

# A Greater Restoration

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Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. like that, and there was more that he needed to be doing to bring about restoration in the world, to help people understand and experience the good news and the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

And I hope that that one conversation, which encouraged me greatly, is also taking place across our congregation. Amen? That God is using this story of Nehemiah to say, what are you doing in the world? What has God called you to do? Again, you don't have to change the world, just change someone or something in the world for the glory of God. And so that's what this series has really been about, is encouraging and challenging us to be a part of God's restoration work in the world. Now, this evening, we're going to shift here to what really the next few chapters in Nehemiah focuses a lot more on personal restoration, spiritual restoration, than that of restoring the city of Jerusalem itself. And what you're going to discover tonight, have you ever wondered why we do some of the things that we do? Have you ever wondered why I'm standing on a platform up here? Why the Scripture is right here, centrally located in this worship service?

[ 3 : 5 6 ]    Why here in literally just a few seconds, I'm going to ask you to stand for the reading of God's Word? You're going to see tonight in this passage, kind of a template for some of the things that we do.

We're not doing this just out of tradition. We're doing this because we see it in the Word of God. So with that, let's turn our attention to Nehemiah 8. I'm going to read just the first three verses, but we'll look at several verses here in this chapter. And I'm going to ask you to do what?

To stand, if you're able to do so, for the honor of reading God's Word. Nehemiah 8, verse 1 says, And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate.

And they told Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra, the priest, brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could understand what they heard on the first day of the seventh month.

That was the Jewish New Year. And he read it from facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday in the presence of the men and women and those who could understand.

[ 5 : 11 ] And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this time that we get to be together this evening, that we get to hear your Word.

And I'm praying for us as a church, for us individually, as we just sang that you would revive us again. Revive us.

Breathe your Spirit upon us. Awaken our hearts to who you are and what you have called us to do in your name. And we ask this all for the glory of Jesus.

And I pray it in his name. And God's people said, amen. Amen. You can be seated. Faith family, if you can't get your children to eat their food, just paint it. That's exactly what happened at a kindergarten in the Gongshu province of China.

According to the BBC and several other news outlets, the kitchen staff at this school was having a hard time getting the students to eat the food that they were serving.

[ 6 : 16 ] So rather than cooking different food, they decided they would purchase a dye or a paint, and they would just paint the food to brighten it up, to make it look more appealing to the children.

Now, when the staff approached the principal about purchasing the dye, he said, no problem, just go buy it online. And they did. And everything seemed to be working fine.

The kids started eating the food. There seemed to be no problem at all. Until 233 children all got sick at the same time.

And they not only got sick, many of them were hospitalized with severe stomach aches and leg pains. After the doctors did the necessary test, they discovered that the kids had lead poisoning levels over 2,000 times higher than the food safety limit.

And to make matters worse, the kitchen staff knew they were doing it. When the staff was investigated, they tried to hide all the paint supplies and bribe the local authorities to cover up the story.

[ 7 : 35 ] But when the paint supplies were eventually found, they were all clearly marked inedible. Do not put in mouth.

Meaning, the staff had full knowledge that what they were serving the kids while looking good on the outside was actually harmful to their health.

Now, let's be honest. That's a troubling story. Amen? But it's a troubling story, but it's also something that you and I all struggle with. And what I mean by that is not that we would ever be tempted to knowingly poison someone.

What I mean is, every one of us is tempted to be more concerned with how things appear on the outside than how they really are.

Amen? I mean, think about it. It's why people will do plastic surgery. They want to appear externally as young when really you're old.

[ 8 : 38 ] All right? Or you think about a home improvement project where people just want to cover up, just paint over the problem rather than actually fixing it.

I imagine a time or two you've baptized yourself in cologne or perfume to give yourself the appearance of smelling nice only to cover up your B.O., right?

Or here is something that we have all done, right? You know this. Some of you have even done this tonight. You have put on that fake smile to make it look like you're okay when you're actually in pieces inside.

Every one of us has the tendency to focus on the external and neglecting the internal. Amen? That is true for all of us in one way or another.

Now, the same thing happens if we're not careful spiritually. The Bible is full of warnings about this. For example, look at what God says in Isaiah 29, verse 13.

[ 9 : 45 ] And the Lord said, this people draws near with their mouth, and they honor me with their lips, while, say it with me, their hearts are far from me.

In other words, it looks good externally. It appears as though you're worshiping me. You sing the songs, though some of you don't even do that, but your heart is not engaged.

Or look at what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23, verse 27. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you are like whitewashed tombs, which what?

Outwardly appear beautiful. You're just like that Chinese food. You outwardly appear beautiful, but within, you're full of poison. You're full of dead men's bones and uncleanness.

So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within, you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Jesus warned of this very thing when it came to prayer.

[ 10 : 51 ] In Matthew 6, verse 5. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be what?

Seen by others. It's an external show. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. In other words, faith family, it's easy to paint our lives with religiosity when our hearts are actually restless before God.

Let me say that again. It's easy to paint our lives with religiosity, going through the motions, keeping the rules, singing the songs, when our hearts are restless before God.

This really is, ultimately, the difference between religion and a relationship. Amen? Religion is just going through the routines. It's just going through the motion rather than actually having an intimate relationship with God, which is what God desires with each of us.

Let me tell you this tonight, and I hope you're listening. God cares more about your heart than He does your appearance. God cares more about your heart than He does your appearance.

[ 12 : 06 ] And this is what we're going to discover here in Nehemiah chapter 8, and really it's going to go all the way through chapter 10. Now let me set the stage for us. You remember in chapter 1, Nehemiah hears word that Jerusalem is in ruin, that it's a devastation.

He knows he needs to do something. He begins to pray and fast for several months. Then in chapter 2, he takes his request to King Artaxerxes, and the king gives him everything that he asked for.

In chapters 2, 4, and 6, we look at the opposition that Nehemiah faces. As soon as he gets to Jerusalem, he faces threats and rumors and all types of opposition to shut down the work.

In chapter 5, he deals with the disunity of God's own people as they're taking advantage of one another. And yet through all of this, Nehemiah is able to inspire a group of ordinary people.

We looked at them. Names you don't know how to pronounce. Names you've never heard of. These aren't Moses and Joshua or people like that. These are names you've never heard of that Nehemiah brings together with a diversity of gifts to accomplish an extraordinary work of God.

[ 13 : 22 ] Everybody with me? Say yes. That's what we've looked at thus far. Now, by chapter 8, by chapter 8, the work is finished. So after all these years of building and working, Jerusalem finally has a...

Big, beautiful wall. I couldn't resist. I couldn't... It's just too easy. It was too easy. It's too easy. Jerusalem has a big, beautiful wall.

And it looks awesome. The city has been restored. They are now externally protected. So here's my question.

Why doesn't the book end? Why doesn't the book just stop? Because as I'm reading along, I know, listen, that the mission back in chapter 1 was to restore Jerusalem.

Are you tracking with me? The issue for Nehemiah was he knew the city of God needed to be rebuilt. It needed to be restored. So now that it has been restored, why does the book continue?

[ 14 : 31 ] And here's why. Because in chapter 8, the people of God come to realize something very important. And here it is. True restoration is not rebuilding a wall.

True restoration is reviving the heart. Let me say that again. This is so important. True restoration is more than external.

It's not just rebuilding the wall. It's reviving the heart because God cares more about walls. He cares about your heart. He wants His people to be right with Him.

After all, the city was originally destroyed and the people taken into exile not because they were lacking anything externally.

Why did the destruction happen in the first place? Why did they face this ruin? Why were they taken into exile? Look at 2 Kings chapter 17 and verse 13.

[ 15 : 34 ] Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer saying, Turn from your evil ways. Keep my commandments and my statutes in accordance with all the law that I have commanded your fathers that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

But they would not listen. They were what? Stubborn. You ever been stubborn? Do you know someone who's stubborn?

They were stubborn. They wouldn't listen just as their fathers had been who did not believe in the Lord their God. In other words, the real issue was a heart issue.

It wasn't an external issue. It's that the people's hearts were worshiping other gods and not listening to the one true God. And that's why the ruin took place.

Meaning, if all you do is restore the wall, you haven't addressed the real issue. Because the real issue is a heart issue.

