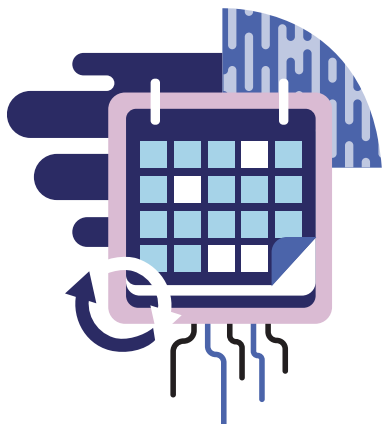


Daily Devotions



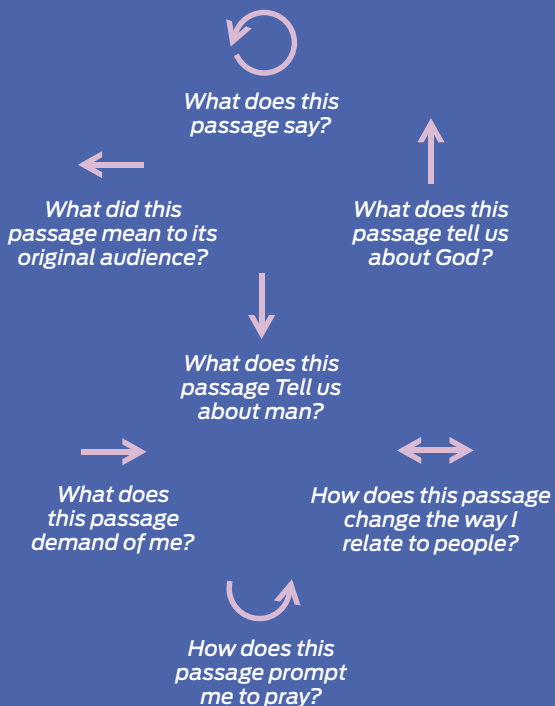
Day 1

Nehemiah 7:73b–8:18

The Scriptures are always after the heart; they are directed beneath the surface of the hearer to the seat of the soul. This is why, as you read or hear the Scriptures, you interact with them differently based on the state of your heart. If your heart is dull or hard to the things of God, then the words of God may not affect you. But if your heart is soft and ignited by the Spirit of God, then the words of God often come alive in your heart in unimaginable and powerful ways.

The Israelites who had returned from exile were eager to avoid yet another exile for their disobedience, so they turned their hearts to the Word of God to know what God expected of them. The posture in which they requested, received, and responded to the reading of God's Word revealed the inner workings of their heart. Their faith in the Lord was deepened through personal, intentional, and thoughtful interaction with the Scriptures followed by joyful obedience. Their posture and practice are a pathway to be considered and followed as we read and hear God's Word.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



What rhythms do you have in your life for personal, intentional, and thoughtful interaction with the Scriptures?

Nehemiah

9:1-38

The Israelites had been told not to weep or grieve at the initial hearing of God's law (Neh. 8:9-12). But there was a time to weep for their sins. God had given them commands to obey, and the people's disobedience had wrecked them over and over and over again, and the consequences for their sin were still being felt.

Yet they came to God in prayer and praise with hope because of who He is. Their song of blessing proclaimed the Lord as the Creator, the covenant-maker and keeper, and their deliverer. Their song also confessed with honesty how the people had failed to honor the Lord in obedience. But this highlighted yet another reason to praise the Lord—He is gracious in His forgiveness and faithful in His patience.

This prayer of praise summarizes the storyline of the Old Testament, and this is the story of God and His work in the world. The truth of these Scriptures grounded their requests and their steps going forward.

How does Scripture ground your requests before God?

Nehemiah

10:1-39

The revival of the people resulted in a commitment to obedience. It is necessary for us to see that their commitment to obey wasn't just affirmation of duty but an expression of delight—an expression of their renewed faith in their Creator and Savior God (Neh. 9:5-37).

Whenever we commit to obey God it should be for the same reasons—duty and delight. We find ourselves in a dangerous space when we reduce obedience to duty (I only obey because I must) or delight (I only obey when I want to). Obedience for the Christian must be both, an outworking of our faith in Christ and an expression of our love for God.

To desire, delight in, cherish, and value God is to obey Him. Our obedience to His commands is evidence of our relationship with Him as our Father, and that relationship is grounded in faith (1 John 5:1-4). Only by faith in the one true God and His Son sent for our salvation can we obey the Lord from duty and delight.

What are some reasons you resist obedience to God, and how can you grow in your faith to obey from duty and delight?

Nehemiah

11:1–12:47

Even though the wall around Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the city was still sparsely populated (Neh. 7:4). The pride and joy of Judah, the city for the Lord's dwelling in the temple, remained impoverished. The people did not want to live there, and given the incredible opposition from enemies while the walls were being built, who could blame them. Yet God had promised a restoration of His people and His promised land, and that required people living in the capital city.

The bulk of chapters 11–12 is a listing of names and numbers of people who were called out by the casting of lots to pick up from their hometowns and move into Jerusalem. These verses testify to the faithfulness of God and the privilege of obedience. The Lord populated His city, and the people who came were recorded in Scripture and blessed by their countrymen.

How are you being called to obey in ways you may not want to?

Nehemiah

13:1-31

The people in the promised land had committed themselves to obedience to the Lord's commands and signed their names to this promise (Neh. 9–10). But that didn't stop some of the people from disobeying once again. Chapter 13 contains examples of people dishonoring the temple, the Sabbath, and God's law about marrying idol worshipers (those who rejected their idols were allowed to worship the one true God along with the people of God; see Ruth; Ezra 6:21).

As Nehemiah called people to account for their willful disobedience, he called on the Lord to remember him for his faithfulness (Neh. 13:14,22,31). If he had wanted to be remembered by the people he governed, he could have enabled their disobedience, approved of it, and even participated in it. But his focus and desire was on the Lord, to be remembered by our faithful and compassionate God. This ought always to be our desire as Christians—not to please human beings but the God whose favor is everlasting (Gal. 1:10).

How does the gospel of Jesus Christ figure into our favor with God?