



## The Beginning of a New Start

Have you ever worked through a home improvement project? At the beginning of most renovation projects there is a feeling of excitement and energy, there are hopes and dreams about what the outcome will be. Along the way there are many steps to bring those dreams alive. From demolition to decorating and everything in between each step of the job takes hard work and commitment to reach the end.

As I continue to read through the book of Nehemiah, the account of the wall being rebuilt comes to an end. I am sure that when the last brick was cemented into place and the final gate was hung by its hinges, Nehemiah drew a deep breath of relief to know that the wall around Jerusalem was finally restored. Step one was complete. With the wall finished, Nehemiah begins to focus on his next step, the restoration of the inhabitants of the city.

When you read through chapter 8 of Nehemiah the next stage of his plan is laid out for us. His goal in this phase is to help restore the people of the city back into a right relationship with God through the reading and understanding of the Law as given to them in scripture. It was time to focus on the spiritual needs of the city. Verse 8 of chapter 8 says, "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving meaning so that the people understood what was being read."

The beginning of a new start for the people in the city was a reminder of who God is, what he has done for them and how his love for them has not changed over time. The message of what was being read was a reminder for the people to live in obedience to God's will.

In my last blog entry, I briefly talked about how we might "lend a hand" in the process of re-building the church after our time of physical separation. All through the pandemic things have constantly been changing for all of us. One of the incredible truths about scripture and its message for us is that it is unchanging. God's word is and always will be the solid foundation on which our faith is built.

The people of the city were gathered to hear God speak through these words, they were willing to stand and listen as scripture describes, attentively, from daybreak to noon every day for a week! When was the last time you had a thirst for hearing the word of God read out like this?

Nehemiah fortified the walls of the city and provided a safe place for the people to gather and hear the words of God spoken and explained. Each day holds the potential beginning of a new start in life and faith as we seek to hear God's voice for our lives. The words that Ezra read then were persevered for us and continue to inspire many people today as they read God's word.

It is my hope and prayer that as we gather again that the center of all we do is found in the words of scripture. From Genesis to Revelation and everything in between God's Word is the best place to begin a new start. Where will you start today? What is your next step in life and faith?