



STARTING OVER

HOW TO KEEP GOING.

After rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the Jews knew things needed to be different going forward. Past choices and idols had led to exile and destruction. They started this new start with a new foundation - ie. HOURS of listening to Scripture.

Yes. *Hours.*

The Bible isn't just a book of long stories and good advice. It is a living and active tool against any darkness coming against us. It spurs us on to love our neighbor. It reminds us of forgiveness. The Word of God penetrates the deepest part of who we are and points us straight to the heart of Jesus. The Holy Spirit works through these words to *change us.*

And when that still doesn't translate to perfect living, beautiful starts, or a need for Scripture that cannot be quenched - well, that sucks. The Jews *wept* after hearing all the laws they had broken in the Scriptures. **But** we get to continue forward knowing we are forgiven. In fact, we can *celebrate* because today is a new day - a chance for a new start with a God who is for us, who has saved us, and who fills us with hope.

IN THE BIBLE.

Nehemiah 8:2-3

2 So on October 8, Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. 3 He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.

Nehemiah 8:9-12

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, “Don’t mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God.” For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

10 And Nehemiah continued, “Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!”

11 And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, “Hush! Don’t weep! For this is a sacred day.” 12 So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy because they had heard God’s words and understood them.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Ephesians 6:13-17

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be

standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

QUESTIONS.

1. What sticks out to you about the verses in Nehemiah? Why?
2. We see in the Ephesians verses that Scripture is the only part of the armor of God that is *offensive* instead of *defensive*. What does that mean?
3. Have you ever experienced the Bible feeling "living and active" while you read? What was your experience like?

Pray: Pray for a deep desire to dig into God's Word habitually. Ask God to speak to you through it in a living, personal way.

Whenever you read the Bible, ask yourself these three questions:

1. What does this tell you about God?
2. What does this tell you about yourself and the world?
3. How is this going to change who you are and how you live?