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Book of Nehemiah, chapter number eight and verse number one. When we have it as a body, can we say amen?

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Amen.

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And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law, of Moses, that the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could

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understand what they heard. On the first day of the seventh month, and he read from it facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday. And the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand, in the ears of all the people,

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were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Matthiah, Shema, Anani, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Messiah on his right hand. Paddaiah, Mishael, Machalach, Hashalem, Hashalabanana,

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Zachariah, and Meshelem on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And as he opened it, all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, amen, amen,

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lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also, Jeshua, Benai, Sherabiah, Jeziam, Akai, Shabadai, Hodai, Masai, Kileidah, Azariah, Josiah, Hazaniah, Bilahi, the Levites.

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Help the people to understand the law while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the law of God early, and they gave the sense so that the people understood

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the reading.

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Father, we thank you for the reading of the word this morning. We thank you for the worship, Lord, that we've been able to partake in. It didn't begin when the song sung. It began the minute we opened our eyes.

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And it will continue, Father, until the day you call us home. And so we just ask you, Lord, now, keep us attentive. Guide us for your glory. In Jesus' precious name, we love you and we pray. Amen.

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Amen.

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So as we start our journey here in the book of Nehemiah, as we continue our journey, rather, in the book of Nehemiah, we've reached the part where we've now gone beyond that halfway mark. The point where, as we were last week, chapter number seven was that transition chapter.

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We were moving from the building of the wall to the real purpose, which Nehemiah knew from the beginning, and that was to the glory of God. The first six chapters focused on the wall. And the cupbearer turned general contractor, now governor, had made it clear the wall was not only finished,

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but as we can see through Nehemiah's movements that the whole purpose was the restoration of God's glory among his people. As chapter 7 ends, we saw that there weren't very many people living in the city. As we move into chapter number 8,

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we know that at this point, when they come together to worship, there are some 50,000 people gathered together with Nehemiah, ready to worship the Lord. Now, I want us to think about this for a minute. Take a look around the room. Just look around. Look around some more. Look around some more. Ask a question. Why is everyone here? Why is everyone here? Yes, there's an

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attractive pastor up front. fit, strong. Okay, I'm joking. All right.

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Okay, I'm joking a little bit.

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My wife is going, oh my goodness. So why is everyone here this morning? It's a question I want you to continue to ask yourself. What prompted you to get up, to get dressed, jump into your car, drive some 10 to 45 minutes depending on where you live,

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your car, drive some 10 to 45 minutes, depending on where you live, so as to walk into this building and take a seat. The answer, it may vary from person to person. But the question I have is, should it? Should it be a different answer for each person

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walking through the door? You see, Nehemiah None, he paints a picture of how we gather. He defines why we gather. What's the purpose? As we saw last week, he had appointed various men

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to positions. He appointed gatekeepers, singers, Levites. And if you're familiar with the Old Testament scriptures, these men were appointed for the worship of God as they worked within the temple. Now, as chapter 7 closes, the people

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were being readied for a revival. That's the purpose. One of the major themes we're going to see through this chapter. So, what is revival? It's an improvement of a condition. It is the strength of something. That's how Webster's defines it. The Bible defines revival as a restoration to spiritual vitality. It's the gracious work of God for his people who at times may fall into apathy or despair. Now something

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that we need to understand about revival, revival is not ministry to the lost. We need to make sure that we understand that, that revival is not ministry to the lost. You see while revival involves a proclamation of God's word, the focus is not on those who don't know God, but rather on those who do. Think about it like this, if you were to come upon somebody and all of a sudden their heart were to stop working and there was an AED nearby, you would attempt to revive the person. In other words, you would apply the AED so as to

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start their heart back up again. The shock that's delivered by this device is meant to restart the heart, bringing the person back from the brink of death to life. You cannot take an AED and go down to a morgue and start putting it on people, because someone who's dead cannot be brought back to life. So we have to make sure that we understand what's taking place here. Consider this in light of how the Bible describes us before we were saved.

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Remember, the Word of God teaches that before we were saved, before we placed faith in Jesus Christ, Ephesians 2, 1 says that we were dead in our trespasses and that in order to be saved through faith we must be born again, John chapter number 3. That is being made alive, new life. Once a person has been born again, there are times in our walk with the Lord we sometimes become a little apathetic. Maybe it's because of some sin in our life.

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But more often than not, we begin to develop this lack of passion for the Lord in our lives for various reasons. Remember the scene. Israel has just returned from Babylon. They were in captivity.

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Many of the people, most of them, had not been raised. What I mean by that is they weren't being raised or reared in the culture of Judaism. That means that while the Jews were, while they were Jews in terms of ethnicity, they were Chaldeans in every other way, in language and in culture. In fact, they spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew. So the book of the law, something that the

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Jew was to be very familiar with, their forefathers wasn't exactly known by some of them. Sure, they heard about it. And sure, there was those who talked about it. But there were some things that were still missing. Now, they understood that God had called them, that there was a homeland they were being called to.

