



*Ministry of
Biblical Studies*

Reset

APRIL LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES
"10 Steps to Spiritual Renewal"
April 17th, 2024

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Welcome to the Metropolitan Community Church
Ministry of Biblical Study Classes
April 17, 2024

“Is It Time for a Spiritual Reset In Your Life?” (cont.)

**3. Learning the Word: Renewal Requires Learning and Knowing the Word.
Neh. 8:7-8. (cont.)**

- The Jews suffered because they failed to learn and follow God’s law. Through the prophet Hosea, God lamented that His people had suffered because of their lack of knowledge of God’s law: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” (Hos. 4:6). Their lack of knowledge of God’s law had also led to their exile: “Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude is parched with thirst.” (Is. 5:13). If you don’t know God’s law, you may slowly slide into behavior that God has defined as sinful. Are you studying God’s law to protect yourself?
- The parallels to the rediscovery of God’s law under King Josiah. During the evil reigns of King Manasseh and King Amon, the Jews lived in open rebellion and failed to follow God’s law (2 Chr. 34:14-18; 2 Kgs. 22:8-10). During the reign of the reformer King Josiah, the high priest found the “the book of the law” during the eighteenth year of his reign, in 621 B.C. The book of the law was another term for Moses’ Torah or the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. If the book had been lost, this suggested that Manasseh had tried to purge God’s Word from Judah during his evil reign. A copy of the Torah had to be kept next to the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies (Dt. 31:26). Only the high priest could enter the holy of holies (Lev. 16:2, 34; Heb. 9:7). Thus, this copy of the Torah was beyond the reach of Manasseh and Amon. Without the rediscovery of God’s Word, renewal could not have truly begun. As led by the Holy Spirit, Ezra, Nehemiah, the priests, and the people all followed in Josiah’s example.

- God's Word was meant to be studied by all. God commanded that each leader of the Jews was required to write a copy of the law to guide his actions (Dt. 17:18-19). God also commanded that His law be read to the nation once every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles (Dt. 31:10-11). But the Jews had failed to study God's law as He commanded. God wants you to learn from the Jews' mistakes. In order to allow the Holy Spirit to renew you, you need to study and learn God's law and His Word.
- Memorize God's Word. The Jews frequently sinned because they forgot God's law. To avoid making the same mistake, God wants you to hide His law and His Word in your heart: "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You." (Ps. 119:11). "The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip." (Ps. 37:31). "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart." (Dt. 6:6). "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jer. 31:33). If you hide God's law and His Word in your heart, the Holy Spirit can guide you and convict you of your sins.
- Be a teacher of God's law and His Word. The Shema, or the Jewish call to worship, included a call for every believer to teach God's law to their children: "7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Dt. 6:4-9). This is a common theme throughout Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:9-10; 5:31; 11:19). This commandment is also repeated throughout the Old Testament: "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6; Ps. 78:4-6). It is also repeated again in the New Testament (Eph. 6:4). "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid

food." (Heb. 5:12). Yet, failing to properly teach God's law can lead to judgment: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." (Jam. 3:1) Will you study God's law and Word so that you can teach it properly?

4. Repentance: Renewal Requires the Conviction of Sin and Repentance. Neh. 8:9-11.

- God's law convicted the Jews of their sins. God's law convicted the people of their sins. But Nehemiah, Ezra, and the priests encouraged the Jews to celebrate the holy day: "9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then he said to them, 'Go, eat the festival foods, drink the sweet drinks, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your refuge.' 11 So the Levites silenced all the people, saying, 'Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.'" (Neh. 8:9-11). Although their actual repentance is not expressly stated in the text, it is implied. Without it, Ezra and the priests would not have encouraged the Jews to be joyful and celebrate God. Reading God's law revealed to the Jews their sins. They had spent 70 years in exile because their ancestors had failed to observe God's law. The Jews feared God's wrath for their continued disobedience. But God's mercy and grace was bigger than the Jews' sins. Thus, the leaders encouraged the people to celebrate God on this holy day of revival.
- God's Word convicts of sin. God's Word is able to pierce the heart and convict a person of their sins. "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb. 4:12). "'Is not My word like fire?' declares the LORD, 'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?'" (Jer. 23:29).

"Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth." (Hos. 6:5). The Holy Spirit then convicts the person of their sins: "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;" (Jo. 16:8). During King Josiah's similar revival, the Holy Spirit convicted him regarding the failure of the Jews to follow God's law (2 Chr. 34:19-21; 2 Kgs. 22:11-13). He feared God's wrath after hearing of the discipline that God promised to inflict upon His people if they disobeyed Him (Dt. 28:14:15-68). He knew that God is faithful to keep His Word. The Jews felt a similar conviction, and they feared that God would repeat His judgments.

- The conviction of the Word can lead to spiritual revival. God does not want to condemn people with His Word. Thus, once the people were convicted of their sins, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the priests encouraged the Jews to celebrate God's mercy and grace with a change in their behavior: "2 Timothy 3:16 tells us two things the Word of God is profitable for: reproof and correction. Our knowledge of our sin should never be bigger than our knowledge of Jesus as our savior. We are great sinners, but He is a greater savior. Therefore, the joy of the Lord is your strength - even when you are being convicted of sin. When we are convicted of sin we know that God is doing a work in us, so we can be glad and take joy. . . . The people felt sad, because they were aware of their own sin. But they could walk in joy because God was doing a great work." Revivals frequently begin with people hearing God's Word and repenting of their sins. If you are seeking renewal, it begins with reading the Word. God wants you to then repent of your sins and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your path.
- If a nation repents and turns back to God, He will deliver it. God promises to deliver any nation trapped in its sins if the people repent: "and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chr. 7:14). It is the role of the Church to pray and be His salt and light in leading the nation to repent. Are you fasting and praying for our nation to repent?

