



*Ministry of
Biblical Studies*

Reset

APRIL LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES
"10 Steps to Spiritual Renewal"
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Welcome to the Metropolitan Community Church Ministry of Biblical Study Classes April 3, 2024

“Is It Time for a Spiritual Reset In Your Life?”

While studying the book of Nehemiah, Dr. David Jeremiah discovered a simple and profound blueprint for spiritual renewal that made all the difference in the lives of God’s people back, then, and it is just as relevant today —the need for spiritual revival.

This bible study will help us discover practical ways to reignite our walk with God. Take the RESET challenge and begin your own spiritual renewal journey as we study the “Ten Steps to Spiritual Renewal”.

Introduction: The Jews wanted to have their nation revitalized. Building the walls would bring security from foreign attacks. But spiritual renewal would not begin until the Jews’ transformed their hearts. After Nehemiah led the Jews in rebuilding the walls, the Holy Spirit moved upon the people to seek out the great teacher Ezra to read God’s law, found in the first five books of the Bible. God’s Word transformed the hearts of many leaders and the people.

From these events, God reveals seven lessons on spiritual renewal. For spiritual renewal to be successful, it must include: (1) the Holy Spirit, (2) worship, (3) knowing God’s Word, (4) repentance, (5) gratitude, (6) a desire for a deeper understanding of God through His Word, and (7) obedience.

First, the Holy Spirit moved upon the people to request that Ezra read God’s law to them. Renewal also requires a willingness to be led by the Spirit and the Word.

Second, Ezra blessed God, and the people worshiped God. Renewal also requires a desire to worship and honor God.

Third, Ezra and Nehemiah could not lead a revival on their own. They needed priests to teach and explain the law. Today, any believer in Jesus Christ is part of His royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). Renewal requires a desire for people like you to learn and teach God's Word.

Fourth, God's Word convicted the people of their sins. Renewal also requires the conviction of sin and repentance.

Fifth, the Jews expressed their gratitude for God's mercy and grace. Renewal also requires gratitude for God's mercy and grace.

Sixth, the elders came to Ezra to gain an even deeper understanding of God's law so that they could better serve God as leaders. Renewal also requires that you seek a deeper understanding of God's Word.

Finally, for the first time since Joshua, the Jews followed the ordinances for the Feast of Tabernacles by living in booths. Renewal also requires a desire to obey God's Word out of love, not obligation. Living in booths also symbolized dependence on God. For the Jews' obedience to succeed, they had to depend upon Him. If you hope to succeed in obeying God, you must also learn to depend upon Him.

1. Being Spirit-led: Renewal Requires a Willingness to be Led by the Spirit. Neh. 8:1-3.

- Led by the Spirit, the people acted with one accord to request the reading of God's Word. After the rebuilding of the walls and God's commitment to rebuild the population of Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit moved the people to renew their hearts for God: "1 And all the people gathered as one person at the public square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel.

- 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read from it before the public square which was in front of the Water Gate, from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law." (Neh. 8:1-3). This gathering began "on the first day of the seventh month." (Neh. 8:2).
- This was during the Feast of Trumpets, New Year's Day on God's civil calendar (Lev. 23:23-25; Nu. 29:1-6). It was a day that celebrated the new beginnings that only God can offer. God commanded that His law be read to the nation once every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles, which the Jews would soon celebrate: "Then Moses commanded them, saying, 'At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing.'" (Dt. 31:10-11). But the Jews had failed to study and learn from the law as God commanded. Here, the important role of the Spirit in the Jews' revival is stressed. The Spirit gathered: (1) all "the people", (2) to act "as one person"; (3) to seek out the teacher Ezra, (4) to "ask" for God's Word to be read to them; (5) to "listen with understanding," (6) for six hours, and (7) to remain "attentive" during the teaching.
- **Ezra's Spirit-led calling to teach God's Word.** This is Ezra's first introduction in the book of Nehemiah. Ezra was a descendant of the High Priest Seraiah (Ezra 7:1), the last High Priest of Judah before the exile (2 Kgs. 25:18; 1 Chr. 6:15). As a Levite, he had a right under God's law to lead the Jews in spiritual matters. In 458 B.C., nearly 60 years after the completion of the Temple, God appointed Ezra to lead a second wave of returning Jews to the Promised Land. This happened during the reign of Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus I (circa 464 – 423 B.C.) (Ezra 7:7-8).

In 445 B.C., the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1). Between 445 B.C. and 425 B.C., Nehemiah led the Jews in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Ezra and Nehemiah together led the Jews in preparing their hearts for the Messiah. The Hebrew word for "scribe" (NASB/ NKJ) (Neh. 8:1) is listed in some translations as "teacher." (e.g., NIV). Because books did not yet exist, many teachers learned the law by transcribing it. This allowed for God's Word to be preserved and disseminated to the people. Instead of offering new revelations, like a prophet, the scribe or teacher helped to apply God's Word. By Jewish tradition, Ezra had memorized the law and could write it from memory. Thus, he was an expert in the Mosaic law and how to apply it under the changed circumstances. He was "learned in the words of the commandments of the Lord and His statutes to Israel." (Ezra 7:11). He was like Paul, who later declared that he was "educated at the feet of Gamaliel in the strict ways of our ancestral law." (Acts 22:3). But Ezra and Paul never served as high priests. Moses was also a Levite who never served as high priest (Ex. 2:1-10). Instead, Moses was a man of faith who came to give God's law following the first exodus. Ezra came to reintroduce God's law following the second exodus. Thus, to some Jews, Ezra is referred as their second Moses.

- It is the duty of every believer to learn God's Word. The word "people" appears thirteen times in the first twelve verses of this chapter. This was meant to stress that a nation's spiritual renewal requires the involvement of all God's people if it is to be both meaningful and long-lasting. "Nehemiah 8 emphasizes that all the people of God must know His Word. Surveys have shown the appalling lack of biblical knowledge among Christians today. At the same time there is a deep hunger for the Word among Christians. Religious leaders today must take seriously their responsibility as shepherds to feed the flock (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28-31; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2). Paul's command to Timothy is still valid for ministers, 'Preach the Word!' (2 Tim. 4:2); and James' word is valid for all believers, "Be doers on the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" (Jam. 1:22, NRSV). This chapter also stresses the need for exhortation based upon the Word (Neh. 8:9-12).

Ezra's helpers explained the meaning of the Law and its relevance for the people in their situation. They first understood their need for forgiveness; then they needed an explanation of God's forgiveness and His grace." (Mervin Breneman, *The New American Commentary*, Vol. 10, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (B&H Publishing Group 1993) p. 230-231) (*italics in original*).

- God's Word and the Spirit will guide your steps. The Jews knew to seek God's Word and a great teacher to guide their steps. God's Word can be a lamp to guide your steps as well. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Ps. 119:105). "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." (2 Pet. 1:19). The Holy Spirit also takes the Word and applies it to the unique circumstances of your life to guide your path. "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." (Jo. 16:13). Are you reading the Word and praying for the Holy Spirit to guide your steps?