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But this particular generation was dead, not in a sense to where they didn't know God, because there was enough about God being passed down from their ancestors and forefathers, from their parents to where they had an understanding. But the way one would normally be raised to know the God of

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Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was clearly missing because of where they were. And so now they're returning home. And what's missing is the idea of what it truly means to worship God. We were talking about this a little bit last week. Now what I love about this is that Nehemiah step aside and Ezra begins to take front and sitter David Wilkerson he talks about Nehemiah in his sermon anguish and he talks about how Nehemiah was a career man

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Meaning Nehemiah wasn't a priest He wasn't a Levite in short He wasn't a preacher and while Nehemiah was used by God for the revival of his glory, it was in tandem with Ezra. Ezra, who we're going to call the man of the book. So I want you to think about this as we go through.

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Now, I'll be honest with you. If you're in here and you say, hey, you know, I'm not really sure where my relationship is with God, there's going to be times where I'm going to be saying things you're going to know I don't know what that means to me. For those of you who have a relationship with God, you should know

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exactly what it means to you. And I pray that by the time I'm done, those of you who may not have that relationship will be able to understand what's being implied and how this relates to you. So be patient as we kind of peel back the layers, if you would. I'm gonna read Nehemiah 8.1 one more time. It says, And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law

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to Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. And this is an amazing picture to me. Nehemiah knew his role just as Moses and Aaron knew their role. Moses is leading the people. Aaron was the one who became the priest to the people. The time had come for the man with God's rebuilding plan

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to stand next to the man of the book, Ezra, who would be used to continue revival. We're going to talk a little bit more about Ezra later, but for now I want to focus on what's needed for revival. There are two things, and there are a few other things, but I'm going to give you two things essential to revival. The first is the Word of God. We live in a day and time where the Bible is

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foreign to many people, where there are a lot of books that are out there. I almost got covers of books, and I was going to show them to you, Harlequin romance books. I was going to put the covers up and say there were Rouse. Pastor Rouse. But I started looking at some of them,

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and I was like, I can't do them like that. And so I want you to get this picture right, because there are many books that we pick up and many books that we read. But it's interesting how, in a day and time where the scriptures are all around us,

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it's not something that people naturally gravitate towards. See, again, remember, revival isn't about winning the loss. It's about restoring spiritual vitality to the saved. So I want you to think about this in terms of yourself, in terms of this gathering right now. Because it's interesting, it says,

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the people gathered into the square by the water gate. And here's what's interesting. They instructed Ezra to bring the book of the law They asked Ezra to bring the book of the law at the heart of every revival will be the Word of God Whenever God's Word is neglected Believers become complacent their spiritual state begins to deteriorate if we're going to experience

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Spiritual renewal it will not happen apart from God's word. Psalms 119.25 says this, "'My soul clings to the dust. Give me life according to your word.'" Psalms 119.93 says, "'I will never forget your precepts,

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for by them you have given me life.'" The psalmist is making it clear that revitalization comes through God's word. For the Christian in the room today, I have a simple question. How many of you brought a Bible with you this morning? Now I understand the other generation. We just whip out the phone and we got the Bible right there. So

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don't start panicking, all right? The Scriptures are for you on the screen, okay? But what happens when you don't have access to the internet? My house during the week looks like a call center sometimes because everybody and their mother's working from home right now. And so, and the Wi-Fi went out. Boy, you should have saw people tripping out. And so, I wasn't there. So I'm getting all kind of phone calls like, what's the password to the Wi-Fi? Well,

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how come it's not working well how about this and how about that and I guess working fine while met and so everyone's panicking because no one knows what to do because the Wi-Fi is not working you see there's something about this book there's something about the book now I've had this one probably for maybe a year maybe yeah yeah maybe a year and so I have this other one right that the cover doesn't It's not on it anymore. I put it around it

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But it ain't holding it okay And so it's one of those things where you just read it you just read it you almost don't want to go to another Bible You only want to go to that one because you know exactly where the scriptures are in it, right? Even if you can't remember you remember the crease the coffee stain you remember all the stuff So, you know what? It's close to what it's by you like hold on It's around here somewhere, and you start looking for it, then you find it

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There's something about the book right and so there is this love that I have for God's Word But when I begin to turn to it it begins to do something on the inside of me There's no such thing as a super Christian anybody Given enough time can become disinterested in the Lord if they spend enough time away from them and so we we get to this place to where we feel like well you know it won't happen to me you

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spend enough time away from anything and all of a sudden you become a little apathetic towards it when you start to go back to it how much time do you spend with the Word of God so as to know the God of the Word this is how we get to know him in the West we can't say that we don't access to Bibles. We got it in different translations Different versions different you want a sports Bible got you covered you want this kind of Bible got you covered Whatever color whatever shape whatever size I mean they make them every way from you can imagine

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So this is the last place where we can say I find it hard or I found it hard to find the right one. There's no reason for any believer, excuse me, at least in our Western culture, to not have a Bible. What's so interesting is I hear so many believers saying, well I can't find either the right one or I don't need to read the Bible in order to know God. And it's interesting to me. I'm not going to touch on that right now, but it's an interesting thought. See, we have to get to the place where we begin to understand

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that the Word of God is so that we can know the God of the Word, so that we can grow in Him. A major issue facing the church today is just that. We become accustomed to teaching that is man-centered theology and not God-centered theology. Therefore, the Bible is not often read. It's a lack of God's Word that's producing the apathy. Now, whenever we start to talk about that, we always hear the all-famous Hosea 4.6. We know that it's a scripture that is commonly used But the way we think about this scripture is often correct

