emphasis shifts in chapter 7 as the focal point becomes re-instruction—we move from re-building the wall around the city to re-building the people. Three myths about the Bible get demolished in Nehemiah 8. The first myth is that the Bible is too confusing to read. This myth gets demolished in Nehemiah 8:1-8 where we see that the Bible, instead of being confusing, is actually a Book that we can comprehend. A second myth is that the Bible is too dry and too boring to study. This myth gets demolished in Nehemiah 8:9-12 where we discover that the Bible is anything but dull. A third misconception is that the Bible is impossible to apply. Some wonder if the Bible has any relevance to today's world. This misconception is corrected in Nehemiah 8:13-18 where we are shown many ways we can apply the truths of Scripture.

Hallelujah, we can understand the Bible (8:1-8)! The Bible can and must be understood so that It's life-changing power can be released. Nehemiah 8 describes how the people came together in a spontaneous gathering eager to hear God's Words. Ezra read the words from the Book of the Law for 6 hours a day for a week. The Levites joined with Ezra the priest to help instruct the people and give them understanding. To help you better comprehend the Word of God:

- Pray before you begin your time of study/reading in the Word of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and to make sure the condition of your heart is like good soil
- Use a translation that is accurate and understandable
- Grab a notebook and write down how the Word is speaking to you
- Be attentive during preaching/teaching times
- Read the passage ahead of time that will be studied/taught
- Make sure your heart is hungry for God's Word

Hallelujah, we can rejoice in the Bible (8:9-12)! The Bible is not boring to study; It is alive, active and powerful and pierces deeply into our innermost being. Like the people of Nehemiah's day, we should weep with conviction and grief when we are confronted with the truths of God's Word. It's through the Word that we become aware of sin. Hearing the truths of Scripture help us to see the beauty of God and the ugliness of our own hearts. The same Word that convicts us leads us to repentance which results in forgiveness and then brings us joy! It's as wrong to mourn when God has forgiven us as it is to rejoice when sin has conquered us. To help you better rejoice in what you understand from the Bible:

- Instead of focusing on how you've messed up draw your attention to what God has done on your behalf. If you've repented and confessed your sins the Bible says you are forgiven and free—so move on with joy!
- Look for ways to share what you have with others

Hallelujah, we can obey the Bible (8:13-18)! The Bible is not impossible to apply. Through the Spirit's power and by the grace of God we can live out the Bible's truths and principles on a daily basis. We don't have to make the Bible relevant, It's already relevant. We will discover great joy when we fully obey the Lord. Instead of just following part of what God wants, we need to completely obey the instructions found in Scripture. Fully obeying, even without fully understanding why God asks what He requires, is the highest form of trust in the Lord. We will have *very great gladness* when we fully obey God's Word! To help you better apply God's Word:

- Pray and ask God to change you as you read and understand the Bible
- Don't just study the Bible to compile information—take what you've studied and see how God wants you to apply it
- When God reveals something to you: don't delay, don't attempt to negotiate with God, and don't just go halfway

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. Hallelujah! We can understand the Bible!
2. Hallelujah! We can rejoice in the Bible!
3. Hallelujah! The Bible is relevant and we can obey It!
4. Every time you hear/read the Holy Scriptures honor these sacred words as the very Words of God.
5. Share the Scriptural truths you are discovering with others.
6. Determine to be fully obedient to the Word that you hear/read/study.