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Nehemiah 8 - 10

Ever Changing, Never Changing Part 18

"Building up our Spiritual Walls"

Pastor Gary Hamrick

It's easy for us to become so preoccupied with the physical, that we neglect the spiritual. We work hard at our jobs, we raise kids, we pay bills, we work out, and we try to eat right, which are all good things. But, what are we doing to take care of our spiritual lives? What are we doing to feed our souls? In today's study from Nehemiah 7 - 10, we see how the Israelites shifted their attention from the physical (building the wall of Jerusalem), to the spiritual (building up their lives spiritually). There were three key disciplines that the Israelites practiced in order to build up their lives spiritually, and these three things are the topic of today's study with Pastor Gary Hamrick.

The Priority Of The Word

1. With the physical work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem having been completed, there was a decided shift toward an emphasis on spiritual matters.
2. **Nehemiah 8:1-3** - *"When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. So 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. He 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."*

3. **Nehemiah 8:8** - *“They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.”*
4. **Nehemiah 8:13** - *“On the second day of the month, the heads of the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law.”*
5. **Nehemiah 8:18** - *“Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God.”*
6. It’s important to remember that by the time these events took place, it had been more than 100 years since the Jews had been reading the Word of God!
7. Pastor Gary said: “This [hearing the Word of God] was fresh and brand new to everyone there. The revelation of God’s Word. Do you realize [and] understand the significance of what you hold in your lap? [It’s] the Word of God. [It’s] the God-breathed revelation of himself. To express his love to us. [It’s] God’s love letter to [us]. [It’s] the revelation of God, breathed by the Spirit of God, to help us understand the person of God - that he loves us - and the purpose of God, that he has a plan for us.”
8. **Deuteronomy 32:47** - *“They are not just idle words for you - they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”*
9. **1 Peter 1:23** - *“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”*
10. **Isaiah 40:8** - *“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”*
11. **Matthew 24:35** - *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*
12. Pastor Gary said: “We need to read [the Bible]. We need to get it into our hearts. Please don’t just think that just coming Sundays or Saturday nights or Wednesdays [are] enough. We need the Word of God to get into our hearts, because it is life changing. Nothing else can change the human heart like the Word of God. I have seen alcoholics and addicts become sober because they started reading the Word of God. I have seen self-centered men become godly husbands and fathers because they started reading the Word of God. I have

seen insecure women become confident and godly women because they started reading the Word of God. I have seen fearful people and people without hope and people without direction become, because of the Word of God, people who are secure, people who have hope, and people who have a purpose in their lives, because they started reading the Word of God. I have seen average people – like you and me, sinners before God – who understand because of the revelation of God, that [they] are sinners and [they] need grace. And, [when they] give their life to Jesus [they] have their sins forgiven, [they] have the hope of heaven when [they] die, all because [they] read and understand the Word of God.”

13. **Psalm 19:7-8** - *“The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.”*
14. **Nehemiah 8:10-12** - *“Nehemiah said, ‘Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ The Levites calmed all the people, saying, ‘Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve.’ 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 that had been made known to them.”*
15. The Bible brings out joy in the life of the Christian!
16. Pastor Gary said, “Happiness is the absence of problems; joy is presence of God’s peace in spite of our problems... Joy is not dependent on circumstances.”
 - a. **Hebrews 12:2** - *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*
 - b. The basic definition of joy in the Bible is a calm delight in the Lord, knowing that the Lord is in control and we can rest in him.
17. We must make the Word of God a priority in our lives.

The Necessity Of Confession

18. **Nehemiah 9:1-3** - *“On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth¹ and having dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all*

¹ Pastor Gary likened wearing sackcloth to wearing a burlap sack!

foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God."

