

HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK

Timeless Lessons on Leadership

STUDY ELEVEN

The Fine Art of Insight

Nehemiah 8:13–18

You can have a knowledge of Bible facts. Up in your head, you can have it. You can spend decades in a Bible-teaching church and have no insight. You can have truth spelled out in a teaching fashion, systematically, book by book, verse by verse, and not gain insight. Insight comes in a different way.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE awaking up one morning with a new ache in your lower back. You try to sit up, but your body won't bend that way. You slowly wiggle yourself out of bed and creep to your phone to call your doctor. After you finish listing the symptoms—that seem to increase by the minute—she says, “I'm referring you to a specialist. He's one of the best in the country!” *Great!*

You call the orthopedist and start to give the rundown of your symptoms again. After a few seconds, he interrupts you. The pain should go away on its own. No treatment needed. *Great!*

Yet after a few days, not only is the pain far greater than it was before, but it has spread to your upper back and to your neck, too. So you reach out to the orthopedist again. This time, he admits he made a mistake in the initial diagnosis. *Not great!*

What happened here? Though this top doctor possessed all the knowledge needed to help you, he failed to demonstrate *insight*—failed to put his knowledge into action. Without taking time to understand your symptoms, lifestyle, and medical history, he couldn't accurately diagnose the problem and then prescribe an appropriate treatment plan.



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Insight is an essential element for the healthy Christian life. With insight, we respond to what we learn from Scripture to live in a way that resembles Christ and glorifies God. This *Searching the Scriptures* study will reveal how you can put your Bible knowledge into action to lead a godly life.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Gaining insight requires hard work, steady patience, and a willing spirit. Yet you will never gain insight by sheer effort alone. *True* insight always comes from God alone, and He graciously offers it to us to spur us on to Christlike living. Say this prayer, asking God to give you insight as you open the Scriptures today:

Father, I need You to show me the right way to live. I need You to give me insight. As I look to the example of Nehemiah, help me put into action my knowledge of Your Word so I can master the art of insight. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Nehemiah is about *reconstructing* the walls of Jerusalem and *re instructing* the people who lived within the walls. For the first half of the account, Nehemiah mobilized Jerusalem's citizens to complete the walls. He then turned his focus to eternal matters.

Along with Ezra the scribe, the priests, and the Levites, Nehemiah instructed the people of Jerusalem in the law of Moses. For decades, the Israelites had been exiled from their home, and for many of them, this was their first substantial exposure to the Word of God.

How would they respond to what they learned? Let's turn to [Nehemiah 8:13–18](#) to find out!



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Observation: The Pursuit of Insight

Read *Nehemiah 8:13–18* slowly and carefully. Then reread it, looking for details you may have missed initially. Repeat this process until you can't uncover any more details. If we don't clearly understand what Scripture says, we won't be able to glean insight from its teachings.¹

According to *8:13*, why did the heads of the households gather around the priests, the Levites, and Ezra the scribe? Look at several different Bible translations to get a sense of the people's desire.

According to *8:14–15*, what ancient Israelite custom did the present residents of Jerusalem newly discover based on their close reading of the Law of Moses?

How did the people respond in *8:16* to what they had learned?



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According to *Nehemiah 8:17*, what kind of attitude did the people assume as a result of these events?

Celebrating the Festival of Shelters didn't end the Israelites' journey toward insight. It was just the beginning. Each day of the weeklong feast, "Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God" (*Nehemiah 8:18*). The people were hungry to grow in their knowledge of God. And as they nourished themselves on His Word, they practiced the first step of gaining insight.



Interpretation: The Product of Insight

The arts of interpretation and insight are close companions. Without a proper understanding of the meaning of a passage of Scripture, we won't be able to appropriately respond to its teachings.

Look up *insight* in a dictionary or two and define it in your own words. What is the relationship between insight and knowledge? What role does God play in the giving of insight? For some help, look up *wisdom* in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* available for free at biblestudytools.org.

The Festival of Shelters was one of three Jewish festivals that required all male Jews to gather in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God (*Deuteronomy 16:16*). This festival wasn't another routine gathering. It was one of the highlights of the year—a time for remembering God's promises and celebrating His faithfulness!



