

# HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK

## Timeless Lessons on Leadership

### STUDY TEN

## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

*Nehemiah made plans to revive the authority of the Scriptures in the minds of all the citizens of Jerusalem. The testimony of God's Word had been silent far too long. The beginnings of spiritual revival were now taking place. And the potential for revival is always present in our own lives, by the way, if we just know where to look.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**IELDING a hammer, a nail, and a piece of parchment, the ex-monk marched up to All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany. As he pounded his *Ninety-five Theses* into the church's door, Martin Luther publicly confronted the Pope's abuse of power and mishandling of God's Word.

The church had lost its way, and Luther intended to set it back on the road to righteousness. His act of protest on October 31, 1517, sparked the Protestant Reformation and the return to the truth that people become right with God by grace *alone* . . . through faith *alone* . . . in Jesus Christ *alone*.

Yet a spark without kindling will fizzle out. So Luther offered more than a single piece of parchment. He pointed the church back to the source of truth that the papacy had misused for so long, and he spread the fire of the reformation by putting the Bible into the hands of the people.

Previously, German Christians couldn't make sense of their Latin-language Bibles. But in 1522, Luther published a translation of the New Testament in the common German tongue, and the Bible that was once chained, literally, to the pulpit was set free. Now *anyone* could access the truth. In the following years, the flames of revival swept across Europe, and people turned to Christ like never before.



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

The work of Luther in sparking and spreading the Protestant Reformation demonstrates two realities about revivals:

1. God's Word is clearly and broadly proclaimed.
2. God's people are energetically and spiritually mobilized.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will turn back the wheel of time to see these two principles in action in an ancient reformation—one where the great leader Nehemiah sparked a vibrant, worshipful revival among the people of God who had drifted from Him for far too long.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Often, revivals begin in small ways—in the heart of one individual who has a deep desire to know God more fully, to love Him more deeply, to serve Him more passionately. Pray that God would stir your own heart as you open His Word:

*Father, as You remind me of the truth of Your Word, draw me closer to You. Spark a revival in my heart that will spread to those around me so we can be a community that loves and serves You well. In Jesus' name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

At first glance, the book of Nehemiah appears to tell a story about a community rallying together to build a wall. While this is true, the book addresses other important themes too. That's why the book doesn't end at *Nehemiah 6:15*: "So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun." In fact, Nehemiah completed the wall just about halfway through the book!

Nehemiah cared about the physical safety of the city of Jerusalem, but what mattered more to him was the spiritual security of the Israelites' souls. In *Nehemiah 8:1–12*, Nehemiah traded his blueprints for a scroll and went to work rebuilding the spiritual walls of the people of God.



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*



### Observation: A Revival in Jerusalem

As you read and observe *Nehemiah 8:1–12*, place yourself in the sandals of one of the workers in Jerusalem . . .

For the past several weeks, you and your family have been working from dawn until dusk to rebuild your allotted portion of the wall. Your muscles are sore. Your body is bruised. Your hands are calloused. And your soul is relieved to be done with the job.

Yet one morning, your neighbor tells you everyone is gathering in the city square by the Water Gate. *Not more work!*

According to *8:1–2*, who gathered together all the people, and why did he do it?

### Proclamation of God's Word—Nehemiah 8:3–8

According to *Nehemiah 8:3*, what happened that day at the city square?



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

As Ezra unfurls the scroll, you lean and listen in. *What's he reading? Some decree from Persia?* After a few moments, Ezra's words strike your heart as you realize what he's reading.

*I recognize this. It's the law of Moses . . . the Word of the Lord!*

From childhood, you've known the stories about Abraham and Moses and David. You've celebrated the Sabbath. You've even memorized a few prayers. But no one you've known has had access to the *whole* Law. As Ezra reads, you realize how much of God's story you hadn't known.

In reverence and awe, you stand. Waves of others rise with you (*Nehemiah 8:5*). When Ezra finishes reading, you and your brothers and sisters shout, "Amen! Amen!" and bow in worship to God (*8:6*).

Yet the revival is just getting started. According to *8:7–8*, what essential role did the Levites play in this revival?

### Mobilization of God's People—Nehemiah 8:9–12

Not only did you just *hear* more of the Word than you had ever heard before, but you also now *understand* it more than you ever thought possible. But in an instant, your shining excitement fades under the shadow of guilt and shame as you realize all the ways you've failed to obey God.

According to *Nehemiah 8:9–11*, how did Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites provide comfort to the people?



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

According to *Nehemiah 8:12*, how did the people respond to the exhortation of the spiritual leaders?

*Go and celebrate!* When you hear these words, you sigh in relief. Now that you have access to God's Word, you can know Him and serve Him better than you ever had before. You smile, stand up, and join the celebration.



### **Interpretation: Scripture and Revival**

The public proclamation of Scripture resuscitated the spiritual life of a community that had been lifeless for decades. Why is hearing (or reading), understanding, and applying the Scriptures essential to the Christian life? What would a walk with God lack without His Word?



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

The people of Jerusalem wept after hearing the proclamation of the Word of God because they realized they had failed to keep His commandments. Despite this reality, why did Nehemiah and the other leaders want the people instead to rejoice? For some help, check out *Constable's Notes* available for free at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).

Using the following template, write two or three timeless truths based on this passage: *A godly leader shows concern for others' spiritual lives by . . . because . . .*

*We must have balance. The people of Jerusalem had emotion—spontaneous emotion. They expressed their love and praise to God, not caring, thinking only of the Lord God and of how much they loved Him. But at the same time, there was the teaching ministry of the Word. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Correlation: Another Revival in Jerusalem**

Hundreds of years after Nehemiah's death, *another* revival took place in Jerusalem. A few weeks after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus ascended into heaven. But He promised not to leave His followers alone. He would give them the Holy Spirit.



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

The arrival of the Spirit prompted the apostle Peter to open the Scriptures to explain to his Jewish brothers and sisters the eternal significance of these events. The climax of the sermon is recorded in [Acts 2:32–39](#). What truths about Jesus did Peter proclaim based on his exposition of God’s Word in [2:34–35](#)?

No revival is complete without the mobilization of God’s people. According to [2:41–47](#), how did the community respond to Peter’s sermon? What similarities does this scene share with the revival recorded in [Nehemiah 8:1–12](#)?

*We are in a famine. Frankly, it’s difficult to find faithful exposition of the Scriptures today. I do not say that out of judgment. I say that out of an ache in my heart. People all over the world are hungry for the teaching of God’s Word. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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*Nehemiah 8:1–12*



### Application: Personal Revival

Studying Scripture isn't an end in itself. God's Word not only informs the head but touches the heart and instructs the hands. This is why application is essential to Bible study.<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah knew that the people of Jerusalem needed to understand and apply the Scriptures, and Pastor Chuck Swindoll demonstrates how we experience revival when we do the same:

- No life is complete without a spiritual dimension.
- No spiritual dimension is complete without scriptural input.
- No scriptural input is complete without personal obedience.
- No personal obedience is complete without great rejoicing.

Which of the four reminders above is especially important for you in your current season of life?

*Rejoicing* is a practice and a privilege, a duty and a delight, the fuel and the destination. How can you work at the discipline of rejoicing to ensure your spiritual life doesn't grow cold?



## Revival at the Water Gate

*Nehemiah 8:1–12*

God wants His people to live vibrant lives. Yet when the fire dims, revival is necessary. Are you in need of personal revival today? Scripture will be the spark. Obedience will be the fire. And your life will offer a warm glow of joy that will draw others to God.



### A FINAL PRAYER

As you close your time in God's Word, write your own prayer in the space below:

#### ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