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But what I want to do is I want to read it in its complete context I want us to grasp everything that God is saying because he's calling out Israel. He's calling out the priest He's calling out the prophets why for the willful rejection of his word. Listen to what he says. Well, they are for one Hear the word of the Lord or children of Israel for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land there is no faithfulness or steadfast love no knowledge of God of the land there is swearing lying murder stealing and

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committing adultery they break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed therefore the land mourns and all who dwell in it languish and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven and even the fish of the sea are taken away. Yet let not one contend and let not one accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest. You shall stumble by day. The prophet also shall stumble with you by night, and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge, because you have rejected knowledge. I reject you for

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being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God I will also will forget your children." There's some strong words. We often say my people perish for the lack of knowledge. We say it over and over and over again. But I want you to grasp the context, right? He's not just talking to Israel. He's talking to Israel, talking to priests, talking to prophets. He's talking to everyone. There's this willful rejection. When he says there is no faithfulness or steadfast love, no knowledge of God in

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the land, the word faithfulness there is better translated truth He's saying there is no truth in The land he's saying that they have forsaken truth They forsaken God's Word if we're going to experience a spiritual renewal It won't happen apart from God's Word Which means it's important psalms 138 one says I give you thanks the Lord with my whole heart before the gods I sing your praise I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name

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For your steadfast love and your faithfulness for you have exalted above all things your name and your word Listen, it's important that we get to the place to where we begin to look at this as a book that gives life I know we go to and we say it's so hard for me to understand But there are many things that are hard for us to understand that we grow in as we keep

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at it.

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And so, it's a desire, right? It's hard to understand so many different things. Parenting is hard to understand. I don't see people just turning their children over. Well, maybe. There are a lot of things that are hard to understand.

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It's not easy when you first start to drive a car. Hard to understand. There are so many different things, yet we don't stop we don't quit we keep going the Word of God isn't hard to understand it's just something that we grow to mature in as God continues to reveal more light to us the question is do you have a desire for the light and so God will give you what it is that you desire but we're so quick

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to push it away and I remember when I first started reading and there were so many different things that I would say all the time, I don't understand it. I don't understand it. But can I just help you? When you're reading, just take a bird's eye view, a 50,000 foot view of the Bible.

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You may not understand everything, but you can make out certain things. It's like when you're at the airport and you start to take off from the city you live in, you start looking at all the different things. I see downtown. Oh, that's Bank of America's building. Oh, that's America West building.

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You see all these different things, but the higher you get, it's harder to make out what's going on. And so I want you to get this picture right that you may be at this altitude right and you're looking you can't really see everything but as you start to descend you begin to make out things that are familiar and can I tell you the more you spend time in the word you begin to see more and more different things it doesn't it doesn't matter how high up you continue to come. I am not smart, ask my wife, okay? And so one of the reasons why I'm able to stand before you, two, one because of the God that's in me.

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That's the first and foremost reason. And two, is because I refuse to put the book down. It is the only thing that gives me life. It is the only thing that gives me strength. When I am going through, and I go through like everybody else at the same problem, same hurts, same pains as everybody else in this room. Pastor, how are you able to stand?

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And sometimes I wanna say, don't say pastor, how are you able to stand? Say, Will, how are you able to stand? I'm not standing because I'm a pastor. I'm standing because of the word of God. It wasn't written to just pastors,

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it was written for everybody. It was written for our learning so that through patience and endurance of the scriptures, we might have hope. That's what Romans 15 tells me. So it wasn't just written for me,

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it was written for you. If you're going through something right now, say, I wish I knew how to get through this. I wish I knew how to go past it. Let me tell you what the Bible doesn't do. It's not a magic book. See, that's what we think it is. I'm going through something right now. So we go to the back of the book. Let's see. Trials and tribulations. That's what we do. We go through it. We start looking at the index and we start going through we said oh, yeah This is a good one right here, and so we want to find what relates it suffering Oh suffering

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I'm gonna go to Romans chapter number 5 verse number 3. Let me help you the Bible isn't a self-help book Never has been never will be it's a book of truth. Here's the truth God doesn't make your problem go away He gives you strength to go through it He gives you the wisdom and the encouragement to say this is how we're gonna go through this Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I don't fear any evil and so what he's trying to do is he wants him to return to the Word of God

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Why because only through the Word of God can you see God and when you see God something begins to happen You want to give him glory you begin to see that you're not worthy of anything Driving in this morning. My wife and I were talking, you know, it's just just gazing and I've turned to what I said We are a trip as people I went on about her talking about me and I said here's the crazy thing if you don't believe in God then we're just a wreck in a mess if you do believe in God we're just a wreck in a mess so the only way a

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person gets to heaven can't be by our merit or our effort we never will never get there grace has to prevail because on our best day the Bible tells me my righteousness is as filthy rats do I know do you know that encourages me not to continue in sin it encouraged me to move away from what it is that's contrary to the will of God and to trust him because I know what he did for me that's why we go to the Word of God because it begins to show us something so as we look at what's being said here, it mirrors our

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land where there is swearing, lying, murdering, stealing, committing adultery. All these different things are commonplace in our day. But I submit to you, they're commonplace in the church. It's not just the world. Most of this stuff is happening right here in the church. I don't mean right here, so don't look at your neighbor, okay? Right here in the church these things are taking place and what he's saying to him is that listen you need to return to something you have to return to my word Ezra knew the importance of God's Word because God's Word will tell you what

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is truth not what you want to hear God's Word will direct you down his path not the path of your choosing and so this is the beauty of God's Word and his truth and Ezra he knew it this is why Ezra chapter number 7 verse number 10 just says this as it describes him it says for Ezra had his had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it to teach his statues and rules in Israel Ezra set his heart to teach but in order to do that he had to study the Word of God

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These are the men and women of God that are needed today I said the Word of God is the first thing that you need for revival the second thing that you need for revival for preachers You need those who will preach the truth of God's Word Nehemiah 2 so Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly both men and women and all who could understand what they heard. On the first day of the seventh month,

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and he read from it facing the square before the water gate, from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and women and those who could understand. In the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law." Listen, many are in attendance for the God,

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many are in attendance for the word of God, but very little attention is given to the God of the Word. We come because this is Sunday morning. We're supposed to be here. We're gonna hear something about God. But very few preachers talk about God. I want to set the stage. I already told you they were at the Watergate. It's a wide open space. We know through Scripture there's at least 50,000 people that are present. The population problem seems to be

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resolved. And I love how it says they gathered as one man. Remember I said look around and ask yourself why is everyone here? That phrase one man means one purpose. And so it's saying that when they came together there was something specific that they wanted. So when you look at Ezra 8.1 it says they told Ezra the scribe. They told him. A scribe was a teacher of the law. Okay. A priest was one who would work in the temple Ezra's described as

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both so I want you to get the picture of him the people came to him and they said listen bring us the book they all had the same purpose they didn't say hey bring us relevant teachings on how to be happy they didn't say hey entertain us so that service isn't too boring hey give us more music hey give us more ways to socialize you see those are the cries of many people in the church today there's something that they're looking for and the book isn't one of them the reality is is that if I'm gonna go to church what am I gonna

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get out of it and beloved can I tell you something you should get something out of it and we'll get there when I get closer to the end but listen it's not the way we think we're supposed to get something out of it the way we desire for it to be I think it was a couple weeks ago I was like hey you know when you come inside could you like make sure that if you bring something in to drink and you make sure it's just like water in a clear container like no coffee you thought everybody's gonna have a heart

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attack people started falling apart no coffee there's no coffee in the church like how am I supposed to stay up and listen how am I supposed to be awake? What am I supposed to do? People start getting nervous. Then tell them don't bring anything to eat. Because you know how you watch people reach over to the person like this? Ladies, I'm sorry. You reach over to here, reach over, pull out the little snack like that. And I love when people go like this. Sometimes I be tripping out. I sit back and I watch people because I see them. They're looking

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at me, look at them, looking at them, looking at me. And so they're trying to figure out how to get it from their hand to their mouth, right? And so I look at them and I'm like, I'm just as hungry as you are, right? So I understand it, right? But all these different things, we want to make sure that, hey, why can't it just be comfortable when I come in? That's not the purpose. Comfortability, yes, but in what? And so we have to get back to the place where we begin to understand that we should be saying, hey, listen, I don't need all that stuff. Can you give me the book?

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Bring me the Word of God There's a woman who attends here And she's been here for quite some time It's not here today, but some of you know because I'll be preaching in the middle of what I'm saying. She'll say that's the book Don't matter what I'm saying. If I say something comes from the Bible from way in the back quarter She says it like clockwork. I'll finish saying something. She said mm-hmm. Amen. That's the book. Okay like clockwork, so I know I'm in the book when she telling me

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I'm in the book all right. That's the confirmation. I'm looking for right and can I tell you there's nothing wrong with that So you get this picture right the people are calling for the Word of God That's where it begins if there's going to be revival in the church today like in Ezra and Nehemiah's day We have to begin to move as one. And it has to be a collective call from the people walking into the building for the word of God.

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Now, here's the other thing that I found really interesting as I was looking at this. It says, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both the men and women, all who could understand what they heard on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it facing the square before the watergate

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from early morning until midday. In the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand in the years of all The people were attentive to the book of the law the people came expectant When they assembled at the Watergate the desire was to hear the reading of the law Think about that. That's all that they were thinking about. This is what we want

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They assembled men women all who could understand Listen the Bible the teaching of the Bible is a family thing say it again the teaching of the Word of God is a family thing I know we do a lot of gender-specific and age-specific ministries and I'm not saying we can't do that but understand Deuteronomy 31 9 then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the

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covenant of the Lord and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, at the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the feast of Booth, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God, at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

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Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourners within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law and that their children who have not known it may hear and learn To fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land that you're going over the Jordan to possess Again, notice he calls everybody together. We segregate a lot of things out

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We put different things in different places and there's a proper place in a proper time understand what God calls us to We cannot We cannot misstate this enough. I know sometimes people will tell me, listen, things will be better if my 12-year-old were

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in the back room because you're hard to understand. I remember when my four-year-old granddaughter got my phone, jacked it, boosted it, got the password, it was playing a game in five minutes. I was like, how in the heck did she figure out how to do that, right?

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And so it's amazing what they can figure out, right? But you think they can't understand what I'm saying? Sometimes we underestimate what they're capable of doing. And so we need to make sure that we understand,

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don't get me wrong,

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is there a time for them to be in a place where they're able to learn where somebody speaking to where they are on their level? Absolutely, there's a time. But we also have to make sure that we understand as I look at these four young women

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that are sitting right here now, they're like, great, he saw us. And so I see notebooks out, I see Bibles out, I see them looking, I believe they can understand what it is that I'm saying and I think sometimes we underestimate the power of what God can

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do and a person's like well back off now okay it's alright it's alright I'm backing up I'm backing off all right and so I want you guys to get this picture because when you look at the law of Moses they were laying down something that's a principle that we have to understand right we have to make sure that we don't remove the book and then expect them to live to the book. And so how can they live to what they don't hear? How can they live to what they do not know? I love the fact that he said the people

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were attentive. Listen, it's really easy to be attentive when you're expecting something. And so I love what Jesus said in Mark chapter number four, if anyone has ears to hear, let them hear. And he said to them, pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use it, it will be measured to you. And still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given.

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And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. Think about it like this. Spurgeon, in his book, Letters to My Students, he gave this example. Suppose you went to hear the will of one of your relatives

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read, and you were expecting a legacy from him. You would hardly think of criticizing the manner in which the lawyer read the will. Rather, you would be all attentive to hear whether anything was left to you or not. That's the way to hear the gospel preached. In expectation, I'm hearing what is God saying to me. Thoughtful, careful exposition of the Word of God

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teaches us not only how to truly worship God, but to worship Him in the manner that He deserves. And I love how he said that he did it in the presence of men and women and those who could understand. It's important that as a preacher, one must understand that understanding is key. We must be conscious as communicators while we are teaching. So when we begin to say that the second thing needed for revival is

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preachers, that is men and women of the book, then we have to be able to do just as Ezra and understand that we too are Called to study the Word of God The Word of God and preaching go hand in hand, this is how one sparks revival If you are hit you are a history buff and you're familiar with church history You go back to the time of the Great Awakening when men like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, the Wesley Brothers, just to name a few, sparking a revival

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in the British-American colonies. These men were preachers who had conviction of the truth. They preached forcefully and authoritatively. When I think about the Reformation, men like Luther, they knew how to take a stand firmly on truth, causing the eyes of men to be open to God's word,

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and again, sparking a revival in them as they begin to see the truths of God's words in a new way. Where are those preachers today? Where are they? There are very few people that I turn on to listen to and I don't even listen to myself. Most of the time when I'm reading something, the guy's dead. Those great reformers, those men who would stand and preach

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truth.

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Spurgeon said this, unless we are instructive preachers and really feed the people, we may be great quoters of eloquent poetry, mighty retellers of secondhand windbags. But we shall be like Nero of old, fiddling while Rome was still burning,

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sending vessels to Alexandria to fetch sand for the arena when the populace starved for one of corn. Many in the church are so busy finding ways to make us feel good about our lives on earth They lost sight that we're supposed to be focusing on our life. That's gonna be in heaven Listen, I get it Many are sermons that sometimes people struggle with understanding and we have to guard against two extremes

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You have one extreme where they make it all about the Word of God what therefore thus saith the Lord hitherto father goodness over and we go over to the end on yonder and under and Gilgad said this and you like what's this dude talking about and so what I'm just reading from the scriptures just reading from the scriptures without giving a proper understanding it's pointless then you got those who say well we don't need the book today we're just gonna talk they go all the way to the other side.

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And they just have dialogue about where you're at in life. And as my grandmother used to always tell me, the truth is somewhere down the middle. You see, you have to make sure that we are communicating in a way to where by the time you leave, you have a proper understanding of what's being said.

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I pray that when I come before you, I take enough time to kind of explain where we're going doctrinally, and then take it to a place where you understand how you apply it practically. We can't make sermons so riddled with various scriptures that no one can understand. But we can't have sermons that omit the scriptures completely and then expect somebody to actually

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grow. 1 Timothy 4.13, it says, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation and to teaching. Paul is writing to young Timothy like his protege. He was a father in the faith to Timothy. Timothy's pastor.

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That phrase, reading of scripture, means to give sense of what's being read. Paul wasn't just calling Timothy to read the word. He said, exhort and teach so that people can understand what it is that you're saying. The ultimate goal, according to Steve Lawson,

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of Bible exposition is change lives. Preaching must do more than simply inform the mind. It must grip the heart and challenge the will. The entire person, mind, emotion, and will must be impacted. Thus exposition is not merely for the transmitting of information, it is for the effecting of transformation. It presses for a decision and calls for a verdict. Listen, a lot of

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people come into the church and are changed. Few people come into church and are transformed. You see, the last time I checked, a butterfly, a caterpillar that becomes a butterfly, the butterfly is no longer a caterpillar. That's a transformation, okay? And so a lot of people come into the church and they're changed because they're moved emotionally. And then when they're moved emotionally again, they're changed right back. I've never seen a butterfly turn back into a caterpillar. Once you're

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transformed, you're transformed. That doesn't mean you become perfect. That doesn't mean you don't have problems It doesn't mean you don't go anything all I'm simply saying is that there's a difference between being changed and being transformed The Christian is transformed. He becomes a new creation all things are passed away because all things become new It doesn't mean that you won't trip. It don't mean you won't have problems. It don't mean you won't stand It don't mean you won't have issues all those things are still there

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You just see them in a different way go about them in a different way you go you call upon God and you Handle them in a different way you're trusting in the Holy Spirit within you to lead God and direct you and so this is the place but that's just a result of a transformation that's all it is and so I am a transformed person if you knew me in my 20s you don't want to know me in my 20s I'm not the kind of guy you would have wanted to know but what God has done in my life today I'm