[ 16 : 38 ] And what happens here in Nehemiah's chapter 8, 9, and 10, so we're going to take just a few weeks to look at this, is that the people of God experience what is often called a revival.

I don't mean a tent with sawdust floors or a week-long preaching series that you have at the church. They experience a spiritual awakening with God.

And I'm just curious this evening if there's anybody here that needs that. That as you think about your own life, you could use a fresh breath of God upon you.

You are in slumber. You're not listening. Your heart is restless. And you want to just say, Lord, revive me. Revive me.

Breathe into my life. Let there be awakening take place in my heart. How many of you would say that even for our church? Listen, listen. Faith family is not dead.

[ 17 : 39 ] I mean, listen to this place tonight. It ain't dead. And I love you for it. But wouldn't we also pray, Lord, come and do a work in this place that is truly a sense of revival, an awakening.

How many of you would say that for the state of Minnesota? Yeah. Does the state of Minnesota need a reawakening of God? You betcha, right?

And what about our nation? And in other words, what I'm trying to stir up in you is that what I want over these next few weeks as we look at Nehemiah 8, 9, and 10 is that our prayer would be that of Psalm 119.

My soul is laid low. Revive me according to Your Word. God, I need revival. I need restoration.

And that's what happens here in Nehemiah 8. Now listen, you can't plan a revival. The Spirit goes wherever the Spirit wishes. But we get a glimpse of what revival looks like.

[ 18 : 46 ] That is, these are signs of spiritual awakening. When these things are happening in our life, it's a sign that restoration and revival is taking place.

Look at verse 1. It says, All the people gathered as one man in the square before the water gate, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel.

So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both the men and women, and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read it facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday in the presence of the men and those who could understand.

And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Here's the first thing that we're going to see is that revival always begins with a reawakening towards the Word of God.

Revival and spiritual restoration always begins with a reawakening towards God's Word.

[ 19 : 52 ] You notice here their anticipation for the Word. These people here in Nehemiah 8, unlike they had been previously, have a revived desire towards the Scripture, towards, in their case, the law of God, the law of Moses.

And there are three observations we make here in those three verses that really point to this. First is their intentionality. Did you notice in these verses that Ezra is not going around town begging people to come to the gate, the water gate, to have a Bible study?

He's not asking people to sign up. He's not inviting people. Instead, the people, did you notice that? The people initiate this gathering and they ask Ezra to come.

It's the opposite. It's not the preacher begging you to come and listen. It's the church begging the preacher to preach. They're initiating this whole thing.

Now, why Ezra? Because as I've told you before, Ezra is the scribe. He's the teacher. He's the theologian. He's the one that has devoted his life to the Word of God. And keep in mind that these people did not have their own individual scrolls.

[ 21 : 11 ] Nobody here has the Law of Moses app on their iPhone, okay? They don't have that accessibility and so they don't have the law and so they request Ezra, hey, we're going to get together and we want you to come where we are, but make sure you bring the book.

Make sure you bring the Word. Listen to me, faith family. Oh my. It is not enough for the pastor to want to teach. The church must want to learn. And listen, listen.

I love to teach. Trust me, I have my off leaks when I'm like, Lord, I have no desire to do this and the Lord just does His work anyways. Gives me a desire that I may not have in that moment.

I am human like that. Amen? But aside from that, I love doing what I'm doing. This is what I'm called to do. I want to teach you the Word of God.

There's no lack of passion to point you to Jesus through the Word of God. Amen? But it doesn't really matter. It doesn't really matter how much of a passion I have to teach if you don't have a passion to want to learn.

[ 22 : 21 ] If you don't show up on Saturday night or Sunday morning or whenever you come, like, I'm ready. Let's go. I want to learn. I want to be taught.

I want God to speak to me. These people have an intentionality towards Scripture, but they notice, secondly, their intensity. The text says, I love this.

This is the Word of God, right? The text says that Ezra taught from early morning. The Hebrew is literally from light until midday.

In other words, Ezra read the book of the law for about six to seven hours. And you thought, I preach long. This is a pastor's dream come true, right?

And they're standing for all of it. There's no nursery workers complaining that the service is going too long. Nobody rattling their car keys, hoping I'll get the hint that you're ready to go eat.

