

## ***How can we reawaken our desire and delight in the Word? (Nehemiah 8)***

**1. Open the book.** Let's start with the obvious. Do you want to hear from God? Open the book. Open the book. It's that simple. *"Ezra, opened the book."* (v5) Do you open the book? The Bible is, according to many, the most widely published and least known book we have. Some people pick up every book other than the Bible. *When is the last time that you opened the book? Do you open the book other than on Sunday?*

**2. Make it a priority.** As the people gathered for their New Year celebration, a festival time, what did they want? What were they calling for? To have the Book opened (v1). Make it a priority.

A Priority is defined as a thing that a person regards as more important than others. Carve out times in your day and your week where you can give God's Word the attention it deserves. And that means more than just persisting with the blurry eyed attempt to maintain some zombie like morning Bible reading plan because you feel it's the spiritual thing to do, don't do that, **the goal is not to read, the goal is to listen attentively**, so actually find a good time to read God's word when you are fresh, unhurried and attentive.

For me it is the morning, although in all honesty 1 or 2 of those times of personal devotion each week are usually zombie like and unproductive, and some I don't even make it to, but I persist with this routine because I know that 3 or 4 will be rich encounters where I am able to engage with God's Word, as long as I sleep in on the right side of the clock.

**3. Slow down.** They were not in a hurry. Ezra read it aloud from day break till noon (v3), day after day (v18), 5-6 hours they stood and listened. Don't read just to get your quota in, don't read to get it done and out the way. **Read slowly, deliberately, attentively.**

I would rather you read one verse slowly and think about it, and reflect on what it is teaching you about who God is and the implications of that revelation for your life and future, one verse, rather than for you to cram in 4 chapters every day for a week and not have stopped to ponder any of it.

Here's a tip, approach your reading with the goal of getting the words moving **from your head to your heart** because this goal will cause you to slow down. That's why I would encourage you to journal, to write, to read with a notebook and pen, because to write you have to think, but to read you don't necessarily have to. Slow down.

**4. Be expectant.** As Ezra opened it the people all stood up (v5). Read with an expectant heart. Believe that God wants to reveal more about Himself to you for your growth and His glory; that is His goal. Believe that He wants to teach you and speak to you and He wants to show you wonderful things in His word. If you open the book with that expectation it will affect the way you read, it will affect your openness to the Holy Spirit. Whereas if you don't believe you're going to get anything out of it, then you've defeated the objective before you've even started. So guess what? You won't get anything out of it because you've shut your heart and mind down.

**5. Be amazed.** All the people lifted their hands and responded Amen and Amen! They bowed down and worshipped the Lord (v6). Recognise the magnitude of what you actually have in your hand, the very words of God. In your hand is the revelation of the creator, your creator, the revelation of who God is, what He has done, what He is doing and what all this means for the past, present and future of your life and of His work in His world. I suppose this is another way of saying you need to read with thankfulness, and gratitude, for what God in His grace and kindness has made available to you.

**6. Remember you can't live without it** (so don't try). This is the word of life. This is the word that brought you life, that saved your soul, that brought you back to God, and this is the word that will continue to bring transformation in your life.

Understand that no spiritual renewal or revival, that no maturing in your life or anyone else's will ever come about without exposure to the Word of God, without a growing desire and delight in the Word of God. You can't live without it, open the book. *'They told Ezra the Scribe to bring out the book.'* (v1)