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not the same man I was but can I tell you I'm not changed I've been transformed When I look at my son and I think about him and how I knew him you wouldn't want to know him as 20s He's like father like son. And so when he was changed, he wasn't just changed. He was transformed Look at the mirror for some of yourselves You know the difference between who you were and who you now are There's no going back to who I was that person's dead a transformation has taken place and that's what happens when we come to the Word of God

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Which is why it's so important that we become men and women who read the book This is why Nehemiah says in Nehemiah 8a They read from the book from the law of God clearly and they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading If people are to properly apply the Word of God, it must be properly interpreted so that those who hear it may understand Well, I don't understand what you just said, so what are you saying? Listen, I need to be able to take the Word of God and say, this is

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what God is saying. If you're a Christian in here and you're struggling in sin, the Bible told us that we were struggling in sin. It said, listen, I'm dealing with temptation, which means I must not be a believer. Well, that's interesting, because when you say you're struggling with temptation, while I'm being tempted, the Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted.

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James said, each man is tempted when he's led away by his own desire. But when desire is conceived, hold it. There's a step in here. So I can be tempted. Yeah, but that doesn't mean you have to give birth to it.

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You see, you don't become perfect. You just become changed. The thought will still come. You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can certainly stop them from making a nest in your hair. This is the point in the picture, right? Something begins to happen. I can do something. You mean I can choose?

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The fact that you're thinking about choosing tells me you're not the same person. Before, when I wanted to get drunk, I just got drunk. I didn't think, I don't have to get drunk. No, I wanted to get drunk. When God changed my life, something began to happen. When I began to see different things pop up in my life, and no, I didn't want to go get drunk when I begin to see different Things pop up in my life all of a sudden. I knew I had a choice when this temptation presented itself

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What's interesting? I never felt like I had a choice before that's because the old man didn't the new man does So you don't have to fear temptation Temptation is just making you aware of what's going on and giving you the opportunity to turn to the grace of God to be able to Persevere through it so you know that God is faithful So see when I say understanding, that's understanding. When you walk out of here and you think I want to do some things differently, you

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begin to realize that the fact that I'm even asking that question, something's going on inside of you. John 6 44 says no man can come to the Father unless he draws it. Listen, some of you, everybody had different reasons for coming here. You know, maybe because it's the second Sunday of the month or the third Sunday of the month And that's the one you told the Lord you were gonna go Maybe you're in town visiting friends

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Maybe you came with friends For whatever reason why you're here can I tell you something you still at any point in time could have still said no And you didn't why? Why didn't you say no you said yeah, you know on second thought I know I said I was gonna do this but I Got up this morning the clouds were in whoo looking good outside Cloud cover my kid came downstairs. He said dad am I feeling good. I think I might just stay home

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It's pouring a little tea. I was like a tea looks good Got pretty shades down a little bit let the cloud cover come in turn on SportsCenter. Oh, it's a good day Oh, whoa I got a preach so I found myself going where she was in and the idea of what it would be like to just be able to take a moment and just rest I thought it but it's not

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what I wanted you see I want to come and hear the Word of God you think I'm preaching to you when all actuality I'm talking to me you see as I'm writing the Holy Spirit's leading and guiding me but as I'm preaching he's teaching me every step of the way I'm not talking to you you just happen to be in the room while I'm talking to me this is what God is saying to will and so I need to make sure that I am being attentive and that when I speak to

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you, you're understanding. So as a preacher, right, of the word of God, I love how Bruce says this, there is no special honor in being called to the preaching ministry. There isn't. There's only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its like to see, it batters and bruises and does not rest. To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time, and to know each time you do it,

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that you're going to have to do it again, and again, and again. Every time I come before you, there's a little bit more, and a little bit more, and a little bit more. Speaking to a young man from here, and he said something to me yesterday actually it's Friday and he

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said you know as a pastor I've often thought about what that would be like and I came to this conclusion I said what's that he said I kind of like it where I'm at because I'd rather not know people's business and just let that be between them and God so that they can deal with God and God can deal with them and I don't have to figure out how God wants to use me to help them. He said because it's much easier. So I look at you sometimes and I

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pray for you. I was like, okay, because you're right in the middle of all of it. And the reality is, is a pastor often is. But here's the beauty. I'm not in it by myself. Revival calls for both the word of truth and a devoted preacher. 2 Timothy 2 15, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved. A worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Beloved, if the word of God is going to be revived in the heart of a believer, it must first be revived

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in the heart of the preacher. If it's not here, it's not going to come out there. Listen, there are many bumper stickers and Christian memorabilia. It's all over. We have more faith-based movies in the theater sporting events that have faith nights Christian concerts everywhere But for people to see a revival taking place within a church We still need preaching solid preaching of the Word of God My job is to preach at you. It's a surrender to the Holy Spirit so that he may teach us

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My role is to do three things to present the Word of God to you accurately, clearly, and practically. Those are the three things. I want to make sure that I'm saying exactly what the Word of God is saying. I want to make sure that it's clear when I'm saying it. And then I want to make sure it's practical for you when you leave. This is the end goal of every preacher. Paul again writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy, believed to be his last letter. He says, I charge you in the presence of God

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and of Christ Jesus, who is the judge of the living and the dead, by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not

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endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passion. They will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into the mist. As for you, always be sober-minded,

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endure suffering, and do the work of an evangelist. Preaching has faded. That's why revival is needed. Now, let me conclude with this. In verse 4, it says, Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose.

