

God's Word and God's People

The unifying power of God's Word

all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. -Nehemiah 8:1-3a

1. What does it mean to say that God's Word has power?
2. Why do we centre our worship gatherings around the reading, proclaiming, teaching and applying of God's Word?
3. How might we neglect or fail to trust the power and sufficiency of the Word?

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. -1 Timothy 4:13

The proper approach to God's Word

And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. -Nehemiah 8:3b-8

1. What approach to hearing the Word are we called to take? What does this look like when we gather together? What does this look like in your own devotional/study time?
2. In what ways do you struggle to remain attentive to the Word? (Read, preached, etc)
3. How can we be intentional about our posture and attentiveness to the Word - preparing ourselves to hear from God?

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. -2 Timothy 3:16-17

*I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes. -Psalm 119:48*

The proper way to respond to God's Word

And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them. -Nehemiah 8:9-12

1. Why does God's Word always require a response? How might we hear and see, yet carry on unchanged, failing to respond?
2. What does it mean that God's Word often wounds us before it heals us? Can you recall a time when this has happened?
3. How can we intentionally make a practice of application and response whenever we hear from God through His Word?
4. What did God say to you by His Spirit through His Word this week - In the sermon, your own reading, study, devotional time? What is your response?

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. -James 1:22-25