



Week Seven – Nehemiah: 52 Days

CONNECT

- How long does it take you to read something you enjoy learning about? Why do you think it takes you this amount of time?
- How long does it take you to read something you do not enjoy learning about? Why?

WORD

Nehemiah 8:1-18 (NIV)

¹all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.²So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.⁴Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam.⁵Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up.⁶Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.⁷The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah— instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there.⁸They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear^[a] and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.⁹Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.¹⁰Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”¹¹The Levites calmed all the people,

saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.”¹² Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

¹³ On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the teacher to give attention to the words of the Law. ¹⁴ They found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month ¹⁵ and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: “Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make temporary shelters”—as it is written.¹⁶ So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves temporary shelters on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷ The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.¹⁸ Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

THOUGHT

Reading the word of God is essential for our relationship with Christ. Currently there seems to be a lack of interest in reading. With music, media and the newest apps changing our lives, reading a book sounds archaic. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra publicly reads the word of God. The response of the crowd was overwhelming, they wanted to hear God’s word more. As followers of Jesus we must discipline and have boldness to read and declare the word of God over our lives.

DISCUSSION

1. Why did the people come “together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate”?

2. How did the people react to the words of Ezra? How would you have reacted if you were there?

3. How can we develop the kind of responsive hearts that are needed to profit from God’s Word?

4. How can a non-studious type develop a hunger to read and study God’s Word?

5. How can we guard ourselves from the spiritual pride that often accompanies knowledge (see 1 Cor. 8:1)?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

- Spend time writing down a spiritual goal for this week to accomplish.
- Set time this week to start a Bible reading plan.

PRAYER

- Ask God to help you love and read His word more.
- Ask God to make you a student of His word.