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So you get this picture.

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This is the first time you see something erected where you see the man of God is standing Remember I said it's like 50,000 people So we see that all the people are there. Here's the beauty. There's no sound equipment. No sound engineer. No speakers. No microphone There's absolutely nothing And so they are wrecked this platform so that he can be up above the people so that he could speak out so that the people could hear. Today we have all types of things right because

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we got all types of equipment we black out the back we do this we have all these different types of lights we have all different types of lights we have all these different things going on we have to be careful that we're not erecting concert stages that we're not in a business of entertainment that when we come to the house of the Lord we're coming to the house of Lord I'm not saying it's sinful and it's wrong I'm saying we need to be careful because when we begin to do those things we have

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a tendency to do one of two things we're either stirring people by their stirring people's emotions by what they hear and feel good or we're stirring them by the Word of God verse 5 said Ezra opened the book in the sight of the people for he's above all the people and he opened it in front of all the people and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God and all the people answered amen amen lifting up their hands they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground it's clear that their

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emotions were stirred but it wasn't by music it wasn't by the right atmosphere their emotions were stirred by the Word of God this is why preaching is so important if you're the believer in this room this should be resonating with you you should understand what it is that I'm saying because sometimes we're looking to be stirred and yet we're hearing the very Word of God and nothing's happening. So, oh man, service today was amazing because of the music.

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Service today was amazing because of this. Service today was amazing because of this. Wasn't service amazing just because you heard the Word of God? Wasn't your day amazing just because you read the Word of God? Isn't your life amazing just because you have the Word of God? In other words, it should be the Word of God

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and when we hear it, it should provoke a response Yes emotions involved, but your emotions stirred by truth and when a merchant store stored by truth Everything begins to happen and what begins to happen is we begin to take this step back and we begin to see things in a completely Different way we have this tendency that when we come to church we can sit expressionless and then we go home Can I tell you revival in the heart of a believer provokes a response from you? It makes you want to move. Now don't get me wrong. Listen, I grew up in the black church. Everybody was moving.

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Okay and so that's that's that's not what I'm saying. But can I tell you something? It is okay to say amen. It is okay doing worship to lift your hands. It is okay to praise the Lord. Listen, they said, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands, they bowed their face to the ground. They were hearing the Word of God and they had emotion. They had something coming out. It's okay. Listen, I get it, fellas. We're a little cool, all right? So I can't go out like that, right? So you kind of look up and you don't

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want to just, you put your hand up like, you know. You know how we used to dance back in the day? Men never moved, they just turned in a circle. I get the picture right some of you looking at your spouse saying that's exactly how they dance right never move always remain in the same circle you know you get it like this hold it then they get they get really good they step to the side like didn't do anything else right and so I want you to get the picture it's okay to raise your hand it's okay to say amen it's okay to say

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hallelujah listen you don't have to overtake what's being done, but can I tell you something when the scriptures are resonating with you? There is a response there is something and it's okay for it to come out. We understand all things decently in an order So don't come running down the aisle, okay? But there should be an understanding to where we can actually have some sort of a response to what's being said Revival will cause us to praise the Lord. There should be a spontaneity to our worship of God. We should be able to say something.

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This is where revival begins through the word of God, through the preacher, to the person. And what begins to happen is we're strengthened. One writer says this, revival invigorates and sometimes deepens a believer's faith,

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opening his or her eyes to the truth in a fresh way. It generally involves the connotation of a fresh start with a clean slate, marking a new beginning of a life lived in obedience to God Revival breaks the charm and power of the world which blinds the eyes of men and generates both the will and power to live in The world but not of the world

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You become different in every single way Love it. I love listen to what it said. It said that he started preaching Early to noonday That was a six-hour sermon six hours How long before you start looking at your watch?

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Our sermon. Six hours. How long before you start looking at your watch? You say, I was looking at it five minutes before you said that, right? How long before you start thinking, how much longer is he gonna go? Last week I realized that I had spoke a little bit longer than normal. And so, and I noticed it because I looked at the clock. And then I turned to my wife and I said on the way home,

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I said, um, I was a little long on Sunday, didn't I? And she's like, she said, yeah, you did, but I didn't notice it. Well, if you didn't notice it, how you know I went long? That's what I'm thinking inside my head, right? I mean, okay, anyway, she said, but it's okay.

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It didn't feel like it. I'm like, okay, all right. I'm still processing that one right now in my head. But she said, it didn't feel that way. Listen, we shouldn't be fixed on how long, because if you buy tickets to the game and it goes in

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overtime you ain't complaining about how long you're there. Okay if it's I went to go see what is that movie Inside Out 2 so I took the grandkids and I guess there's some special thing at the end of it right and so my wife said did you stay to see the end I said the end of what I saw the end of the movie she said no no no no no there's a special secret thing I ain't got time for all that. I don't want to go anywhere.

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I'm taking the grandkids. I'm going to go right. I only saw the movie twice. So, I went, two sets of grandkids. So, I go again to see it a second time and then she asked me again. She said, did you stay to see The Secret?

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Now, she got me.

