**Conduct Befitting the Open Book**

*Nehemiah 8*

**Introduction**

1. The greatest problem facing the church is a lax approach to God’s word.
2. Our conduct is greatly affected by our response to the word of God – **cf. 1 Timothy 3:14-15** – conduct instructed based on the church’s role as the pillar and ground of the truth.
3. God’s word is effective for those who use it effectively **(cf. 1 Timothy 1:8).**
4. Our conduct must be appropriate to the gravity of hearing and studying God’s word.
5. When Nehemiah went to Jerusalem the temple had been rebuilt – although it paled in comparison to the former temple – but the walls and gates still remained unfinished **(cf. Nehemiah 1:3).**
6. Nehemiah, with authority from King Artaxerxes of Persia, came as civil governor to direct the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem.
7. In **Nehemiah 8**, after the walls were built and the gates hung, the people requested that Ezra the priest read from God’s law.
8. The people’s conduct displayed in the reading of the law is admirable, and it is imperative that we follow their example today.
9. They Had a Desire to Hear **(vv. 1-3)**
10. Desire for God’s Word is Characteristic of the Godly
    1. Jesus to the disciples – **Matthew 13:16-17** – Concerning speaking in parables, what Jesus was revealing was desired by righteous men before, but given for righteous men then.
       1. **1 Peter 1:10-12** – they searched carefully, and longed for such.
    2. **Psalm 19:7-10** – These are more to be desired than gold because of the spiritual blessings they bring.
       1. Those interested in spiritual blessings will be interested in God’s word.
       2. The godly have a great desire for God’s word.
11. Desire for God’s Word is Manifested by Study
    1. Study is necessary for growth – **1 Peter 2:1-3**
       1. Metaphor – as newborn babes – they’re constantly longing for the mother’s milk.
       2. **(v. 3)** – if you’ve tasted that the Lord is gracious – THE INDIVIDUAL WHO TRULY VALUES GOD’S BLESSINGS WILL BE LONGING TO STUDY HIS WORD.
    2. The danger of lacking a desire – **Hebrews 6:4-8** – speaks of those who never moved on from elementary principles.
       1. They lacked a desire – they had tasted the heavenly gift, but still didn’t long for it.
       2. Makes it hard to renew to repentance after they’ve fallen away.
       3. **Hebrews 5:12** – they didn’t grow because they didn’t have the proper desire, so they didn’t study.
12. They Were Attentive **(v. 3)**
13. “Hearing” God’s Word is a Discipline
    1. Attentive – paying close attention to something.
    2. A study of God’s word takes effort – **2 Timothy 2:15** – “be diligent”
       1. We cannot be “approved to God” without careful attentiveness to His word.
       2. **1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16** – we must give our attention to God’s word to be benefitted by it.
    3. Hearing is not enough – ***“Therefore, take heed how you hear” (Luke 8:18)***.
    4. Approaching the hearing of God’s word in a lackadaisical manner makes one prone to self-destruction – **2 Peter 3:16**
    5. Test all things – **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 John 4:1**
14. Who Should be Attentive?
    1. **Nehemiah 8:3** – there is a distinction made between “men and women” and “those who could understand.”
    2. Those besides men and women were children – certainly older children with the ability to understand.
    3. Parents – enforce attentiveness in the assembly on your children.
    4. Children – do not think God’s word is not for you.
    5. NOTE: God’s word was read the same to the men and women and the others who could understand. It wasn’t watered down, or laced with gimmicks.
15. They Showed Reverence **(vv. 4-5)**
16. Platform and standing up were matters to reflect the seriousness of the situation – God’s word was given precedence, and the people reacted appropriately.
17. Reverence When God Spoke
    1. When Moses was appointed – **Exodus 3:1-5** – sandals off would show respect – the place was not ordinary.
       1. Holy ground – because of God’s presence.
       2. Especially because God spoke.
    2. Before Mount Sinai – **Exodus 20:18-21** – God’s display of His power and magnitude to instill in the people the gravity of the situation.
       1. **(vv. 20-21)** – God appeared in this way so you take Him seriously.
       2. **Cf. Hebrews 12:25-29** – our approach to God should be in the same manner of reverence. THIS HAS NOT CHANGED.
18. When God Speaks Today
    1. Inspired scriptures – **2 Timothy 3:16** – inspiration – theopneustos – God breathed.
       1. We must not act any different when approaching scripture than the Israelites did when God spoke.
       2. When scripture is read or studied GOD IS SPEAKING TO US and deserves the UTMOST RESPECT.
    2. Understand the preaching to be GOD SPEAKING TO YOU, NOT THE PREACHER – **1 Corinthians 14:37**
    3. We are to show reverence:
       1. Show up.
       2. Be on time.
       3. Be quiet.
       4. Pay attention. (May take more preparation the night before – bed early, etc.) (NOT SLEEPING)
       5. Follow along in the bible.
       6. Stay seated as you can. (Take preparatory measures – bathroom before, etc.)
19. The Preaching Was Distinctive for Understanding **(vv. 7-8)**
20. God’s Word Must be Understood for Benefit
    1. **Ephesians 5:17** – Understand the will of the Lord.
    2. **1 Corinthians 14:13-19** – understanding must accompany the speaking of God’s word. (Tongue speaking without an interpreter would not accomplish that.)
    3. When it isn’t understood – **2 Peter 3:16**
21. The Job of the Preacher and Teacher is to Give Understanding
    1. **Acts 8:30-31** – Philip to the Eunuch.
    2. Some do not preach for this purpose – **1 Timothy 1:3-7** – they just wanted to argue, and show off knowledge. (of worthless things)
    3. The teacher is a gift from God to edify the church – **Ephesians 4:7-13**
       1. The preacher/teacher should hide behind the word of God – **1 Corinthians 2:1-2**
       2. They should be clear, and distinctive with the teaching of God’s word – SHOULD NOT LEAVE QUESTIONS, BUT ANSWER QUESTIONS.
       3. IS NOT FOR ENTERTAINMENT!
    4. All should desire such teaching – **2 Timothy 4:2-5**
22. The Word Impacted Them and They Obeyed **(vv. 9-12, 13-18)**
23. Our Hearts Must be Cultivated
    1. Our hearts require careful attention and cultivation so they are ready to receive the word – **Matthew 13:18-23** – parable of sower.
       1. Soils were the hearts of men.
       2. Some were tainted with matters of the world, and kept the word from success.
    2. We cannot let ourselves become hardened – **1 Timothy 4:2; Ephesians 4:17-19** – seared conscience, past feeling – the word of God did not have an effect on them because of their preoccupation with the world.
    3. **1 John 2:15** – we must cultivate a heart where the love of God can abide.
24. We Must Have an Urgency About Obedience
    1. The Israelites were urged to stop their weeping and take action. It was good that they reacted with sorrow for their sin, but they couldn’t mope on a day that God required action.
    2. The impact the word has on the heart is to move men to obey – **Acts 2:37-38, 41** – they were moved, then inquired, then obeyed.
    3. Ananias to Saul – **Acts 22:16** – WHY ARE YOU WAITING.
    4. Jesus’ attitude – **John 9:4-5** – take advantage of the time to do God’s word.
    5. **Luke 6:46-49** – the proper reaction to God’s word is to build our lives on it by doing what it says.

**Conclusion**

1. We would do well to learn from the conduct displayed by the people of God in Nehemiah 8.
2. God’s word is a serious matter which requires the undivided attention of those to whom it is being given.