

HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK: TIMELESS LESSONS ON LEADERSHIP

The Fine Art of Insight

Nehemiah 8:13–18



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The spiritual revival led by Ezra at the Water Gate (Nehemiah 8:1–12) was just the beginning of the Israelites' desire to remodel themselves before the Lord. In search of a solid foundation in the Law, they returned to Ezra, seeking insight—wisdom that could be built into their daily lives. They committed to clear away the rubble of wrong thinking and their old patterns of living, replacing them with obedience to the Lord and His Law. This biblical method for spiritual renovation is an excellent model for rebuilding our spiritual lives today.



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1. The Pursuit of Insight (Nehemiah 8:13–15)

In our last message, we observed the people's spiritual renovation in a revival led by Ezra. As the Israelites started to move back into a right relationship with the Lord, they discovered that they needed spiritual insight. These five truths will also help us gain spiritual insight.

First, *gaining insight takes time*. Merely memorizing biblical facts does not automatically result in wisdom. In Psalm 119:15, the psalmist wrote, “I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways” (NLT). To gain insight we must feast on a regular diet of God’s Word.

Second, *gaining insight takes people*. Successfully pursuing insight involves learning from the right kind of person. According to Nehemiah 8:13, Ezra was the rare and essential person Israel needed. The leaders of Israel huddled at his feet to gather pearls of wisdom.

Third, *gaining insight takes the right attitude*. According to Proverbs 13:10, “Wisdom is with those who receive counsel.” The men who came to hear Ezra that day were all leaders in their own realms (Nehemiah 8:13), yet they came with open, appreciative, eager attitudes.

Fourth, *gaining insight takes the right source*. Ezra never intended to be the people’s true source of insight. After so many years of pursuing insight himself, he knew where to lead the people to find it—“they found [it] written in the law” (Nehemiah 8:14).



Quotable

*Do you teach
the Bible? Then
set your heart to
study God’s Word
and to practice
what you
have learned.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Fifth, *gaining insight takes the right response*. The men of Israel who gathered to search the Scriptures that day rediscovered a priceless celebration that many had forgotten—the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths). Then they observed the feast with obedience (8:14–17).

2. The Products of Insight (*Nehemiah 8:16–18*)

Israel's insight into the Law brought about three visible results. And these responses will be evident in our lives as well—when we truly seek insight from God's Word.

The first visible result of insight is *personal effort* (*Nehemiah 8:16–17*). A person with insight will put forth whatever effort it takes to obey God. The Jews chose to obey God. And they paid the price with their efforts to make booths according to God's specifications, even when it may have appeared ridiculous to others.

The second visible result of insight is a *willingness to change* (8:16). Those who possess insight choose to leave behind old habits, seeking instead to live out the truth.

The third visible result of insight is *great rejoicing* (8:17). Those who possess insight overflow with the joy that comes from obedience. Though the Jews had little experience celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles in makeshift booths, nothing could quench the happiness that flowed from their hearts. Insight leads to immediate obedience, and obedience results in unfathomable joy. Joy doesn't imply ease or a lack of difficulty but delight in God.



DOORWAY TO HISTORY

The Feast of Tabernacles

Memorials, monuments, and celebrations are designed to commemorate an event of deep significance. Through feasts and other holidays dictated by the Lord in the Old Testament, the people of Israel recognized the reality of God's provision and renewed their commitment to obey Him alone.

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God had ordained several annual feasts in the Old Testament—each one illustrating a significant aspect of His relationship with His people. They were “memorials of God’s saving acts in the past, . . . sacraments of His sanctifying power in the present, and . . . types of His anticipated victory over sin in the forthcoming first and second advents of Jesus Christ.”¹

The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) was an annual remembrance of a time when the Jews lived in temporary quarters. From the time they were delivered from slavery in Egypt under Moses until they entered Canaan under Joshua, they lived in tents. This feast was designed to remind them of the Lord’s care and protection during their time in the wilderness and His promises to protect them and provide for their needs in the future. As such, they were instructed to gather branches and build small booths to live in for the seven days of the feast (*Leviticus 23:32–43*).



LET'S LIVE IT

Like the men and women of Ezra’s day, we need more than just occasional insight if we’re going to make any real spiritual progress. And just how are we to do that? Consider these two practical suggestions.

First, *we need to spend time in the Scriptures every day* (*Nehemiah 8:18*). Clothing yourself with the wisdom of God doesn’t come from window-shopping in God’s Word. You must enter into His storehouse of insights regularly. And when you come across a fitting insight, remember that God’s Word is not to be tailored to your life . . . your life must be measured and tailored to fit His Word.

Second, *believers need to gather regularly for times of worship and celebration*. Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron, / So one man sharpens another.” Ezra pointed the Israelites toward the true source of wisdom and insight, leading them in regular worship and celebration. God intends for believers today to join together in the same way (*Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:24–25*). We all need the encouragement and strengthening of our faith that come from fellowship with other believers.

Do you take time regularly to feed on God’s Word by hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, or meditating on Scripture? If not, what other priorities are taking precedence? How might you make time in God’s Word a priority in the coming days?

ENDNOTE

1. E. D. Isaacs and J. B. Payne, “Feasts,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, E–J, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and others (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 293.



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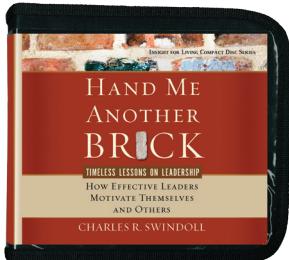
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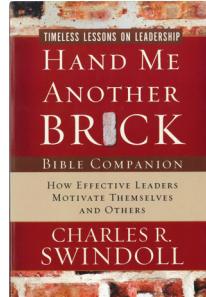
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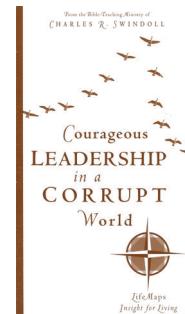
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