

**Feast of Booths**  
Neh 8:13-18  
SS Lesson for 08/04/2013

**Devotional Scripture:** Lev 23:33-44

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Proclaim God's word so that all men will know what has been seen and heard (Acts 22:15)

Proclaim God's word because it can't be kept in (Jer 20:9)

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*Response should be on-going (18)*

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# Introduction

## Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews how God's people responded after learning about the **Feast of Booths**. The **study's aim** is to see how God worked in the hearts of His people to prepare them for His blessings. The **study's application** is to realize that God works in similar ways to bring the blessing of revival to individuals and congregations today.

### Key Verse: Neh 8:17

*17 The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Nehemiah then encouraged the people to consider the day... sacred and to eat, give to others in need, and rejoice in the Lord, their source of strength. Holiness and joy were to go together! The next day the spiritual leaders—heads of... families (i.e., heads of clans), priests and... Levites—gathered to hear more of God's Word from Ezra. Another response of the people was their celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. The sequence in chapter 8 is striking: intellectual response to the Word (verses 1-8), emotional response to the Word (verses 9-12), and volitional response to the Word (verses 13-18). The spiritual leaders discovered this instruction about the feast in Leviticus 23:37-43. This was celebrated from the 15th to the 22nd of the seventh month (Tishri). Since they discovered these instructions on the second day of the seventh month (Neh. 8:2, 13), the timing was perfect. They had exactly two weeks to prepare for it. So they had the people get branches from various kinds of trees (verse 15) and build booths (temporary shelters) in various places, including the square... by the Gate of Ephraim (see the map "Jerusalem in the Time of Nehemiah," near 3:1). This recalled their days of wandering in the wilderness (Lev. 23:43). Their celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles was unmatched since the days of Joshua. When the altar was completed in 536 B.C. the people then celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezra 3:4), but here the joy and involvement was much greater. Ezra read the Law during the Feast of Tabernacles, because Moses had indicated that this was to be done every seven years (Deut. 31:10-13).

### Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Once more Israel could celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles as God had commanded them. The celebration was to remind them of the wilderness journey of the people of Israel, when they had no houses but lived only in temporary shelters. "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 23:43). Through the symbolism of their actions, they would recall God's faithfulness to His promise and how He had led His people to independence from Egypt's tyranny to a land of milk and honey. There have been many important events in history that have shown God's love for His people, and Israel had many celebrations to recognize that, including Passover, the Sabbath, and, of course, this one, the Festival of Tabernacles. These special days were to remind them of God's faithfulness. What He had promised, He would fulfill. People tend to forget; so God has placed these special events in the calendar of life. We too always need reminders; so we have calendars on which we mark special dates and events. Now we have electronic reminders that we carry everywhere; so we are without excuse if we ever forget something. We, as Christians, have the most important of all symbols to remind us of God's eternal love—the Cross. All of God's promises are seen in that symbol of redemption. We have moved beyond the symbols of the Old Testament and now embrace the reality of those symbols in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Now we look ahead to the victory of Christ's coming again to bring all His people home to His glory. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I

Thess. 4:16-17). Israel went forth on the promise of an earthly home, one that still needed the labor of farmers and other craftsmen. Believers now have the promise and realized hope of an eternal home, where time will be no more and we will be forever with the Lord. Israel needed to cross the Jordan River to reach the beginning of the end of their wanderings. They needed to battle more enemies as they advanced to their final place of victory. Indeed, the battles were far from over; in truth, they were just beginning. Yet their hope was in the Lord. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy" (Ps. 33:18). God has not changed, and His Word will never fail. His promise to Israel will be fulfilled. God still looks for the faithful person who will stand against all the doubts of the faithless and affirm that what God said will indeed come to pass. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

**Commentary from NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

The people know that they are obeying the very words of God: "At the end of every seven years, ...during the Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing" (Deuteronomy 31:10, 11). Both young and old have been privileged to hear the law as it was read, and we easily imagine all family members sharing the privilege of helping cut the branches, build the huts, and enjoy the produce of the fall harvest. The people are able to enjoy the tasty meat from the abundant sacrifices they make throughout the week (Numbers 29:12-38 notes the original stipulations for the animal sacrifices in this regard). Joshua son of Nun has been dead for over 900 years at this point (Joshua 24:29). Comparing the reinstatement of a festival with earlier celebrations is not unusual in Scripture (see 2 Kings 23:22; 2 Chronicles 30:26; 35:18). Comparison with Joshua serves to emphasize the wilderness experience itself since that man had lived through it personally (Leviticus 23:43; Hosea 12:9).

**Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson**

The outline of the lesson was adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
14	And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses	Commanded by God's Word
16	Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God	Response to God's Word

**Lesson Introduction and Background**

**From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

The Festival of Tabernacles was one of three annual feasts that the ancient Israelites were to celebrate before the Lord (Exodus 23:14-17; also Deuteronomy 16:16). This festival has different names, and it's easy to get confused. At first it was called the "Festival of Ingathering." Occurring in late September and early October, the name points to the final harvest of the season (Exodus 23:16b; 34:22b). Harvest was a cause for celebration, especially if the harvest was abundant. The designation "Festival of Tabernacles" came later (Leviticus 23:34; Deuteronomy 16:13-16; 31:10; compare John 7:2). The "tabernacles" in view are also called "temporary shelters" (or "booths" if you use the 1984 edition of the NIV; Leviticus 23:42, 43); we may think of these as huts or lean-tos. For seven days, the people were to dwell in these makeshift structures in a time of rejoicing (Leviticus 23:40; Deuteronomy 16:14, 15) as the Israelites remembered God's provisions during the

wilderness wanderings of the exodus. Living in tents was the normal lifestyle of the Israelites during the wilderness wanderings. Thus the Festival of Tabernacles recreated that lifestyle for succeeding generations that had not experienced it. But some of Nehemiah's audience in today's text had themselves experienced something like that lifestyle during their four-month trek from Babylon to Palestine—what some have called “a second exodus.” The events of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah occur during what is called the Persian period. This period dates from the rise of Cyrus in 539 BC to the overthrow of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great of Greece in the 330s BC. The Bible records three distinct returns from Babylonian exile during this period. We date the return of the first group—the one under Zerubbabel and Joshua (or Jeshua)—to 538 BC (see lessons 5, 6, and 7). The second return, under Ezra, is dated to 458 BC, some 80 years later (see lessons 8 and 9). Our final four lessons of the quarter take us to the time of the third return, the one of 445 BC. Nehemiah led this return. The Bible does not mention anyone other than Nehemiah himself in this group, but others undoubtedly came with him. (The list of returnees in Nehemiah 7 is that of the first group; compare Ezra 2).

### **From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

Does studying God's Word produce any change in our behavior? Do we see any purpose in Bible study beyond its mere completion? Some people leave their weekly session of Sunday school and worship believing they have fulfilled their duty to God and can now get back to living life "in the real world." Even some who have a schedule of daily devotions consider these the extent of their spiritual duty. They read a text, say a prayer, and go about their daily rounds without giving further thought to what they have read. At worst, this is legalism—expecting to gain God's favor through external observances. At best, it is merely an academic exercise—mastering facts to be able to exhibit superior knowledge. Yet the Bible was given so that we might become more like its Author. It is intended to turn us away from sin (Ps. 119:11), make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15), and equip us for good deeds (verses 16-17). It does this by revealing God's nature, our nature, God's will, and His power to accomplish it for His glory.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Commanded by God's Word (Neh 8:13-15)**

13 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law.

14 And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,

15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written."

### **Since it is commanded, desire understanding of God's Word (13)**

*Understanding to do what God has called us to do (1 Chron 22:11-13)*

11 "Now, my son, the Lord be with you, and may you have success and build the house of the Lord your God, as he said you would. 12 May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when he puts you in command over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. 13 Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged.

*Understanding from God the creator (Ps 119:73)*

73 Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.

*Understanding through discernment (Ps 119:125)*

125 I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

*Understanding of life (Ps 119:144)*

144 Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.

*Understanding that adversaries will not be able to contradict (Luke 21:15)*

15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

*Understanding of the Scriptures (Luke 24:45)*

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

*Understanding through the teaching of the Holy Spirit (Prov 9:9-10)*

9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. 10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

*Understanding through wisdom (Prov 3:13)*

13 Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding,

*Understanding so that we will be obedient to God's Word (Ps 119:34)*

34 Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

*Understanding that is shown through good conduct (James 3:13)*

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

### **Since it is commanded, study God's Word (14)**

*Study word because there is delight in God's word (Ps 112:1)*

112 Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.

*Study word so that we might not sin (Ps 119:11)*

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

*Study word because we love God and His word (Ps 119:97-100)*

97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. 98 Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

*Study word so that we will be able to stand when troubles come (Luke 6:47-48)*

47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

*Study word so that we will be successful (Joshua 1:8)*

8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

*Study word so that we will understand and use God's word correctly (2 Tim 2:15)*

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

*Study word so that we will be able to distinguish good from evil (Heb 5:14)*

14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

*Study word so that we will persevere until the day of the Lord (Phil 2:16)*

16 as you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

### **Since it is commanded, proclaim God's Word (15)**

*Proclaim God's word so that it becomes an everlasting witness (Isa 30:8)*

8 Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness.

*Proclaim God's word because it is good news (Rom 10:15)*

15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

*Proclaim God's word so that it will rebuke, instruct and encourage (2 Tim 4:2)*

2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

*Proclaim God's word so that all men will know what has been seen and heard (Acts 22:15)*

15 You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

*Proclaim God's word because it can't be kept in (Jer 20:9)*

9 But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

*Proclaim God's word because of the preparation to give an answer for hope (1 Peter 3:15)*

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

*Proclaim God's word because of the delight in doing it (Ps 119:46-47)*

46 I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, 47 for I delight in your commands because I love them.

*Proclaim God's word because God provides the words to say (Luke 21:13-15)*

13 This will result in your being witnesses to them. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

## **Response to God's Word (Neh 8:16-18)**

16 Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim.

17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness.

18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

## **Response should be obedience (16)**

### *Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)*

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

### *Obedience learned (Heb 5:8)*

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

### *Obedience in love (2 John 1:6)*

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

### *Obedience that is better than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)*

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

### *Obedience through putting God's words into practice (Matt 7:24-25)*

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

### *Obedience through focusing on the eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18)*

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

### *Obedience through living holy (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

### *Obedience that is consistent with God's will (Isa 58:6-9)*

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear

guard. 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

*Obedience that is from humble, praying, repentant people of God (2 Chron 7:14)*

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

*Obedience that is bold and steadfast (Dan 3:16-18)*

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

### **Response should be gladness (17)**

*Gladness expressed in praise and song (Ps 33:1-3)*

33 Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. 2 Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. 3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

*Gladness expressed in the soul (Isa 61:10)*

10 I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

*Gladness expressed in spite of circumstances (Hab 3:17-19)*

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

*Gladness expressed because the Bible tells us to do so (Phil 4:4)*

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

*Gladness expressed because we believe and love God (1 Peter 1:8)*

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

*Gladness in the Word through obedience (John 15:9-11)*

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

*Gladness in the Word through use of Jesus' Name (John 16:21-24)*

21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. 22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. 23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

*Gladness in the Word through being in the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17)*

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

*Gladness in the Word through the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

**Response should be on-going (18)**

*Commit to continue to do good (1 Peter 4:19)*

19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

*Continue to do good deeds (2 Thess 2:16-17)*

16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

*Continue to do God's will (1 John 2:28)*

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

*Continue in the work of the Lord (1 Cor 15:58)*

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

*Continue because God will not forget my work (Heb 6:10)*

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

*Continue in living God's Word (2 Tim 3:14-15)*

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

*Continue in obedience (Dan 3:16-18)*

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

*Continue in fellowship (Acts 2:40-43)*

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### ***Concluding Thoughts from Steven Cole***

It is spiritually dangerous to study the Word without the goal of obedient response. Knowledge apart from obedience leads to pride (1 Cor. 8:1). Our aim, as Calvin put it, should always be to transform our lives by Scripture. There are five responses here:

#### A. Repentance

The people wept when they heard and understood God's Word (8:9), because they realized how much they had sinned against God. We will see this in more detail in chapter 9. But the fact is, the more the light of God's holy Word shines into our hearts, the more we will see areas where we do not conform to His righteousness. Spiritual renewal always involves repentance.

#### B. Joy

The clouds of godly repentance should quickly break up, allowing the sun of godly joy to flood our hearts (8:9-10). God never wounds us to hurt us, but only to heal. The joy of knowing that He has forgiven all of our sins and that we are His people should fill our hearts. We will look further at verse 10 in our next study.

#### C. Good deeds

Ezra and Nehemiah reminded the people to send portions from the part of the sacrifices that they could eat to those who had nothing (8:10). God's Word should produce compassion in our hearts for the needy. His salvation is "to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).

#### D. Obedience

The people heard in the reading of the Law that they should observe the Feast of Booths. Since it was only two weeks away, they immediately made preparations to do it. This feast commemorated both the harvest that God had just provided and the deliverance that He had granted under Moses, when Israel lived in temporary shelters in the wilderness. The Israelites had not celebrated a Feast of Booths like this one since the time of Joshua (8:17)! Again it is noted that their obedience resulted in great rejoicing.

#### E. Worship

The Feast of Booths lasted a whole week, and every day consisted of more reading of God's law, culminating in a solemn assembly on the final day (8:18). In other words, there was great rejoicing along with reverential attention to God's Word. As the people camped in the temporary shelters, they reflected back on God's faithful dealings with the nation, in spite of their sins. And so they were filled with gratitude and love toward God for His gracious dealings with them. The reading, study, and preaching of God's Word should produce in all of us a heart of worship as we reflect on His abundant mercies toward us.

*(Adapted from Sermon notes by Pastor Steven J. Cole, Flagstaff Christian Fellowship [www.fcfonline.org](http://www.fcfonline.org))*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

Many years ago, I had the privilege of baptizing a man known to be the town drunk. Since my father had been an alcoholic, I understood this man's problem. We helped him overcome his alcoholism and to surrender to the Lord. The man was a good reader and had a deep baritone voice, so he read Scripture for worship services. This was a perfect fit because in those days we always read a large portion of Scripture that was relevant to the sermon. Many of us lament the fact that churches today do not have Scripture read in services as much as we used to. Christians need to connect Scripture with celebrations of faith, especially with regard to Christmas and Easter. This can help us "experience" God's Word by reenacting what is meaningful to our faith. What improvements can your church make in this regard?

***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

1. People of all classes and ranks should give careful attention to God's Word (Neh. 8:13)
2. Only God can reveal truth; man can only discover and disseminate it (Neh. 8:14; cf. Deut. 29:29)
3. If the Word is not proclaimed, it cannot be received and obeyed (Neh. 8:15; cf. Rom. 10:17)
4. The best evidence that we believe God's Word is our full obedience to it (Neh. 8:16)
5. Obeying God always brings joy— if not now, then later (Neh. 8:17; cf. Luke 6:20-23; Rev. 19:7)
6. Daily encounters with God's Word can both guide and guard us (Neh.8:18)