19. When the people heard the Word of the Lord, they started to mourn, because they were broken over their sin.
20. Pastor Gary encouraged us to fast from time to time, if we are physically able to fast, because fasting helps us focus on the Lord.
21. The people wore uncomfortable clothing made of goat hair as a reminder of being in a time of mourning and grief over their sin.
22. The Jews were grieving and mourning over their sins and the sins of their fathers.
23. It's important to note that they were not taking responsibility for the sins of their fathers; they were simply acknowledging the sins of their fathers.
 - a. There are some Christians who "buy into" the belief of a generational curse, which is the idea that the sins of your parents will be passed down to you and you are destined to repeat them.
 - b. **Exodus 20:4-6** - *"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."*
 - i. In that day three or four generations lived under one roof, so the point is that one spiritual leader can have an effect on everyone living within that single family.
 - ii. **Jeremiah 31:29-30** - *"In those days people will no longer say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eat sour grapes - his own teeth will be set on edge.' "*
 - iii. **Ezekiel 18:1-4** - *"The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the*

father as well as the son - both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.' ”

- iv. Pastor Gary said the equivalent in modern terms would be: “If Dad eats too much candy, his kids are going to get cavities!”
 - c. We need to reject this type of thinking because there is no Scriptural basis for the notion that we are responsible for our parents’ sins nor are we destined to repeat their sins.
24. It is vitally important for every Christian to confess his or her sins to the Lord, and keep short accounts with him.
25. When we confess our sins to the Lord, we are agreeing with him concerning his standard of what is right and what is wrong.
26. **1 John 1:9** - *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*
27. Confession brings the benefit and blessing of having a clean conscience before the Lord, as well as being in right relationship with him.
28. **Psalm 32:5** - *“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ - and you forgave the guilt of my sin.’ ”*
29. **Nehemiah 9:16-17a** - *“But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands. They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.”*

The Opportunity Of Giving

30. **Nehemiah 10:37-39** - *“Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our grain offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work. A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and oil to the storerooms where the articles for*

the sanctuary are kept and where the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the singers stay. 'We will not neglect the house of our God.' "

31. Giving is a discipline of the faith because our human nature is instinctively greedy and materialistic.
32. **1 Timothy 6:10** - *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*
 - a. Paul was saying that the potential for materialism is so real that it might rob us of our relationship with the Lord!
33. God is a giving God, and his generosity is singularly remarkable!
 - a. **John 1:12** - *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."* (Emphasis added)
 - b. **John 3:16** - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (Emphasis added)
 - c. **Galatians 2:20** - *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Emphasis added)
 - d. **Ephesians 5:2** - *"... live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* (Emphasis added)
 - e. **1 Corinthians 1:4** - *"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."* (Emphasis added)
 - f. **James 1:5** - *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."* (Emphasis added)
 - g. **James 1:17** - *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights..."*
34. Being greedy, stingy, hoarding, and materialistic are the antithesis of who the Lord is!
35. Pastor Gary cautioned against embracing the tenets of the consumer-oriented and entitlement-oriented culture in which we live.
36. We should be a giving person, as well as someone who serves others in Jesus' name!

37. [2 Corinthians 8:7](#) - *“But just as you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us - see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”*

Summary

38. We must continue to build up the “spiritual walls” of our lives.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Nehemiah 6:15-16](#) and [Nehemiah 7:1-3](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the ways you are being intentional about giving first place to the Word of God in your life?
4. Do you have a dedicated time and place for daily Bible reading?
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about reading the Bible. (See #12 above)
6. Share examples of the ways the Word of God is making a difference in your life.
7. Do you see the Lord as a judge who is intent on meeting out punishment or do you see the Lord as a judge who is willing to extend forgiveness to those who seek his forgiveness?
8. Read and discuss [1 John 1:9](#), [Psalm 32:5](#), and [Nehemiah 9:16-17a](#). (See #24 through #29 above)
9. Provide an overview of the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared, which demonstrate the Lord’s incredible generosity. (See #33 above)
10. What are some of the ways you are being intentional about the giving of your “time, treasure, and talents”?
11. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).