

Sunday 23rd April 2023 - 'The Joy of the Word', Nehemiah 8:13-18

The main aim of this morning's message was to draw out from the passage the value and importance for us of reading, understanding and responding immediately to what we read in the Bible.

As Ezra carefully read and explained the Book of the Law, (probably Leviticus 23:33 et al.) the people discovered that they needed to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in a new, wholehearted way... something that hadn't been done properly since the days of Joshua.

1. Why do you think the Israelites *hadn't* always celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles wholeheartedly? What factors might have caused this?
2. Do those factors affect your wholehearted worship of God? How?
3. What might we do to overcome those limiting factors?

We see in V.17 that the people of Isreal, who heard and understood the reading from the Book of Law, ***immediately*** responded and made their shelters and lived in them for 7 days.

Although I didn't have time this morning to delve into this, some may feel that it is almost irresponsible to respond ***immediately***..... could this be a 'gut reaction' without due thought and prayer????

4. What do you think about this?

Personally, for me, I'm ok with this! As the step before responding is understanding, I think that includes enough time to prayerfully think through our response before responding immediately. Perhaps you disagree though?

One of the most significant points that I felt came out of this passage was the fact that, when they had responded, *'there was great joy'*.

5. Why might there have been great joy?
6. Can you share with the group an example of how you might have responded to something you've read in the Bible *'with great joy'*?
7. How could you encourage others in your group to discover that *'great joy'*?

As a follow up point, I suggested that we also need to ***continuously*** respond immediately to what God might say to us through the Bible, for the whole of our lives.

8. How could we develop a lifestyle of doing that?

Spend some time praying for each member of the group. Perhaps each group member has particular prayer needs to grow into this lifestyle?