

The One and Only Key to Revival Nehemiah 8

Introduction:

1. Webster's defines "revival" as the state of being revived.
 - **Illustration:** A person is lying on the street after a car wreck and has stopped breathing. That person's greatest need is to be revived. They need revival.
2. You hear a lot of talk today about the current state of the church in America and the need for revival. Well-meaning people write books and articles and attempt to come up with answers to how the church can be revived (usually deals with methodology).
3. Here in our text, this courageous group of Jews, led by Nehemiah, rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem. Here in chapter 8, an incredible revival breaks out among the people.
4. What led to this revival? It is the same thing that is always the center of true revival. It is the Word of God. If a church or individual is to exude the life and vitality of Jesus Christ, it will only come by means of the Word of God.
5. It is God's Word that brings spiritual life to a person (salvation), and it is God's Word that brings the manifestation of that life (after salvation). **2 Timothy 3:15-17**
6. There were four responses to God's Word that brought revival to these people's hearts. These four responses are still the key to revival today.

The people desired God's Word. vs. 1-3

1. There is a key phrase in verse 1 that reveals the heart of these people. They said to Ezra, "...bring the book..." They wanted to hear the Word of God.
2. Is your Christian life cold, dead, and lethargic? Do you know where revival begins? It begins with your heart saying, "Bring the Book." You come out of that lethargic condition by desiring God's Word. You realize the Bible is the answer! **1 Peter 2:2**
3. As Ezra read the Bible, the people were **attentive** to the Bible. vs. 2-3
4. These people hungered for God's Word. This is one of my prayers I pray consistently for all of you - that you will hunger for God's Word. **Acts 17:11**
5. In Nehemiah's day, copies of God's Word would have been scarce, so they depended solely on their spiritual leaders to read and explain it to them. Today, you can easily have your own copy of God's Word to read and study as often as you desire.
6. Revival will not come apart from a desire for God's Word.

The people respected God's Word. vs. 4-6

1. Ezra stood on an elevated piece of wood with spiritual leaders on both sides (vs. 4), and opened up God's Word (vs. 5). As he did this, the people spontaneously stood up.
2. As Ezra blessed the Lord, the people worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. vs. 6
3. I don't want you to get caught up in the physical actions of the people. I want you to see their hearts in this. Their hearts were full of reverence and respect for God's Word.
4. They knew it was different than any other book. It was God's Word that God had communicated to them.

5. This reminds me of the attitude the Thessalonian believers had towards God's Word.
1 Thessalonians 2:13
6. God's Word brings revival when you approach it with this kind of an attitude.

The people understood God's Word. vs. 7-13

1. The Levites (assistants to the priests) caused the people to understand God's Word.
vs. 7
2. Verse 8 is a beautiful description of what should be going on in churches today.
 - They read the Bible distinctly, gave the sense (explained it), and caused the people to understand the reading.
 - How pitiful that so many people go to church today and leave the church not understanding any more of the Bible than when they walked in.
 - Maybe they were entertained, maybe their consciences were soothed by the performing of religious rites and rituals, but they leave spiritually ignorant of God's Word.
3. The Bible is not a book designed to sit on a table as a relic, or to be devotionalized to provide warm and fuzzy feelings. It is a book to be used, studied, and understood.
4. This is the emphasis of our church. We desire to teach you God's Word so that you understand it, and hopefully whet your appetite to dig in for yourself. **Acts 17:2**
5. Your Christian life will not operate on the basis of ignorance. You must be made intelligent through a proper understanding of God's Word, rightly divided.
2 Timothy 2:15
6. When the people understood God's Word, it brought two reactions:
 - First, they wept and cried as the light of God's Word revealed their sins. vs. 9
 - Second, they rejoiced because they finally understood God's Word. vs. 10-12
7. My friend, God's Word **will** show you your sin, but it doesn't leave you hopeless. God's Word reveals the answer to us today - it is Jesus Christ. **Romans 3:20-22**

The people obeyed God's Word. vs. 14-18

1. As they were reading and studying God's Word (vs. 13), they suddenly realized that during this particular Jewish feast, Israel was to dwell in booths made of tree branches.
 - This was to commemorate their period of wilderness wandering when they lived in temporary shelters.
2. This had not been observed in over 1,000 years. It certainly wasn't an easy or convenient command to obey. Yet, they found it written (vs. 14), so they went forth and obeyed what God's Word said (vs. 16).
3. What was the result? Look at the end of verse 17 - great gladness!
4. We can read and understand God's Word, but if we don't obey its life-giving words, there can be no manifestation of the divine life of Christ through us.
5. Freedom from the shackles of sin comes as we hear and obey God's Word.
Romans 6:17
6. There must be a personal application of God's Word to our lives. If not, our knowledge has no benefit. **1 Corinthians 8:1b**

In Conclusion:

1. When we hunger for God's Word, approach it as God's Word, understand God's Word, and then obey God's Word, do you know the result? The result is spiritual energy, vitality, and life.
2. God's Word is the one and only key to revival. God has no plan B.