

We continue our study of the Israelites as they came out of exile in Babylon to rebuild the temple, the walls, worship, and protect the heart of what God was doing. **Chapter 8** begins with revival as they come together with a longing for God and His Word.

Nehemiah 8:1-3 *And all the people gathered as one person at the public square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it before the public square which was in front of the Water Gate, from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.*

Revival begins with unity and a coming together. *And all the people gathered as one person...* They wanted to see a move of God.

Five steps to revival:

1. Restore unity amongst His people. Unity is the responsibility of every believer to each other. If there is a distance in relationship, then it must begin with me. **Psalm 133:1** *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity!* Division has the enemy in the midst. Our lack of unity prohibits the blessing of God from being experienced. It is that important. We must place unity above our preferences to see revival. The people of Israel had a hunger to see God move. Do we?

2. Our attitude about God's Word must change. **Nehemiah 8:5-8** *Then Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" with the raising of their hands; then they kneeled down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites explained the Law to the people while the people remained in their place. They read from the book, from the Law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. They stood as a sign of reverence and respect for the Word. The Bible is the actual Word of God, has value, is perfect, and is given to us by God. We make excuses about understanding and applying to this time. **2 Timothy 4:2-4** *Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But as for you, use self-restraint in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* If God's Word is only a suggestion, then it loses its power. To see revival, we must revere the Word of God and live by it. Through His Word, we are sanctified, made holy, changed to His image, and are able to get rid of sin. Being holy comes from revering God's Word. Revering God's Word leads us to being holy. The enemy comes to undermine God's Word. The Word begins with an enemy questioning God's Word for Adam and Eve. Reverence to God's Word leads to understanding of the Word. It is not about how we feel. Treat it as the ultimate authority in our lives.*

3. Apply Scripture to our lives. Nehemiah 8:9 *Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Law.* Reading the Word with humility and understanding will convict us of sin. The people wept over the revealing of the Word. Applying God's Word to our lives brings revival and intimacy with the Lord. We will miss the power if we listen just for the words. Sometimes we listen to only what is important to us or to what another person would benefit. But God speaks to our own lives and we need a heart to hear. When Ezra read the Word, they wept as they heard the Word applied to them. Lay ourselves bare before the Lord. **Luke 5:8** *But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"* **James 4:8-10** *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.* It must penetrate every part of our lives. The enemy wants us to compromise. Revival must allow scripture to be applied to every part of our lives. Don't avoid the Word's conviction, as it leads to repentance, and repentance to forgiveness, forgiveness leads to joy.

4. Conviction leads to Joy. Nehemiah 8:10-12 *Then he said to them, "Go, eat the festival foods, drink the sweet drinks, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your refuge." So the Levites silenced all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." Then all the people went away to eat, drink, to send portions, and to celebrate a great feast, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.* The law always produced an opportunity for grace. Conviction brings confession, which brings God's forgiveness and goodness, resulting in joy.

5. God renews an obedience to His Word. Nehemiah 8:13-18 The festival of booths was celebrated together as a reminder of God's provision in the 40 years in the desert. Apart from God's instruction this didn't make sense. They didn't live this way - in booths. God's Word says that *the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.* **1 Corinthians 1:18.** We do what God's Word calls us to do no matter what it looks like to others. Obedience follows revival.

Are you struggling with something? Instead of trying harder, try loving greater. Elevate Jesus in your life. Commit more to Him. Revival has to begin at obedience. Over 800 years had gone by without celebrating this feast. But they obeyed the Word. **Nehemiah 8:17** *The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths. Indeed, the sons of Israel had not done so since the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was very great rejoicing.*

Great rejoicing is available to those who follow God, revere His Word, and walk in obedience. **James 1:22** *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only...* Allow the Word to penetrate our lives.

Is there a relationship that needs repair?

Is there a disunity in our own hearts toward God's Word?

How important is the Word in your life?

How have you applied God's Word this week?