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Read about the Festival of Shelters in *Leviticus 23:33–44*. What specific event did this festival celebrate? Why is this festival an occasion for rejoicing—as we see *Nehemiah 8:17*?

Using the following template, write two or three timeless truths based on this passage: *A godly leader can gain insight by . . .*

There are three products of insight: personal effort despite difficulty, willingness to change despite tradition, and great rejoicing despite circumstances. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Perseverance of Insight

The Word of God tells the story of creation. The hero of this account is Jesus Christ. Every biblical book ultimately points to Him and His work as Redeemer and Lord. So without Him, every spiritual insight is incomplete.



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Acts 8:26–40 tells of an Ethiopian eunuch who couldn't make sense of the book of Isaiah. The Holy Spirit immediately sent Philip to offer a generous dose of insight. According to *8:31*, what did the Ethiopian eunuch say when Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (*Acts 8:30*)?

Philip interpreted the passage from Isaiah and explained how it reveals "the Good News about Jesus" (*8:35*). How then did the Ethiopian eunuch respond in *8:36–38* to what he had learned?

In what ways does this passage overlap with *Nehemiah 8:13–18* in the demonstration of true spiritual insight?



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God doesn't drop insight out of a cloud into your head. It comes from the Holy Spirit and through a sound understanding of the Bible. Every insightful Christian I've known has pored over this Book . . . many of them not even engaged in vocational Christian service.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: The Practice of Insight

Gaining insight is like mastering an art. You can't simply learn insight from reading a textbook. Rather, you must practice putting your knowledge into action under the right conditions. Pastor Chuck Swindoll identifies five conditions necessary for learning the fine art of insight:

- *It takes the right amount of time:* structured, scheduled, consistent
- *It takes the right people:* pastors, mentors, teachers
- *It takes the right attitude:* humility, teachability
- *It takes the right source:* God's Word
- *It takes the right response:* wholehearted obedience

Though true insight ultimately comes from the Holy Spirit, we must cooperate with Him as He enables us to let our knowledge flow from our heads to our hands. As you reflect on your own circumstances, which of the conditions above do you need to work on to deepen your insight?



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The people of Jerusalem didn't gain their insight in isolation. No, they did it together! What role does the community of believers play in the cultivation of insight? What practical steps can you take to pursue insight with your local community of believers?

In the Christian life, it can be easy to become content with knowledge alone. Yet spiritual insight demands we put our knowledge of God, Jesus, and the Bible into action. What element of your Christian knowledge do you sense the Holy Spirit prompting you to put into action?

Practicing the art of insight is no simple task. It's a slow process, a difficult process. Yet to be able to put your knowledge of God into action to serve Him and others is one of God's greatest gifts. So keep working. Keep studying. Keep praying. And God, the giver of all insight, will guide you toward a life that honors Him.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for giving me Your Word—the most valuable source of insight. Help me understand Scripture better every day so I can know You more closely, love You more deeply, and serve You more passionately. I pray in the wonderfully profound name of Jesus. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

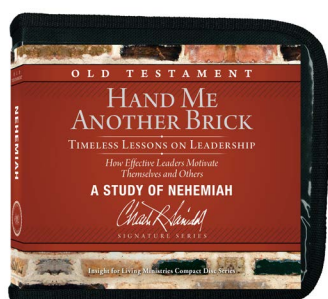
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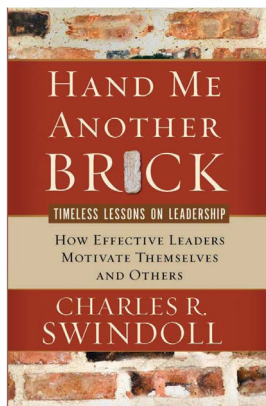
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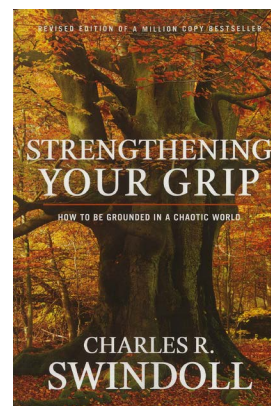
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2023 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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