

# **CITYWEST CHURCH**

**23.11.2025 - 10 AM**

## **THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.**

all the people assembled with a unified purpose at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.

2 So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand.

3 He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.

4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. To his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. To his left stood Pedaiah, Mishaël, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.

6 Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, “Amen! Amen!” as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—then instructed the people in the Law while everyone remained in their places. 8 They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, “Don’t mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the LORD your God.” For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

10 And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a

sacred day before our Lord. ***Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!***

### **Nehemiah 8:1-10 (NLT)**

*Nehemiah 1-7 is all about rebuilding the wall.*

*But Nehemiah 8 shows us that God's real goal was to rebuild the people.*

*Nehemiah 1-7 is about*

- *Wall*
- *Construction*
- *Establishing physical security*
- *Work*
- *Nehemiah the leader*

*Chapter 8 it pivots to:*

- *Gods law*
- *Instruction*
- *Spiritual security*
- *Worship*
- *Spiritual revival of a nation.*

*The wall is standing. The city is safe.*

*Now God wants their **hearts**, not their hammers.*

“Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

### **1 Timothy 4:8 (NLT)**

*A few thoughts out of this passage on how it relates to us today:*

## 1. THE BIBLE SHOWS US WHO WE REALLY ARE

He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.

### **Nehemiah 8:3 (NLT)**

*Nobody forced them.*

*The people hungered for God's voice again.*

*This is spiritual renewal:*

*When we stop asking God to bless our plans and start asking God to speak to us again.*

*Ezra reads the Word and the people stand — a posture of attention, honour, and readiness.*

*Where the Word is welcomed, identity is restored.*

*When we open Scripture, God reopens our hearts.*

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

### **Psalms 119:105 (NLT)**

‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God

### **Matt 4:4 (NLT)**

*Jesus says this quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 makes it clear, that bread alone is not enough, a wall around a city is not enough. We find our life and not just in the work of the Lord, but the word of the Lord.*

## 2. THE WORD REVEALS WHAT'S LOST, AND HOW IT'S RESTORED.

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—then instructed the people in the Law while everyone remained in their places. **8** They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

### **Nehemiah 8:7-8 (NLT)**

*Because the Word holds up a mirror.*

*It shows where we've wandered, what we've forgotten, and who we've become without noticing.*

*This is the painful grace of conviction —*

*Not to **shame** us, but to **save** us.*

*Conviction is not God rubbing your face in failure;*

*It's God reaching into the rubble to pull you out.*

The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

### **Psalms 51:17 (NLT)**

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. **13** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.

### **Hebrews 4:12-13 (NLT)**

*To be vulnerable is not a virtue celebrated by the West. It helps a lot to be vulnerable, but if you have to be vulnerable to the wrong person, you can be burned forever.*

*When we come to the world, and are vulnerable, it can feel painful and like pieces falling to the floor, but God is gracious and kind. The wall was built by the people, but he who builds the people is God, through his word.*

### 3. WHAT CAN BEGIN WITH TEARS ENDS IN JOY.

And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!”

#### **Nehemiah 8:10 (NLT)**

*Not their joy.*

*Not joy from circumstances.*

*Not joy from a finished wall.*

*God’s joy.*

*Joy that comes from being His people, loved, forgiven, and restored.*

*This is the heart of revival —*

*God turns conviction into celebration.*

*He trades sorrow for strength.*

*It’s not “ignore your pain.”*

*It’s “don’t live in it — God has given you something better.”*

*Joy is not an emotion; it’s an engine.*

*Joy doesn’t deny reality; it defies it.*

To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory.

#### **Isaiah 61:3 (NLT)**

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

#### **John 15:9-11 (NLT)**

*Nehemiah 8 reminds us:*

- *God rebuilds His people through His Word.*
- *Conviction is the doorway to healing.*
- *Joy is the strength that carries us forward.*

## **CONNECT GROUP QUESTIONS**

- 1. Why do you think the people in Nehemiah 8 were so eager to hear God's Word — and what does that reveal about what they were longing for?**
- 2. The people wept when they understood the Word. Why do you think God often uses understanding before joy?**
- 3. What could “sharing joy” look like in your life right now?**