**A TIME TO REJOICE**

**Nehemiah 8**

**THE BIG IDEA: When God’s people devote themselves to His word (Bible) and worship Him faithfully, God will *renew* their joy.**

**WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE HUNGER FOR GOD’S WORD (BIBLE) THEIR JOY WILL BE RENEWED**

* *“They asked the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord had given Israel.”* (Nehemiah 8:1b)
* **The Bible is God’s Holy Word which teaches us all we need to know about God and ourselves, yet almost 7 out of 10 Christians do not read it daily.**
* *“All the people listened attentively to the book of the law.”* (Nehemiah 8:3b)
* **Truly knowing God, finding joy, forgiveness, peace, and purpose are rooted in the Bible.**
* Jesus -  *“It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* (Matthew 4:4)

**WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE A HOLY REVERENCE FOR THE LORD THEIR JOY WILL BE RENEWED**

* *“As he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, ‘Amen, Amen!’ Then they knelt low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.”* (Nehemiah 8:5b-6)
* **The almighty God of the universe and creator of heaven, earth, and all that is in it including you and I, deserves our reverence rather than our disregard.**
* *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.”* (Hebrews 12:28-29)

**WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE REMEMBER THE LORD’S FAITHFULNESS THEIR JOY WILL BE RENEWED**

* *“Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, ‘Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ 11 And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, ‘Be still, since today is holy. Don’t grieve.’ 12 Then all the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them.”* (Nehemiah 8:9-12)
* **If we allow our circumstances to overwhelm us, we will find ourselves filled with discouragement when we should be celebrating the goodness of God.**
* *“The Israelites had not celebrated like this from the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day. And there was tremendous joy.”* (Nehemiah 8:17b)
* **Reflecting on the goodness and faithfulness of God is key to overcoming the cares of this world.**
* *“I will remember the Lord’s works; yes, I will remember your ancient wonders. 12 I will reflect on all you have done and meditate on your actions.”* (Psalm 77:11-12)

**CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Ice Breaker:** What is something that you tried to do in your life that you were surprisingly good at, or were better at than you expected?

**Start thinking:**

* What do we learn about God from Nehemiah 8?
* What changed that caused the Jews to now want to be devoted to the Word of God again?
* Why do you think the Jews had such a renewed reverence for the Lord and His word?
* Even though the Jews had neglected God and brought shame on themselves, why were they instructed to not grieve, but to celebrate and rejoice?

**Start sharing. Discuss in depth to create openness.**

* What interferes with your commitment to reading/studying the Bible? How can you overcome those interferences?
* How would you describe having “reverence for the Lord?”
* How would you say you are doing at showing a holy reverence to the Lord in your daily life? What do you need to do differently?
* What are some ways God has shown Himself faithful in your life?
* What is your big takeaway from this message?

**Pray**

* Share prayer requests and pray for each other.
* Pray for our community to be open to the Gospel.
* Pray for our church, and leadership.
* Pray for our government leaders, and local leaders.
* Pray about anything else the Holy Spirit leads you to pray