

## Nehemiah 8

**MAIN POINT: God's written word has powerful effects when read and heard by God's people.**

### **Introduction:**

Ask each group member to share their favorite verses or passages from Scripture, if they have one. Allow any person to "pass" if they do not have a favorite or if they do not wish to share. As each person shares, ask them to explain why that passage is their favorite.

### **Reading the Word**

Next, ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6. Then ask the group to respond to the following questions:

- **Pastor Andy said that the people were eager to hear the word of God because they were looking for a corporate identity. What would you say is the corporate identity of Emmaus Road church?**
- **How would an "outsider" describe our corporate identity?**
- **Is that what we want it to be? If not, how would we go about changing it?**
  
- **How would you describe the corporate identity of this Life Group?**
- **How would an "outsider" describe our corporate identity?**
- **Is that what we want it to be? If not, how would we go about changing it?**

### **Understanding the Word**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 8:7-8, 13, and then ask the group to respond to these questions:

- **Who has been an influential Bible teacher in your life? What is one thing you learned from that person?**
  
- **What are some things you still want to learn from the Bible? Where can you go for help in that endeavor?**
  
- **Notice the audience for verses 7-8 (all the people) and the audience in verse 13 (the heads of the families) that met with the Levites. How does large group teaching/preaching differ from small group teaching? To what extent do you need both—or maybe one is as good as another...what do you think?**
  
- **Pastor Andy said that his role as preacher and teacher is not to make the words recorded in scripture relevant, but to demonstrate the ways in which they are already**

relevant. What do you think that means, and in what ways do you see it happening—or not—in our church?

### Celebrating the Word

Ask a volunteer to read Nehemiah 8:9-12 and then ask the group to respond to these questions:

- **What were the range of emotions that the people had through this passage? How do you account for these different reactions?**
- **What feelings have you experienced when you read or hear scripture?**
- **What are some of your favorite ways to experience/hear the reading of scripture?**
- **What ideas do you have for public reading of the scriptures?**

[BONUS QUESTIONS IF YOU HAVE TIME OR YOUR GROUP ENJOYS DIGGING A LITTLE DEEPER INTO THE BIBLE. THESE RELATE TO THREE CELEBRATIONS THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE OBSERVED: (1) THE FESTIVAL OF TRUMPETS; (2) THE DAY OF ATONEMENT; (3) THE FEAST OF BOOTHS OR TABERNACLES]

- **The dates mentioned in Nehemiah 8 are significant. Read Leviticus 23:23-25 and compare with Nehemiah 8:1-3. How does this date give meaning to the instructions in Nehemiah 8:9-12? What role does celebration play in your relationship with God? How does our church provide opportunities for that?**
- **Read Leviticus 23:26-28 and notice the date mentioned there. What is significant about the Day of Atonement and the response of the people to hearing Ezra read the Scripture? What role do you think regular repentance and forgiveness should play in a Christian's way of life? How does Communion help you do this on a regular basis?**
- **Read Leviticus 23:33-43 and Nehemiah 8:13-17. What is the link between the Exodus from Egypt and the return from exile? How does our sacrament of Communion incorporate this theme of freedom? What thoughts or feelings do you experience when you celebrate Communion?**
- **What other acts of God do you celebrate with regularity? Which of these are personal, which are family celebrations, and which are with the community of faith? What do you think is a good balance of these three venues?**

Prayer: