

A husband read an article to his wife about how women use 30,000 words a day to a man's 15,000. The wife replied, "That's because we have to repeat everything to men." The husband turned to his wife and said, "What?"

We have to pay attention of the word of each other. And pay attention to God's word.

Two young fish are swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way. The older fish nods at them and says, "Morning, how's the water?" The two young fish swim on for a bit, when eventually one of them looks over to the other and says, "What water?"

Like fish unaware of the water, we can become so immersed in our environment, experiences, histories, and stories, that we can be unaware of the presence of God surrounding us, and how God works in our lives.

In our New Testament readings, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then Jesus said to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus allowed people to realize how God had worked in the midst of their lives through the word of God. The Bible teaches us that God loves us, God works for us, and God takes care of us.

The same thing happens to the people in the reading from Nehemiah. When the people heard God's instructions, they understood how they had failed to live up to God's expectation.

In Nehemiah 8:2 the priest Ezra brought the law of God before the assembly, and read plainly from the book. When people heard it with understanding, their reaction was to cry and weep. They felt overwhelmed by a sense of their ignorance and shortcomings as they realized how far from God's ways they had fallen.

In the first seven chapters of Nehemiah, there are the story of Nehemiah's return with a group of exiles, how he rebuilt the walls and how he overcame the obstacles and opposition. Now Israel were no longer exposed to robbers or armies behind the security of new gates and walls, but they were required to deal with another issue.

A more important need than the protective walls around Jerusalem was the people's need for the Word of God in their hearts and minds. After completion of the gates and walls, a large wooden platform had been constructed so that all the people in the assembly could see and hear the reading of the Word.

On hearing the Word of God and understanding it, the people became deeply convicted of their sin. When they finally realized God's holy standard, they wept.

If we're planning to build a house, we can't start the process without a blueprint. The blueprint is the plan that a builder must have in order to build. It gives the builder a vision for what a house is supposed to look like. Without it, the construction crew wouldn't know what to do. Walls might not meet. Rooms might not be where they are supposed to be. Important things like plumbing, wiring, and doorways might be placed wrong. The entire building could eventually collapse because it would be structurally unsound.

The same thing is true of our lives. Without a blueprint of our lives, how do we build our lives? But thankfully, we have a blueprint for our lives. The blueprint for our lives is God's Word, the Bible. It provides God's guidelines for us, the path for us to follow.

Do you remember our first challenge verse? Psalm 119:105 says God's word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Right now, we can't see down the whole path for our lives. The future is shrouded in darkness. But God's Word is a light to that darkness! It can show us the way to go.

The Word gives us a vision for what our lives are supposed to look like. When we read the Bible, we learn how to walk through this life of a Christian, and how to walk out God's specific plan for our lives.

Moreover, God's word gives us the Holy joy and deep satisfaction. After the people had continued mourning, Ezra, Nehemiah and the Levites urged the people to weep no longer. They said in Nehemiah 8:9-10, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep... Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." In other words, Nehemiah was saying to stay in the solution now that you know it. Not self-condemnation but rejoice now because you are being reconciled to God.

The people of Nehemiah's day were overwhelmed with joy because the Lord had again become the center of their lives. They felt secure in their relationship with God. This security gave them a sense of well-being, protection, approval, and freedom from worry. In this security, they became conscious of their worth before God. With His blessing upon them, they felt competent to face an uncertain future. strength came to them, and this strength enabled them to have JOY.

When we are aware of God's presence and grace, joy comes to us. The joy of knowing that Jesus died for us. The joy of knowing our place in Heaven is assured because of what Jesus has done for us. The joy of knowing our sins, past, present,

and future have already been forgiven. The joy of knowing that we are in a relationship with a God who loves us and cares for us and has a plan for us. The joy of knowing that the Holy Spirit stays in us, leading and guiding us to bring honor and glory to God.

Knowing Jesus brings joy into our daily lives. If we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the joy of the Lord should be in our heart.

We are a child of God, and no one can snatch us away from Him. We are an heir to a priceless inheritance, an inheritance that is kept in heaven for us, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. We can experience the joy of the Lord in all circumstances by keeping our eyes on Jesus.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he found more than broken walls, and he found broken lives. In response, he gathers the people to hear the priest Ezra read and explain God's Word. The people understood, responded and wanted to hear more so that they could apply the Word to their lives.

Where do we stand in this matter of spiritual hunger for the Word of God? Are we experiencing the joy, strength, and unity that God has for us? Are we submitting ourselves to the teaching of the Word of God and allowing Scripture to permeate our thinking, regulate our emotions and direct our wills? Only as we put into practice what is taught in the Bible, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being become part of our experience.

So, let us respond to the Word of the Lord. We will experience the emotional renewal, the satisfying joy, the empowering strength and the encouraging unity that comes from full fellowship with the Living God through the obeying of God's Word.