

BIBLE STUDY WEEK 9 – NEHEMIAH CH'S7&8

Welcome to our Wednesday Study and these are quite remarkable chapters before us. Sadly in many churches the Bible Study groups are very small and poorly attended! Here we see Nehemiah's re-building program gather steam and two major activities make up our chapters this week. Firstly in ch.7 a massive census takes place then in ch.8 a giant bible study takes place and the ancient festival of booths happens. This is both a reminder for these people of their past (flight from the garden/journey with Abraham/escape from Egypt/wandering in the wilderness etc.). But also points the way forward, as God's people they are still on a journey, His journey and there is a way to go. You might like to do your own bit of research into the festival of booths it makes for very interesting reading.

I wonder what the very first event will be in our churches when we are fully allowed to return? Will it be remembering those lost during the pandemic, will it be Holy Communion, will it be an act of fellowship and thanksgiving? As this Bible Study is being compiled we know that Arlene and Michelle are talking with our church leaders, who knows what will happen and when but we all sense a moving towards an end of lockdown and some kind of return to normal. What I can be pretty sure of is that when we get going again a week long Bible Study is unlikely to be on the agenda! Who knows – come on Select Vestry what do you think?

Q1

Chapter 7 places an importance on belonging – is this something you are aware of in these times? Belonging to God. Belonging to a world-wide Christian family, belonging to a denomination? What importance do you give to a sense of belonging? I often use an illustration in funerals/weddings etc. My dad is from Muff, my mum from Ballywalter, we lived in Hillsborough and Lisburn, I married a girl from Omagh, we lived in London, Bedford, Bangor, Killyleagh, Ballynure and Ballymena – please don't ask me where I'm from!!! Belonging can be a tricky thing.

Q2

What score out of ten would you give the Bible – God's Word? How many times a week do you take time to read/study God's Word? What importance in our part of the world (Ballymena 2020) do people place on God's Word? Do you think living through these covid-19 days will make a difference?

Q3

When was the last time you had a deep emotional response to God's word whether preached/being read/or discussed?

We see this giant Bible study move people to tears of sorrow and distress and to literally jump for joy in celebration? Are you suspicious of reactions like this within yourself, or, others? Why?

Emma and I would love to hear your stories about how and why a verse or section of the Bible has moved you and why? An intellect only approach to scripture can be very dry and uninspiring! An emotion only relationship with God's word can lead to serious error. This is tricky, but in God's power and sovereignty both are important. Maybe you and your Bible will get along better in the coming days.

God Bless you everyone keep the faith and keep safe. Mark