

Nehemiah 8 Student Supper notes

Overall structure

- v1-8: Listening with reverence to God's word
- v9-18: Responding with obedience to God's word

Extra text notes

(I would recommend watching the video first - many of the details of the text are referred to there, and this is really intended to give a bit more depth on a couple of points for you as leaders. Lots of this may well not come up in your study but just in case!)

- v9: as well as conviction of sin, the people may be mourning their situation under Persian rule. The two go together – in chapter 9, it's clear that they have understood from the Torah that their exile was a result of their sin.
- v9-12: of course, it is right to grieve over sin, and to feel that deeply. Much more on that next week. But the focus here is on not grieving inappropriately, to the detriment of rightly rejoicing in the Lord. For us it may not be so determined by the calendar, but it's still possible for us to inappropriately despair over our sin if we never move through grieving to rejoicing in God's mercy.
- v12: what did they now understand?
 - Perhaps the significance of the "holy day" as a day for rejoicing.
 - Perhaps a deeper grasp of God's character from what they'd heard from the Torah, which enabled them to rejoice despite their conviction of sin.
- v14: you can read about this festival in Leviticus 23:33-43. Particularly v39-43 correspond to Nehemiah 8 – notice the command to rejoice in v40.
- v17: saying they hadn't celebrated the festival like this since Joshua is probably hyperbole – the author probably intends to draw a comparison between the journey back from exile and the original journey into the Promised Land.
- v18: notice that again God's word is central to their celebrations.

Suggested questions

(1 is the most important question. 2&3 then focus in more specifically on particular details – you could choose to just do one of them, probably better to follow one all the way through than to do a bit of both.)

1. What do we see in this chapter about their attitude to God's word?
 - a. What might it look like for us to have that same attitude to the Bible? (Try to be specific – eg think about your own Bible reading, listening to sermons, etc)
2. What do verses 9-12 show about the importance of rejoicing as God's people?
 - a. Are you more likely to not grieve enough over your sin, or to end up despairing over your sin?
 - b. How does remembering God's character help us rejoice even when we're convicted of our sin?
3. How might the physical celebrations in v13-18 have helped the people remember God's provision?
 - a. What might be the equivalent for us of festivals like this? (*starter for 10: communion*)
 - b. How can you make the most of those things?