

Mental



✓ **Prepare in Advance**

Facilitator: In advance of the session:

- If you think time and interest will permit, research Lectio Divina, the ancient practice of reading and interacting with scripture. A good basic introduction can be found at the websites listed on the session's webpage. At the end of the session, set aside about 10-15 minutes to introduce and practice Lectio Divina.
- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the *Bible Background Video* ready to view.

✓ **Explore**

As you begin, have someone read Nehemiah 8:1-10 out loud and show the *Bible Background Video*.

✓ **Explojring the Story**

Use the following questions to encourage discussion.

- What details in the passage tell you this was an important event for God's people at that time?
- In what ways did Ezra and the people show respect for God's Word?
- The Levites (verses 7-8) were there to translate and interpret the scriptures – why were they such an important part of this process?
- Why did the people weep? And why do you think Nehemiah interrupted their grieving? Why not let the guilt and shame run their course?
- As reason for interrupting their sadness, Nehemiah said “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (verse 10). What do you think this means?

✓ **Re-Creating the Story**

- How is what you're doing right now (as a Bible study group) similar to the situation we find in today's focal passage?
- How does your faith tradition honor the reading of God's Word? Do you think this shows appropriate respect?
- What is the reason for showing respect in this way (mental, physical, etc.) and how could you honor this when you read God's Word privately?
- Who are our “Levites” – who has translated for us, and who interprets so we can understand?

- How can we allow God's Word to touch us emotionally, and how can we express those feelings?
- How can we also, despite sadness or guilt, allow “the joy of the LORD” to be our strength?

✓ **Closing**

- Take time as a group to share ways that you have found to interact meaningfully with God's Word – privately and in public worship.
- If time permits, discuss the Lectio Divina as one method of interacting with scripture and practice it as a group using another lectionary passage for today – Luke 4:14-21.

Close with prayer.

By Jon Parks

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