[ 23 : 24 ] No, it's just six to seven hours of word, word, word. And then notice their attentiveness. Notice what the text here says.

And the ears of all, say all. The ears of all the people were what? Attentive to the book of the law.

In other words, nobody's falling asleep in church. Sinners. This is a miracle, right?

I mean, literally, a pastor reads this and there's like, there's no way this could happen outside of the grace of God. Right? Some of you fall asleep in my introduction. Much less for six to seven hours, you're all attentive.

Actually, this isn't a miracle, it's revival. This is what revival looks like. When people simply can't get enough of the word of God.

[ 24 : 27 ] And it really doesn't matter the numb-num up here who's preaching, right? It's just the word. Give me the word. Give me the word. I don't need to be entertained.

I just want the word of God. They anticipated it. They longed for it. This is actually the opposite of what is said of the Hebrews in Hebrews 5 verse 11.

And this we have much to say and it's hard to explain since you have become what? Dull of hearing. So I wonder this evening, are you like the Hebrews of Nehemiah 8?

Or are you like the Hebrews of Hebrews 5? You're ready. You want to listen. You're leaning in. You're fighting any and all distractions because you anticipate the word of God.

Or have you become dull of hearing? Notice it on the screen, Faith Family. Spiritual restoration, that is revival, occurs when the people of God approach the word of God with anticipation.

[ 25 : 31 ] When is the last time you have been really excited to come to church and hear the word of God? After all, this is what described the early church in Acts chapter 2 verse 42.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and the prayers. Well, not only their anticipation for the word of God, notice what else.

Verse 4. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform. Okay? Stood on a wooden platform that they'd made for a purpose.

So what's the purpose of the platform? Is this because I just want to be on a stage? Is this because Ezra just needs the limelight? What was the reason that the platform was made?

The answer is, they wanted the word of God to be central to their gathering. They wanted everybody to be able to listen and hear and see the law of God as it was read.

[ 26 : 40 ] Most scholars estimate here that there's about 30 to 50,000 people that were here at this gathering. Have you ever tried to speak to a group that large when you're just reading?

Particularly when you don't have a PA system? And think about, now you know what the law of Moses is, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Let me just kind of give you a little bit of a taste of what this would have been like.

That Ezra reads 50 chapters of Genesis, 40 chapters of Exodus, 27 of Leviticus. Most of you can't get through one of Leviticus.

36 chapters of Numbers, 34 chapters of Deuteronomy. I'm exhausted after three sermons on a weekend and I've got a microphone.

In other words, the reason why they're building this platform is they want to make sure that everybody gets to hear that what is front and center in this gathering is the Word of God.

[ 27 : 44 ] They cherish it. They appreciate it. They want it to be front and center. In fact, look at verse 5. Notice what happens. Ezra opened the book in the sight of the people for he was above all the people, not because he's better than them, but because he's reading the Word.

And as he opened it, all the people did what? They stood. Why are they standing? So they build a platform so that the Word is central and then they stand as a way of recognizing its authority.

It's like when a judge walks into a room, what do they say? All rise. In other words, your standing there is a recognition of authority.

That the one in authority has just walked into the room. This is why I ask you every week if you're able to do so, to do what? To stand for the reading of God's Word.

It's not just a tradition. It's because it has biblical meaning. Maybe some of you didn't even realize that. You just kind of got stuck in the fact that we do this every week.

[ 28 : 54 ] All of this is we are sending a message. We not only are anticipating the Word of God, we revere it, we honor it, and we recognize its authority.

Amen? Now, I think it's fair to say that for many of us, our access to the Scripture has caused a complacency towards the Scripture.

Let me say that again. Listen to that. I think it's fair to say that for many of us, our access to the Scripture has caused a complacency towards the Scripture. It's kind of like food at a grocery store.

You have so much easy access to it, you almost don't even recognize how precious it is to be able to eat and to have food.

It's just, we are. If I need food, I'll just, you know, when I've got time, I'll go to the grocery store. I mean, our experience has not been like many people in the world where it's, give us this day our daily bread.

[ 29 : 54 ] I don't know how I'm going to even eat tomorrow. Listen, when you're in that kind of situation, you cherish food a whole lot more. Amen? And my fear is that we have so much access, which I am thankful for.

Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. It is a gift of God's grace that we have the access that we do to the Word of God. I mean, you can buy all kinds of Bibles and apps on your phone and listen to it online and there's all kinds of access, but has our access caused complacency towards how sweet and precious it is that we have been given the Word of God.

I could give you a hundred examples. I'll just give you one of men like John Wycliffe. Well, you've likely heard of Wycliffe Bible translators. Wycliffe gave his life.

He lived during the, just before the Reformation. And one of the issues that he had with the Catholic Church at that particular time is that the Bible wasn't translated into the everyday language.

It was in Latin and people didn't know how to read Latin unless you'd been formally educated like a priest. And Wycliffe was like, no, everybody ought to be able to have access to the Word of God.

[ 31 : 18 ] And so he literally gave his life to translating the Bible into English. He was so hated for this that after he died, the Catholic Church dug up his bones and threw them into the river.

And some historians said, as his bones went down the river, so spread his work throughout all of Europe. Because one of the hallmarks of the Reformation was that everybody have access to the Word of God in their own language so that it could be central to your life.

Listen, that's what's happening here is that there is not only an excitement for the Word, there is an appreciation for the fact that we have been given God's Word.

Now, you might at this point be thinking, are we worshiping a book? I mean, it feels like you're so emphasizing the Word of God that this is almost like book worship.

Well, was that what was happening here in Nehemiah chapter 8? Not at all. Look at Nehemiah 8 verse 6. It says, And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen.

[ 32 : 36 ] Amen. Like, it's actually okay to say Amen in church. Did you know that? Yeah. They shouted Amen, and they lifted up their hands, and they bowed their heads, and what? Everybody say this with me.

They worshiped the Lord. meaning, this wasn't book worship. This was God worship. The reason why, notice this on the screen, the reason why we cherish the Word of God is because it's the Word of God.

This isn't about a book. It's not about, we don't cherish the book. We cherish the fact that this book contains the words of the God we cherish.

And so do not misunderstand what I'm saying here. This is not book worship. We don't have a relationship with a book. We have a relationship with the One who gave us the book.

And because the One that gave us the book is the living God, we cherish the Word of God. So they had an anticipation. Amen.

[ 33 : 38 ] You're fired up tonight. I love it. So you want revival in your life. You want revival in this church. You want revival in our land. Notice it on the screen. Spiritual restoration, that is revival, occurs when the people of God approach the Word of God with anticipation.

We want to learn. Ezra, we're gathering. Come with us and bring the book. And a reverent appreciation. We want it to be central.

We're going to build a platform and we're going to stand because the Word of God is central to our worship. Notice the third thing. Verse 6. Verse 6.



And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Here's the third observation, and that is their affection for the Word.

Their affection for the Word. Notice that there is a response from the people of God, which I sense from you tonight, as Ezra is reading the Word.

[ 34 : 45 ] The text says that there were people that raised their hands. I didn't know you could do that. They raised their hands. They shouted Amen. Some of them were bowing down.

In other words, clearly these people were not from Minnesota. All right? They actually have emotions. All right? So, that's a joke. Right? So, they're not frozen.

They've thawed out. There's an emotional response to the Word of God. Now, if you keep reading in verses 9 through 12, what you experience is that they are grieved and convicted.

They even weep. My best guess, my best guess is their weeping is because as Ezra is reading through the law of Moses, he's reading sections that talk about their idolatry.

Why? The reason why they're in this situation in the first place is because their hearts had turned away from God. And I believe upon hearing that, it made them weep and grieve.

[ 35 : 53 ] But also in verses 9 through 12, you see Ezra and the Levites encouraging them to rejoice. Because there were parts of God's law that reminded them of what?

Even in your idolatry, even though you've broken your covenant with God, God is faithful to you. You are still His people. You are still loved.

He has not abandoned you. And so, my point here is put it all together. Put it all together. There is amens. And there's raising hands. And there's bowing down.

And there's weeping. And there's rejoicing. The point I'm making, faith family, is in seasons of revival, people don't hold anything back when it comes to worship because they are so deeply affected by the Word of God.

It is just natural to respond. And you know me too well. I have preached here too long and many of you know me too well to know I am not talking about emotion for the sake of emotion.

[ 37 : 00 ] And I am not talking about emotion that's absent from truth. Are you with me? This isn't emotion for the sake of emotion. This is not a show.

And it is not emotion that's absent from truth. But my point is this, and I've made it in other sermons, there should be an emotional response to the Word of God.

And I struggle with this as your pastor. I'm going to take just a moment to kind of speak to you and we'll finish the last point here, okay? And it's this. The reason why I struggle with this is because on one hand, so hear my heart, listen in.

On one hand, I want to give this church, I want to give our faith family the freedom to respond the way you feel led to respond. Here's what I mean. Not everybody worships the same way.

Amen? Some of you will raise your hands. Some of you are terrified by the idea. Some of you may shout amen. Some of you would never want to say an outward word in church.

[ 38 : 02 ] You're more reserved. Are you tracking with me? Not everybody responds the same way. So I want to give us all freedom to say we don't all respond emotionally the same way.

At the same time, I struggle when there's no emotional response at all. Am I being fair?

So like, I'm not trying to get like, well, you should be raising your hands. So next week, everybody raise their hands. No. I don't think that'd be right. Because how did I start this sermon?

One, you could raise your hands and your heart be far from Him. So what good would it have been to have raised your hands? You could sing the songs and your heart be far from Him.

What good is your singing? So I'm not trying to conform you to a certain emotional response. I'm just trying to get you to have an emotional response.

[ 39 : 03 ] Because there are times, and I feel it too, when you come in from a tough week and you're just like, I got nothing. I got nothing.

And what my hope is, is that the Word of God will revive. It will revive you. And in reviving you, there will be some kind of emotional reaction to the truth of God's Word.

That's balanced biblical worship. Right? Because there are some denominations that would be all about emotion, emotion, emotion, regardless of truth.

Right? It's every time you show up, everybody just ought to be running around the room, and that's how you know God showed up. No, that's not the case at all. At the same time, I am as equally concerned that those of you who week after week after week look like this.

And you never sing. You never clap. You never weep. You never say amen.

[ 40 : 15 ] And all I want, all I'm trying to do is pastorally say, is there something potentially wrong? While giving you the freedom to, you don't have to respond a certain way.

You have the freedom to worship as you feel led to worship. But if you're not being affected, if you're not being affected by the Word of God, there is something wrong with your heart.

These people, now, I took a lot of time to try to say that about as balanced as I could. So don't be mad at me. Okay?

You got to love me anyways. All right? But my point is to show you here in this text that these people anticipated the Word. Hey, we're getting together at the Watergate.

Ezra, join us and bring the book. Because we want the book. And we, like, appreciate it. We're going to build a platform and we're going to stand for six to seven hours paying attention because we value the Word of God that much.

[ 41 : 24 ] And we're affected by it. Notice it on the screen that spiritual restoration occurs. Revival occurs when the people of God approach the Word of God with anticipation and appreciation and also are affected by it.

Let me give you one more and we're done. Look at verses six through eight quickly and we'll wrap it up. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

And then in verse seven, he lists all the different Levites. And you notice that they helped the people understand the law while the people remained in their places. Verse eight, they read from the book from the law of God clearly and they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading.

Here's the last observation I want to make from the text and that is the application of the Word. Now, where do I get that? In addition to Ezra, Nehemiah includes here 13 Levites that assisted him.

The Levites were the assistants to the priest. And what's happening here is that the Levites are moving among the people so some of them are helping Ezra read at times.

[ 42 : 45 ] I mean, I can't imagine just going six to seven hours, no bathroom break, no coffee, no anything, right? So you got assistants that are coming and helping him read. But more than that, it talks about how they did what?

They helped the people understand what was being read. Does everybody see that? Now, what did that include? What that included was the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, right?

Well, the people of God that had been taken into exile knew Aramaic because of their Babylonian captivity. Not everybody represented here understood Hebrew.

So the Levites would essentially work throughout the crowds assisting the reading of the Word, translating it into Hebrew.

Why? Because they wanted to make sure that everybody understood what was being said. Now, what does that mean for us? It means this.

[ 43 : 48 ] Notice it here. It's not enough to anticipate Scripture, appreciate Scripture, and be affected by Scripture if you never apply Scripture.

This really is application of the Word. It's making sure everybody understands what this means for your life. Or to say it a different way, notice it on the screen, there is no restoration without application.

Meaning, meaning, and this is big, this is so important. You could be excited to come on Saturday night. I cannot wait to get to church. I cannot wait for the preaching of the Word of God.

It doesn't matter who's preaching. I don't care if it's Wes, I don't care if it's Pat, I don't care if it's Rick, I don't care who it is. I just want the Word. Bring the Word. Because I value it. It's central.

It's central to faith family. That's why it's right here. Stage central. We see the Word of God as precious. And we're affected by it.

[ 44 : 55 ] We're clapping and we're saying amen. And then you leave and do nothing with it. That's not revival.

Revival is when you understand the Word of God in such a way that you make application to your life. You take what you've learned and you take it with you throughout the week by God's grace seeking to cultivate it into your life.

That's when restoration takes place. Are you with me? So what do you do? What do you do to take the Word with you?

I try to do the best I can to help you understand it. I use videos and pictures and all different types of things to help you be able to understand the text.

But I can't take it home with you. Only you can do that. And if there is no application there will be no spiritual restoration. Now I close with this faith family.

[ 46 : 04 ] Why is the Word central to revival? Why is the Word of God central to spiritual restoration? If you've zoned out what do you do?

Zone back in. Listen. It's because listen the Word of God is the primary way we encounter the Word of God.

Now you say well that's redundant. The Word of God is the primary way we encounter the Word of God. I get that. But what is the Word of God? or better asked who is the Word of God?

You know this John chapter 1 in the beginning was the and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. In other words faith family Jesus is the ultimate Word of God. It's why when I preach the Word who am I always trying to point you to?

[ 47 : 14 ] The Word. Because the Word of God is ultimately pointing us to the Word of God. The person of Jesus Christ.

And what does Jesus do? He restores. He revives. In other words it's not this book that will restore you.

It's this book points you to the One who restores you. The Word of God points you to the Word of God and the Word of God that is the person of Jesus Christ brings restoration.

Just ask the leper whose life had been ruined by a disease and then one day he walks away rejoicing. Or the lame man that had not walked in years and then one day took up his mat and walked.

Or the blind man who from the time he was born had never seen a sunrise and then one day was given sight. Unless you think that Jesus is only into external remodeling, remember a man by the name of Lazarus who Jesus brought from death to life.

[ 48 : 21 ] Jesus is the one who brings restoration. And all of these things, all of these miracles, all of these things that Jesus did throughout his public ministry was pointing you, they were signs pointing you to the greater restoration that Jesus came to do.

When he would die on the cross for your sins and three days later walk out of a grave not to rebuild a wall but to revive your dead heart.

To reconcile you to God. You see faith family, our passion for the word of God is because it connects us to the word of God and he is the one who can make all things new.

That whatever is broken he can put back together because he is the resurrection and the life.

So faith family, it's easy, it's really easy to just want to paint over the outside to focus on the external rather than doing the work of the heart.

[ 49 : 44 ] But true restoration is not rebuilding walls. True restoration is reviving hearts. And that's exactly what the word of God can do.

And all God's people said amen. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, thank you, thank you, thank you for your word to us tonight. I do, I do pray for revival.

Revive us, oh Lord. Bring spiritual restoration in this place, in this state, across our land, and to the ends of the earth.

And the way, primary way that happens is when your people turn to your word so that they can encounter the living word, the one who makes all things new.

So give us a renewed passion for the scripture. May we have a hunger, like Peter says, like newborn babies, to long for the pure spiritual milk.

[ 51 : 05 ] I pray that you would begin even in this moment of creating an excitement that may already be there, but just Lord, take it to another level.

We can't wait to come together. We can't wait for the word. We can't wait to see it central in all that we do, to be affected by it, and by your grace.

Understand it and apply it. That we might be restored, and that we might do the work of restoration that you've called us to do in this broken world.

Father, now we take the time to remember Jesus as we do each and every week through the Lord's Supper, and the work of restoration that he did for us on the cross.

Lord, I pray that this will be a beautiful and sweet time of remembrance and worship in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.