

Words, meaning and response

Nehemiah 8:8–12, CSB · Read together; use the prompts on page 2.

⁸ They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read.

⁹ Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all of them, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law.

¹⁰ Then he said to them, “Go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, since today is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, because the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

¹¹ And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, since today is holy. Don’t grieve.”

¹² Then all the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them.

Look for the connection

What were reading and explanation meant to achieve? What reason does verse 12 give for the celebration? Point to the words that help you answer.

Help another pair understand

Your task: explain the account, listen to what another pair understood, then improve your explanation.

Read · Nehemiah 8:8

Find what was read and who needed to understand. Read the sentence together. Ask for help with an unfamiliar word; repeating it more loudly is not an explanation.

Explain · Nehemiah 8:8–11

In your own words, explain what the Levites helped the people do. Then explain holy as set apart for God. What did the leaders say was a fitting response on this day? Stay with the recorded account.

Respond · Nehemiah 8:10–12

Join the meaning to the response. Why did the people celebrate? Who was to receive a share? Use “because” to connect your answer with verse 12.

Listen, tell back, improve

Pair A explains; Pair B tells back the meaning and points out one unclear part. Swap roles. Both pairs return to the passage and improve an explanation if needed. You may speak, point or ask someone to read for you.

Finish together: Why does understanding matter more than hearing sounds alone? Explain with verses 8 and 12. No private story or personal confession is needed. Optional notes may go on the back of this sheet.

Our memory verse

Reading and explanation have a purpose.

They read out of the book of the law of
God, translating and giving the meaning
so that the people could understand what
was read.

Nehemiah 8:8, CSB

What did the reading and explanation help the people do?

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