**1. Motivate**

What are some things you love to listen to?

* radio
* podcasts
* audio books while driving
* favorite cd’s

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_pvq89lei> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/2p8j8fwm>

* Sirius radio
* country
* southern Gospel
* classical music
* rock and roll
* contemporary Christian

**2. Transition**

We have so many choices of what to choose from.

* Our study today challenges us to seize opportunities to hear God’s Word proclaimed and explained.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Be Ready to Hear

Listen for how scripture was studied.

Nehemiah 8:1-3 (NIV) all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. 2 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. 3 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. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

What was the occasion for the assembly described in these verses?

* people gathered to hear God’s Word (parts of our Old Testament) read aloud
* common population didn’t have it available to read
* it had not been available to these former exiles returning to Israel

Who made up the congregation of people?

* men and women
* all people old enough to understand

What are some obstacles to hearing God’s Word?

* our minds wander
* in our culture there are so many other things competing for our attention
* we are busy
* we are used to intense visual communication also
* much of what we see and hear is in conflict with the Truth of God’s Word

What are some ways to listen to God’s Word?

* audio editions of scripture
* listening to preaching
* take notes to help you concentrate (whether you later review the notes or not)
* hear and participate in teaching of God’s Word
* listen to both traditional and contemporary Christian music

We’re told that men, women, and young people were present for Ezra’s scripture reading. How does the Bible speak to all generations, and ultimately all cultures?

* there are stories there that children can understand
* there are deep theological passages for mature believers
* there is a coverage of the history of God at work
* Scripture is rich in spiritual principles that all ages can understand
* all cultures have a sense of right and wrong, to which the Bible has much to say
* all people, no matter age or culture, are sinners and need the salvation Jesus provides
* God’s Truth is powerful – hearing the gospel message changes people’s lives

Ezra got the people back to thinking about what God had to say. Who has been instrumental in teaching you the importance of God’s Word?

* pastor
* Bible study group leader
* a parent
* a college professor at a Christian college
* a friend invited me to a Bible study
* as a child, a Sunday School teacher
* youth leader

In what specific ways are Israel’s actions in this passage a good model for us today?

* determination to hear God’s Word
* attentive listening
* willing to stand and listen for long periods
* focus on what God has to say

3.2 Strive to Understand

Listen for the teaching method used.

Nehemiah 8:7-8 (NIV) 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. 8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

What specific steps did Ezra and the other leaders take to make this event practical for everyone?

* collection of Levites who would answer questions or elaborate on what was read
* may have been alternate reading to the whole group and then break up into smaller groups for discussion and further explanations

When have you gained deeper understanding by hearing Scripture explained?

* sermons
* Bible studies
* reading devotional books that go along with a daily Bible reading
* “Bible in One Year” app on a phone or tablet
* formal college classes
* seminars, conferences
* Church camp

Why is it important for believers to meet corporately?

* everyone sharing the same experience
* we hear and understand the same Truth
* by yourself, you may misunderstand or just not understand what you read
* in a group Bible Study you share ideas and come to a consensus of meanings
* a pastor or special speaker with fuller understanding can communicate that to all present

What contemporary principle can you derive from these verses related to the need for believers to study God’s Word?

* reading alone or just hearing the words read is not enough
* alone we need to stop and think about it, meditate on it
* in a group we need discussion and further explanation
* we need those who have knowledge of God’s Truth
* we need people with that knowledge who are able to communicate and educate others
* we need guidance in how to study God’s Word
* verse 8 says they made it clear, gave meaning, helped people understand
* that principle is still true today

3.3 Respond to God’s Truth

Listen for the people’s responses.

Nehemiah 8:9-12 (NIV) Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve." Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

How had the people responded to the reading of the Word of God by Ezra and the Levites?

* initially they were grieving, mourning
* they were struck by the reality of the Truth from God’s Word
* in the history of the nation, there was sin
* that sin had been ultimately punished by the defeat of the nation, the exile
* they realized how much had been lost by disobedience of God

What did Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites tell the people they should do instead? Why?

* this is a sacred, a special day
* go enjoy a banquet
* share your food
* celebrate the joy of the Lord … it is your strength
* realize God’s blessings and celebrate them

In what way can the grief of repentance lead you to the joy of celebration?

* burden of guilt is lifted
* realization of God’s forgiveness
* knowledge of God’s power now at work in your life
* set free from sin’s penalty and sin’s power

What steps can we take to be sensitive to the message of God’s Word? How can we guard against apathy toward God’s Word?

* prepare your hearts and minds as you come to a Bible Study or preaching service
* ask God to give you concentration, focus, and understanding
* before the time of hearing God’s Word, refrain from joking around, goofiness, foolishness
* yes, we enjoy good fellowship, but keep in mind the main purpose we come to worship and receive God’s Truth

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Respond to Scripture.

* When you read or hear God’s Word and you’re convicted, deal with it.
* Confess your sin and turn from it.
* Thank God for forgiving you and setting you free.
* Balance your repentance with a celebration of God’s forgiveness and grace.

Be intentional.

* You cannot become a better listener by accident.
* Review the recommendations for how to become a better listener when you hear God’s Word preached or taught (p. 95).
* Commit to following these practices for several weeks and see how they positively affect your retention and obedience to God’s Word.

Find community.

* God expects you to personally read His Word, but you’re also expected to hear it in the context of Christian community.
* Make a commitment to be part of a Bible study group or class.
* Commit to helping each other discover and live out God’s Word.

Cryptogram Puzzle



It is I, the Word Ninja. This message and partial decryption key have just been received from our consulate in Moco Tazam. The Christians there are under some persecution and want to assure us of their dedication to the Bible. Our decoding team has been busy with Jr. High soccer leagues, so we need your help. Use the key to figure out the letter substitutions in the message. Do your best to determine the missing letters in the message due to the incomplete key. Pass the solution along to your Christian Education pastor. Technical help is available at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8j8fwm> along with the Crossword Puzzle for you ladies in the back row.