

The Gift that Keeps on Giving: Be a Student

Nehemiah 8:1-12

December 27, 2009

Becoming mature by the word of God

* Chisel Video - 9 minutes

This whole series that we are in...it is simply answering the question, how can I look more like Jesus...because what God really wants from me. What He desires of my life is to look like His son, Jesus.

- Be Holy
- Be a Servant
- Be Worshipful
- Be a Student
- Be Loving
- Be Accountable

Today, we want to discover how God can chisel away at our own lives, so that we become more like His Son, Jesus. We want to give God the gift of being a Student, someone who is willing to grow in His Word, chiseling away the stuff in our lives that keeps us from moving, growing and living for Him.

Nehemiah 8:1-12 - Making a shift today from Gospels to looking at the OT...creation to the cross.

- This whole year gospels...in 2010 we are looking at the OT
 - Many of you grew up thinking the OT was done, finished because we have the NT
- John 5:39 - **"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!"**

1) In October, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey.

- Revival starts with the Word! Returning to what God has asked of you! What God has done for you.
- It's why we continually push each other to read this book...keep after it.
- The public reading of scriptures was required by law to be read every seven years, since the exile, it had probably been neglected.
- The people asked for it to be read! They were hungry! They came together for the one purpose of hearing God's Word, the Law
- This idea of being a student isn't a matter of filling your head with more knowledge, but finding out what God has for you and wants from you!

2) So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. 3) He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.

- The Israelites were gathered, not for ceremony or just a religious exercise, but they needed to know how to live, the morals of the law.
- They came as families
- Early morning till noon!!! Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy!
- Creation, Fall, The Promise to Abraham & Sarah, Joseph & his brothers, the Exodus and coming out of Egypt, Battles, failures, successes, the 10 Commandments, the Law!
- This rich history, incredible story of God and His people...and here they were!!

4) Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. To his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. To his left stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5) Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.

- This group of people and others would assist Ezra in teaching the law, helping others understand.
- Notices what happen as Ezra opened the book...they rose to their feet!
- It's not just a book. It's more than just words on a page...it represents, it is the very words of God!
- So guilty of taking it for granted...
- We've got it on our phones, on our computers, internet, on CD, MP3, 3 versions plus on the shelves at home...we've taken the idea that the Word of God should be spread, should be something that we can access as much as possible...we've developed the idea that the Word of God is a tool, which it is, but...it is more.
- I can read, study, dig in, write, underline, mark, tab it as I grow...but if I lose heart on what this really represents to me...go to verse 6.

6) Then Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and all the people chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

- This was a moment, something would be different about these people, about this community, about this city in the hours, days, weeks to come!
- They recognized that what they needed more than anything else was to hear the Word of God!
- You ever been away from God for so long that your next first encounter...you simply can't show your face?
- We've lost what this book truly represents.

7) The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—then instructed the people in the Law while everyone remained in their places. 8) They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

- Don't know if they stood up again after bowing down
- They read from the book AND!! YES!! Clearly explained the meaning!
- Preaching or Exegesis vs. Proof texting

9) Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, “Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God.” For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

- Why the weeping? Conviction? Guilt? Sorrow for what they've missed? FEAR?
- Grace
- I love the peoples reaction...its right, its healthy, but I love Ezra's and the others reactions too!
- I love this in my children. They get in trouble. Dad lays down the law, shares with them what they did wrong. Tears come. I'm okay with that. They are healthy tears. But I never end there with my kids. There is mercy and grace, we move on with our lives and don't live in the guilt. I'll say, "It's done."
- They give the people some instructions on how to live out of this moment!

10) And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!”

11) And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, “Hush! Don't weep! For this is a sacred day.” 12) So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God's words and understood them.

- Celebrate! Joy of the Lord is our strength!
- Feast, celebrate. Share for those who didn't have!
- Great joy because they had heard God's words and understood them!

3 Practical Steps from today's passage to be a student:

- 1) Grow your desire and hunger for God's Word (Prayer, others, just read!)
- 2) Do this as a Family (The Big Idea, Discussion Guides)
- 3) Put God's Word as a priority for 2010 (Studies, personal reading, etc)

- PRAYER

- INVITATION