



Dear Brother and Sisters,

Please take some time and read Nehemiah 8:1-18.

Before we jump into the text and what it teaches us about God's Word, the Bible, it is important to understand some history of the people of Jerusalem. Before the people came back to the city, they were living in Babylon as slaves. Years before, King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came and attacked the people and city of Jerusalem. The reason for all of this was because the people

refused to follow the directions that God had laid out for them.

2 Chronicles 36:11-16 tells us of the last king who reigned before the Babylonians attacked. His name was Zedekiah and the Bible tells us that *"he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord"* and ignored the prophet Jeremiah's warnings. At that time, the priests and the people also turned their backs on God and began following other religious traditions. They too, ignored and mocked the prophets that God sent to warn them. Finally, in the end, verse 16 tells us that "God's anger could no longer be restrained, and nothing could be done." Thus, the book of 2 Chronicles ends with the Babylonian's attack and the fall of Jerusalem. If the people had listened and followed God's directions, none of that would have ever happened. Now, back in Jerusalem, the people turn back to God and did what they should have done 70 years earlier.

When we are looking for God direction in our lives, there are somethings that we must understand just like the nation of Israel needed to understand. The first thing they did was what any person needs to do in order to understand directions. And that is to read them. Now I am as guilty as the next person when it comes to reading the directions. There are many times that I take for granted that I know how things work, only to find that they don't. As Ezra opened the book, all the people stood in respect and awe of God and prepared themselves to listen.

All the people, the men, women, and children old enough to understand, listened to the Word from early morning until noon. This would have possibly been about 6 hours of time spent listening to Scripture. They made reading God's Word a very important part of their lives and, in fact, as Nehemiah 8:18 tells us, they made it a daily part of their lives.

This is a commitment that we need to make in our lives as well if we are going to see spiritual renewal . Otherwise, we won't know the direction that God has asked us to follow. Now, a huge part of me feels like a hypocrite saying this because I have not been doing well at all in reading my Bible daily. So, this message is as much for me as it is for anyone else out there. It is hard to set aside time and to make it a priority, but we need to keep working at it and keep trying repeatedly. Every day, every season, and every year of our lives.

The second thing the people did was to make sure they understood what they were reading. This is probably the hardest and most difficult thing when it comes to the Bible. There are a lot of scriptures in the Bible that are really confusing and hard to understand at first glance. Let me ask you guys a question though; if you were reading directions for something and you came upon a part you didn't understand, what would you do? You should ask for help from someone who knows more or perhaps call the 1-800 number for help.

That is the same thing that the people of Jerusalem did. In verses Nehemiah 8: 7-8, it tells us that the Levites, the men who had studied God's Word and knew more about it and taught the people *"the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage."*

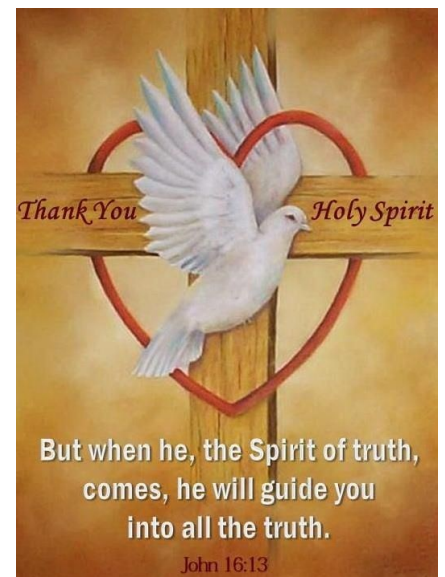
When we read Scripture, we need to make sure we understand it. We are in a much better spot today than the people in Jerusalem because we have so much today that can help with understanding what the Bible teaches. Don't ever forget that the Holy Spirit is our teacher and our guide and He can bring revelation about the meaning of the scriptures. Like the Jews, we also have people who are older and more experienced that we can ask questions. We have books like Commentaries or How To Read the Bible Book by Book. We have notes in our Bibles to help. We have devotionals like The One Minute Bible and we have the internet. It is so important take advantage of these things to help understand what we are reading.

The third and last thing the people did was they put what they read and understood into practice. This is what is said in verses Nehemiah 8: 14-16. As they read the book of Leviticus, they learned that during this particular festival that they were celebrating, God had commanded them to live in shelters during it. So the people immediately went out and built shelters out of branches all over the city.

*James 1:22 says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* This is the most important step when following directions for something. It would be stupid and pointless to have read the directions and understood them but to then just throw them aside and do it your way. Yet, we do this all the time with the Bible because we are a stubborn and prideful people. We need to put our selfish desires aside and put what God teaches into practice.

Read it, hear it, do it! Those are the things that need to be happening in our lives when it comes to Scripture. We need to start by challenging ourselves to set aside time and read the Bible. We need to really hear what we are reading and work to understand it. We can't be afraid to ask the Holy Spirit questions or to search for answers from Bible teachers. Then we need to put it into practice. Let us not end up with a bike that falls apart, or like the Israelites in a mess because they didn't follow directions. But instead, let us do our best to follow the directions laid out in The Bible that will lead to a truly joyful and glorious life that will never, ever fall apart. My prayer is that each of us take the time to do this very thing. Read it, hear it, do it!

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
Pastor Don



## Cooking With Pastor Don

### Strawberry Cobbler

#### Ingredients:

- ¼ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup sugar, plus 3 tablespoons, divided
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided
- 4 pounds fresh strawberries, hulled and halved (about 9 cups)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¾ cup whole milk
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, melted



#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish lightly with cooking spray. Whisk cornstarch, 1/2 cup sugar and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Add strawberries and vanilla; stir until thoroughly coated. Spoon the mixture into the prepared dish. Bake for 15 minutes.
  2. Meanwhile, whisk all-purpose flour, pastry flour, baking powder and the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Add milk and melted butter; stir until well combined.
- Remove the strawberry mixture from the oven. Drop 12 rounded spoonful's (about 2 tablespoons



#### **OVER 80'S SENIOR LUNCHEON**

We will be celebrating our "Over 80's Seniors" in the church with a luncheon on Saturday, May 18 at 12:00 Noon in the Fellowship Hall.



Join us for Mother's Day, Sunday, May 12 at 11 AM as our Nurture Commission recognizes the mothers in our congregation.



We will be honoring our 2024 graduates on Sunday, June 9 at our 10 AM morning worship service. Come to help us celebrate our graduates!

## **Mother/Daughter Banquet :**

*Picnic in the Garden!* Come to a picnic in Peter Rabbit's Garden! Plan to join us for the Mother/Daughter Banquet on May 14, 2024 at 6:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. The cost will be \$15.00, \$6.00 for children 3-7, Free for children under 2. If you feel your little one may need an alternate meal, please contact Laura Wingard-Plank (text or call 724-954-0789).

*If you would like to participate in garden activities:*

- ⇒ Plant or arrange a miniature garden and bring it to display.
- ⇒ Bring a stuffed rabbit toy to join Peter Rabbit for the night.
- ⇒ Dress in your best gardening attire or most elegant picnic outfit.



**Saturday, June 1,  
8 AM -1 PM.**

**Come One! Come All!  
To our Strawberry Festival  
Saturday, June 8, 4-7 PM**

Menu will include hot sandwiches, drinks, strawberry pie and cakes with fresh strawberries & home-made ice cream. You may Dine In or place a Take Out order. To order "take outs" the day of the Fest call 724-545-9655.



# THE Lamplighter

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