

Nehemiah—Building for the Future

STUDY 8

National revival

Nehemiah Chapter 8 Introduction

As we have journeyed through this significant time in the life of Nehemiah, we have covered some fantastic principles. We observed a leader's prayer life, examined methods Nehemiah used in leadership, his mobilizing of teams, the strategy he employed when facing external opposition or dealing with internal division, when all hell broke loose, he pushed on to victory. We witnessed his great generosity and how he motivated others to be the same. After an extraordinary offering of gold and silver for the temple ministry, we now witness an outbreak of spiritual revival!

Chapter eight is an appropriate climax to conclude our study in the life of Nehemiah. By the transforming power of God's word Nehemiah leads his people into a wonderful national revival. People are up at dawn each morning to listen to the word of God being read and taught. Everybody stopped their regular work for over a week, and many camped around the temple. Thousands repented with tears as God's word brought conviction. People responded to God with reverent worship, exuberant praise and celebrated His goodness together. A nation is transformed by the holy Scriptures. This week we learn 5 principles concerning sharing God's word and 5 principles about responding to God's word.

Opening Discussion Questions

What are the ways you try to get the Bible into your life?

What do you find easier, reading God's word or living God's word?

As a group read Nehemiah 8:1-18

In these opening verses we notice that Nehemiah is happy to step out of the limelight and have appropriate leaders move into their public roles; yet another positive character quality of Nehemiah. Ezra is the key player in chapter eight. He is the author of the book of Ezra and served as both a scribe and priest, in Hebrew his name meant "help." (Zondervan NIV. Exhaustive Concordance, Second Edition. Edward W. Goodrick & John R. Kohlenberger 111. Zondervan. Copyright 1999. Page 1463.)

1. Consider Nehemiah 8:1-3a. Wow, six hours straight of listening to God's word. How important do you consider the public reading of Scripture, or quoting from the Bible? Why do you come to that conclusion?

2. Read 8:3b. How did the people respond to the reading of God's word and how do we apply that today?

3. Examine Nehemiah 8:4-5. What sort of aid had been created to assist in the communication of God's word and why?

3a. What aids do you consider useful in the communication of God's word today?

4. Consider Nehemiah 8:6. After the reading of God's word, how did the crowd respond? What do we learn from this?

5. Examine Nehemiah 8:7. It seems likely that after a substantial time of reading the Scriptures, Ezra then invited a team of Levites to instruct or teach the people. Why is it important to have a team of teachers or Bible study leaders?

6. Read Nehemiah 8:8. What did the Levites endeavour to do as they opened the Scriptures?

7. Reflect upon Nehemiah 8:9. It seems the word of God has brought conviction of sin, and a great weeping with tears of repentance has come over the crowd. Nehemiah 7:66 indicates that there were probably more than 40,000 Jews present. This is a classic scene of a national spiritual revival! What do you think it would have felt like to be there?

8. Read Nehemiah 8:10-12. After Ezra and the Levites can see the people have deeply repented, what do they encourage them to do?

8a. What are the people told will be their strength?

The reading of Scripture on the second day (Neh.8:13) reminded the people that halfway through this seventh month they were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the three most important feasts, the others being the Passover and Pentecost. The idea was to make temporary dwellings, celebrate the harvest God had blessed people with and focus on worship, the holy Scriptures and fellowship. A bit like an extended version of a modern-day church camp! (Unger's Bible Dictionary, Merrill F. Unger. Moody Press Chicago. Copyright 1985. Page 359.)

9. Consider Nehemiah 8:13-15. Having discovered or been reminded of an important teaching from Scripture, what were those who had learnt that truth encouraged to do?

10. Read Nehemiah 8:16-18. What percentage of the Jewish nation participated in the described event? How long did it last? What did they spend their time doing?

10a. During historic revivals church services often run daily, many people greatly reduce their hours of work, there is a tremendous focus on God's word, worship and prayer. God's truths are shared throughout the whole community. The whole nation of Jews had become deeply God conscience!

How would you feel about such a phenomena taking place in the municipality or city where you live?

In summary we have learnt 10 great principles about Gods word.

Five principles when sharing God's word:

- A. When sharing God's word, read it aloud (Neh. 8:1-3a).
- B. When sharing God's word, use aids to help (Neh. 8:4-5).
- C. When sharing God's word, use a team to teach (Neh. 8:7).
- D. When sharing God's word, explain it and apply it (Neh. 8:8).
- E. When sharing God's word, encourage people to pass it on (Neh. 8:13-15).

Five responses to receiving God's word:

- A. Your response to God's word: listen attentively (Neh. 8:3b).
- B. Your response to God's word: exuberant praise and reverent worship (Neh. 8:6).
- C. Your response to God's word: repent of sin (Neh. 8:9).
- D. Your response to God's word: joyfully celebrate (Neh. 8:10-12).
- E. Your response to God's word: throw yourself into the full revival experience! (Neh. 8:13-15).

How could you get the Bible more deeply into your life? Tick the

boxes you plan to include:

- Personal quiet times in the Bible.
- Making listening to the preaching of God's word at church a priority.
- Joining a small group Bible study.
- Listening to the Bible online or on CD.
- Completing a Bible college subject.
- Going to conferences with Bible based preachers.
- Watching or listening to sermons on YouTube
- Enjoying movies that are accurate portrayals of Bible stories.

Conclude your time by praying for a city-wide revival, knowing that a great turning back to God's word will be key.

Study Notes: