

# Recipe for Revival

Nehemiah 8



Week Eleven

## inTro



Read This Week's Passage:  
Nehemiah 8

### REVIVING REVIVALS

What is usually thought of when thinking about contemporary revivals? A renowned speaker, a large venue or facility with state-of-the-art sound systems and speakers, aggressive advertising on multiple platforms, wide-scale contiguous outreach activities, and magnificent music with recognized names are the usual components when putting a revival together. But what is it that makes a revival, a revival? Do all these peripheral elements define a revival? What does the Bible have to say about revivals?

Nehemiah 8 is the chapter where we find those answers. By God's grace, now that Nehemiah has taken care of the enemies, the wall, and the city, he moves on to the religious arena, seeking spiritual restoration. If you have been following along the chiasm of the book of Nehemiah, we started with prayer in chapter 1, revival in 2, organization in 3, and opposition in 4. We hit the apex in chapter 5 in the character and ministry of Jesus! We boomeranged back to opposition in 6, organization in 7, and now, again, revival in this chapter. (You can also guess what chapter 9 will be about!)



## **inScribe**

Write out Nehemiah 8:1–8 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Nehemiah 8:1–3, 8. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline it, or mind map the chapter.

## inGest



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How can you experience personal revival? Is corporate revival possible? How can it be achieved?



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## ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

Bread recipes have many variations in ingredients, style, flavor, and technique. However, there are core elements that make bread, bread. Similarly, in biblical revivals, we find the same variety, yet the core of what makes a revival must stay the same. This chapter highlights the three phases of revival: intellect, emotion, and will.

With the first phrase, Nehemiah 8:1–8 emphasizes four ingredients. Verse 1 mentions the role of gathering. As much as we love to watch sermons in our sleepwear at home, it is a powerful time when God's people gather together. That time, energy, and finances are expended manifest the importance of assembly. A collective unity and anticipation of what the Holy Spirit will do to the entire congregation makes the gathering worthwhile. "The convocations of the church, as in camp meetings, the assemblies of the home church, and all occasions where there is personal labor for souls, are God's appointed opportunities for giving the early and the latter rain" (Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, 246).

The second ingredient is bringing out the Bible (v. 2), reading the Bible (v. 3), and studying the Bible (v. 7). Gatherings can occur for all sorts of reasons, from football championships to monster truck rallies. But the purpose of gatherings at revivals is for the sole purpose of experiencing the Word of God together.

The third ingredient is a reverence for and sense of the holiness of the Word. There were dignity and decorum (v. 4), a response of veneration (when the people stood in v. 5), and a prayerful response (v. 6). This cannot be manufactured by technology, music, or ritual. These can augment the sense of holy reverence, but at its foundation, it is the humble expression of the heart.

Lastly, the emphasis is on understanding the Word. It wasn't just about gathering, just reading the Bible, or just worshiping; there was an element of each person understanding the Word. Teachers branched out (v. 7) and helped the people to understand what Ezra was reading in front of the people. What does this remind you of? This is an ancient form of Sabbath School small groups, where people aren't just standing and listening to the Bible being read for six hours. It was an interactive, intelligent, Spirit-filled, and biblical study of God's Word together! "As we approach nearer the end, I have seen that . . . there will be less preaching and more Bible study. There will be little groups all over the ground with their Bibles in their hands, and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, 87).

## EMOTION AND WILL

The latter two phases of revival are also found in Nehemiah 8. In verse 9, Nehemiah records, “For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.” We fall into two extremes when it comes to revivals: some shun the emotional response altogether while others make revival all about an emotional catharsis. Scripture makes it clear that it is the intellect that receives understanding from the Word. Once it is understood and the soul is convicted, then the emotions of guilt and contrition occur.

Each culture has a different understanding of guilt. Some view it as a communal activity where it morphs into shame. Other cultures add and deepen the sense of guilt, mutating it into blame. And lastly, there are cultures that seek to avoid even the slightest hint of guilt. In its proper context, guilt is healthy, just as pain receptors tell the brain that something is wrong with the body. Guilt, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, must drive us to the Lord, who ultimately is the only One who has and will take away our guilt, shame, and fear (Isa. 1:16–19; 1 John 1:9).

Though the natural result of conviction was their weeping, Nehemiah redirected their emotions to rejoicing, “for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). This, in turn, led to the final phase of revival, where their will submitted to obedience. They understood what the Word said (verses 13–15); they did what the Word said (verse 16); and they enjoyed what the Word said (verse 17). What they specifically did (in keeping the Feast of the Booths) is not as important as that their wills chose to obey after their intellect and emotions assented.

It’s one thing to be intellectually stimulated by the Bible. Theological conferences and Bible study convocations can spend much time and scholarship in understanding the Word, but this is not revival. Prayer conferences and praise and worship sessions can spend hours in pouring forth our hearts and weeping before the Lord, but this is not revival. Self-improvement books and how-to videos can show us how to increase the quality of our lives and “hack” different life habits here and there, but again, this is not revival. Corporate revival is when God’s people get together to study together, to respond collectively, and to decide markedly and specifically to obey God’s principles as a congregation. What does the Bible say was the result? “And there was very great gladness” (verse 17). Who doesn’t want that?



**in**Terpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?



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Recipe for Revival



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

- 2 Chron. 7:14
- Ezra 7:6-10
- Acts 2



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with

Review your memorized verse from Nehemiah 8.

## DAY BY DAY

Though it may look formulaic, the recipe for revival is not meant to be simplistic. However, it is indeed simple—there’s a difference between the simplistic and the simple. God seeks to gather His people together to read, to revere, to understand, to respond, and to obey His Word. Though the Holy Spirit cannot be manipulated and like “the wind blows where it wishes” (John 3:8, NKJV), we can still create optimal conditions for His moving. Revival does not require intricate procedures or psychosocial techniques that appeal to the masses. Too often, they are large performances laced with an impersonal spirituality. It’s as simple as getting to know what God has said and says to us today.

More than only at gatherings and convocations, Jesus seeks to have this experience with us “day by day” (Nehemiah 8:18). We are to invest in our relationship with God daily, not out of some legal obligation but because relationships take time. That which we love foremost is that which we invest in daily (Luke 11:3 ; 2 Corinthians 4:6 ). In today’s tempo of instantaneous ridesharing, food service, social communication, and commercial transactions, there is no handheld device, nor app, nor one-minute crowdsourced product that can bring about personal revival.

It’s simply and intimately between you and Jesus, every day. Ironically, it is this simplicity and intimacy that our generation yearns for. Technology, touchscreens, and Tinder cannot provide this level of connectedness. It’s found in time. Beyond the seventh-day Sabbath of the week (which is the apex, of course), the God of time also uses the medium of time to interact with us through His Word. Jesus reveals our motives, our inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and discrepancies. He reads our hearts. And in this intimate relationship, we don’t mind being so well known, or at least, we shouldn’t. Though we may not see the change of Christlikeness instantaneously, that temporal investment over a long period of time will yield fruit in our lives.

To this God of intimacy, our response should be with contrition, “Yes, Lord, how should I live and who should I love today?” We may be called to call fire down from heaven as Elijah did, to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem as Nehemiah did, or visit with a social outcast and love them as Jesus did. Will you commit to a day-by-day, intimate relationship with Jesus today?



inVite

Meditate on Nehemiah 8 again  
and look for Jesus in the passage.



Can there be true revival without  
an encounter with Jesus?

How do you see Jesus differently  
or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to  
seeing Jesus in this way?



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Recipe for Revival



Review your memory verse.  
How does it apply to your  
life this week?

—————>  
As you have studied this  
week, what personal  
applications have you been  
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications  
you must make in your school,  
family, workplace, and church?



Read more inSight from the  
Spirit of Prophecy at  
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**THE CHURCH'S GREAT NEED**

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow his blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our Heavenly Father is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us his blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. While the people are so destitute of God’s Holy Spirit, they cannot appreciate the preaching of the word; but when the Spirit’s power touches their hearts, then the discourses given will not be without effect. Guided by the teachings of God’s word, with the manifestation of his Spirit, in the exercise of sound discretion, those who attend our meetings will gain a precious experience, and returning home will be prepared to exert a healthful influence.

“The old standard-bearers knew what it was to wrestle with God in prayer, and to enjoy the out-pouring of his Spirit. But these are passing off from the stage of action; and who are coming up to fill their places? How is it with the rising generation? Are they converted to God? Are we awake to the work that is going on in the heavenly Sanctuary, or are we waiting for some compelling power to come upon the church before we shall arouse? Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come.

“There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more, and talk less. Iniquity abounds, and the people must be taught not to be satisfied with a form of godliness without the spirit and power. If we are intent upon searching our own hearts, putting away our sins, and correcting our evil tendencies, our souls will not be lifted up unto vanity; we shall be distrustful of ourselves, having an abiding sense that our sufficiency is of God.

“We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world. Unbelievers have a right to expect that those who profess to be keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will do more than any other class to promote and honor, by their consistent lives, by their godly example and their active influence, the cause which they represent. But how often have the professed advocates of the truth proved the greatest obstacle to its advancement! The unbelief indulged, the doubts expressed, the darkness cherished, encourage the presence of evil angels, and open the way for the accomplishment of Satan’s devices.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Ellen G. White, “The Church’s Great Need,” Review and Herald, March 22, 1887.



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



How are today's revivals the same as or different from what the Bible describes?

Are there counterfeit revivals?  
What do they look like?

Which ingredients are essential, and which are elective?

How does each phase of revival transition to the other?

Which phase is most lacking today? Why?

Why can daily devotional habits be so difficult?

How can the habit of daily devotions be cultivated?

How can biblical revivals themselves be revived?