

# *Listen to it then react*

## 1. Word of God – Read to all who could understand.

*NE 8:2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. <sup>3</sup> He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand.*

Mate this is some bible reading, if he read from daybreak to noon – how long was the sermon. And what happened to the worship time. We'll get to that, they stood and listened. God's word – just taking it in.

I am not sure about this bit though - *of the men, women and others who could understand.* Who or what are these others?

Notice there was no talking in the back pew,

*And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.*

I have a theory. We spend a lot of time prettying up the christian faith – maybe we should just let it speak for itself. Hymns and songs are great – and we stand for them, but The reading of God's word just doesn't seem to excite our people, maybe that is because we are more interested in the church experience than knowing God.

## 2. Listening to God's word leads to worshipping God.

*NE 8:5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. <sup>6</sup> Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*

Lifted their hands. It is a natural expression of jubilation. I say this with the utmost respect to people who have issues with raising hands in church. Raising hands is

commanded of us in scripture. *1TI 2:8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

I don't have time to go into it now, but it is. Why? It is a sign of excitement. I watched the last 5 or so holes of the masters golf on Monday morning. When Phil Mickelson dropped that last putt in to win what did everyone, except Ernie Ells do? They raised their hands. Raising hands in worship is not New Testament but Old Testament

*PS 141:2 May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

Having said that, we ignore much of scriptures input into our worship format. We don't bow down, we don't prostrate ourselves before God, we don't worship God with our faces to the ground. Why? We like to do it our way. Guess what, our way is not always the best. We feel comfortable with our hands up or our hands in our pockets. In the times of Jeremiah worship was a whole body experience. So was mourning, so was partying.

The Jews know how to get involved in worship. We are so subdued, so controlled, so cliché. We put on our excitement when it is appropriate, then turn it off.

3. Day 2 – Teach the teachers.

***NE 8:13 On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law.***

Notice here that they didn't call the leaders to bible study – the leaders gathered around, they wanted to know. Leaders who want to know God's word  
AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENS!!!!!!

4. They took what the law said literally, they let it affect their lives.

***14 They found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in booths during the feast of the seventh month 15 and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make booths"--as it is written.***

5. Then what happens – they instruct the people to do what it says.

***NE 8:16 So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. 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.***

Do we have this experience???? Does God's word change the way we do things? If not we aren't reading it right.

They read it and changed what they were doing because of what they read.

If we take this as a principle of how we interpret the bible, then the bible affects life.

When we read how to act towards one another, we do it, when we read that love is a prerequisite for church life we do it. When we read that we have to forgive those who we perceive have wronged us, then we do it.

Notice that they did it as they found out. As we learn more about God through the bible, we change. Do not expect everyone to be reacting like you are.

6. Day after day they heard the law.

***NE 8:18 Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.***

This is not a once a week church service, this is an all week experience. Sure this was a festival of learning but there is a principal here. Growing in Jesus is a week long activity. Sunday is a celebration of the fact that we have been relating to God all week. Sure we learn stuff and grow on Sundays too but the real growth is going to happen in Bible study personally and in groups. That's why there is an emphasis on it at the moment I this church. There is a direct relationship to growth with how much time we open the bible. Notice the rapid growth process here. It was exciting. Learning new stuff about God is exciting. That's why they celebrated afterwards. Seven days of being excited about God. Sounds good. That should be where we are at. We have more access to God's word than ever before.