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I'm intrigued.

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I'm like, well, what's The Secret? And she said, The Secret is, what was The Secret? Oh, don't say The Secret. Okay, I can't tell y'all a secret. Okay If you go see the movie you'll find out what the secret is, all right, I can't tell you all right But here's the deal. There's a secret at the end

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But my point is that now I know if you guys go see it Are you guys gonna be sitting there waiting for the end and see what the secret is, right? We will wait for different things at different times. But when we come into the house of the Lord 30 45 minutes go by We start thinking, all right, he's a little long-winded.

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He talks a little bit.

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What are we going to be done? OK. I need you to understand, they started early and ended at midday. They were there for six hours. Can I tell you there's places around the world, China,

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Platt does a secret church, where they will sit there all day, read as much as you can, and explain as much as you can in this time because I don't know when I get an opportunity to come back out again. But that's the way we need to be when we come out in the morning. For the believer in here, I need you to understand that we are to ask for and call for the Word

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of God. and the preacher that does not submit to that, that's a problem because it's biblical. Then we should come expectantly. This is what we desire. This is what we should hear. And we should be attentive. And then we should seek to understand. You see, a preacher knows when he's reached somebody, when the person can go home and look over what they just studied and they can understand it.

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because the understanding was there. I loved the fact that verse 7 says that the Levites helped the people to understand the law while the people remained in their places. In other words, it's not just a job of the pastor. We shifted our format in our men's and women's study, and in shifting it, what we do is we come in and one person kind of gives kind of like an overview of what we're going to be talking about and then people are broken

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off into groups of four and then those groups of four begin to talk and then in that group of four they begin to break off to groups of two one-on-one so this is something the Lord was dealing with me with a while back because sometimes it's hard to be able to get a hold of every single person the beauty of this is that it mirrored this and I hadn't seen it because it says that they met with the people while they were still sitting in the place, which means

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during that six-hour period, people were coming alongside. It's like, hey, do you understand? Hey, do you understand what's going on? And they're coming alongside. See, that's what we're called to do. It's not just the job of that guy. It's all of our jobs, right? To be able to come alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the picture. So, believer this morning, I pray that you understand what I'm saying. We are in need of a revival.

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Preaching is lacking. The Word of God isn't being taught in the manner that it should. You should be saying, hey, give us the book. We want the book, and we seek the understanding, it changes the way you live. And then Matthew 5 16 comes to light in the same way. Let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.

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And we're right back where we started. Giving glory to God. That's where Nehemiah began, and this is where we're going to continue as we move through. Nehemiah doesn't fall by the wayside. He stands side by side. And so the call this morning is that revival needs to take place. Revival needs to happen. It doesn't just start with me. It starts with you in your workplace. It starts with you in the schools. It starts in our homes. It starts everywhere. When you leave here today, if you are a believer, listen, I understand that maybe

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you're in that place where you feel like, I've been kind of just like lukewarm. Then you're in need of revival. And I thought about bringing an AED and just start shocking people on the way out the door. I first have to knock you off first and make sure your heart wasn't working before I did it. And so there's a whole lot of legal ramifications

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and all that, so I figured I'd just leave that alone, okay? And so then I'd have to send you to Tiffany to counsel you when it's all said and done. And so I need to make sure that we all understand that listen, we all need to sometimes, we need that shock.

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We say, hey, I've been kind of just going through and somewhere along the line Lord. I've lost that first love Well, how do I get back to it? What did he say? Go back and do your first works? What are those works look like? Do you remember when you first came to him? Do you remember when you fell in love with him? And you remember you when you couldn't get enough of the Word of God Do you remember that every time you read it it did something on the inside of you?

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If you can get back to there and you can because you're his And because the word is there It will continue to revive you and when you're revived Then the people that you're around the people that you encounter can't help But see and know that there's a God Not just simply because of the words that are coming out of your mouth

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But because the life that you live will be the proof stand with me Father I thank you this morning for your word, for the opportunity, Lord, to just be a vessel by which you speak. I pray, Lord, that understanding that it came. I pray, Father, for those in our midst this morning, for those who know you, Lord. I pray that they grasp that we are all in moments of our life in need of that revival.

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For those who may not understand you, Lord, may not have come to know you, today they Today they stopped for a second and began to ask what is it about this word that gives life? What is it about this word that keeps life? What about what is it about this word that transforms life? Beloved what is it about the word? That brings us home. I pray that if that individuals here Lord They have questions about that that they can come see me after service things. He pastor Ralph after service

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Well, I just pray that as we depart from this place, we know it's not from your presence. We have a young woman, Lord, who will be traveling out of the state as school begins to embark upon a journey. And so, Father, we want to lift her up in prayer. Father, knowing the name isn't always as important as knowing the desire that we pray for her. And so I pray that we pray for this young woman that you continue to chart her journey, step by step,

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that you guide her, that you lead her, that you keep her. To continue, Father, to show forth your glory, your mercy, and your grace. We pray it not just for her only, but we pray it for us all. This is a prayer of your church, and we ask it in the mighty name of your son.

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The Lord Jesus be Christ, we pray.

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Amen.

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Amen.

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And if you happen to see Neil on the way out, he's turning 50 going over the hill, so wish him a happy birthday. so wish him a happy birthday.

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over the hill so wish him a happy birthday.

Transcribed with Cockatoo