

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on commentaries on Nehemiah by Derek Kidner, Warren Wiersbe, and James Smith, and notes from the HCSB Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

Reading Nehemiah 7:73b-8:3 Bring the Book

Notes
(See back page for authors)

The story is told of a pastor who visited a family in days gone by in America. When he arrived, the father said to one of his children, “Bring out the book which we know and love so well.” So the child went, and returned with the Sears and Roebuck Catalog! (In Australia we might think the Meyer Christmas Catalogue)

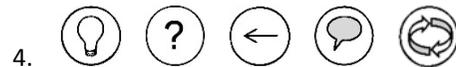
What book would your children bring? Ezra was asked to bring out The Book – God’s book – the Law of Moses that the Lord had given Israel. These returned exiles wanted The Book. All who were old enough to understand (a basis for a crèche for our worship assemblies today?) gathered to hear the Book read and explained.

And, read it was – for 6 hours! Kidner comments that *there was a mood of rare responsiveness, shown not only in the people’s flocking to Jerusalem as one man (just as their forefathers had gathered after the Return: Ezr. 3:1), but in their call for Ezra to read out the Scriptures to them... The attentive listening (3) and heart-searching that ensued (9) gave further evidence of [this being a general desire...not a formality imposed by the leadership].*

How about you. How much do you love the Word of God read and preached?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Why did the people come together – what did they ask for?
2. How long did Ezra read from God’s law?
3. Who all were there to listen?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 110b²
1. Commit yourselves in prayer to love God’s word read/preached
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord’s Day you review the previous week’s readings and/or the previous or current week’s sermons and pray together

² Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading Nehemiah 8:17-18 And there was tremendous joy

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Wiersbe notes that *The people not only had joy in hearing the Word, but they also had “great gladness” in obeying it (Neh. 8:17).*

Wiersbe further comments that *when we obey the Lord and serve Him because we rejoice in Him, then our service will be a delight and not a drudgery. The old Bible commentator Matthew Henry wrote, “Holy joy will be oil to the wheels of our obedience.”* How do you find your response to God’s commands? Do you need some holy joy to oil the wheels of your obedience? It is available from God’s Spirit (Gal 5:22).

For these returned exiles, they celebrated with joy in the Lord. The HCSB notes that *what made the present celebration different was likely the spiritual and theological emphasis that pervaded it. While earlier celebrations may have focused on the harvest and thanksgiving aspects, this observance under Ezra returned to its theological underpinnings to recall God’s provision and care during their forefathers’ flight from Egypt, just as the people in Nehemiah’s time rejoiced in God’s care and provision for them in their flight from Babylon.*

As they celebrated, Ezra read and explained the Word of God each day. Although it is not explicit, many think the pattern set on the first day of the month of 6 hours reading and preaching was continued for the entire festival week. These saints were hungry for and responsive to God’s word!

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What was the attitude of these saints in their obedience?
2. What was special about this observance of the Feast?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 110b
1. Pray that you and your family will obey with great joy, with God’s help
 2. Pray for your family
 3. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
 4. Pray for the reading and preaching of God’s word tomorrow

Reading Nehemiah 8:13-16 The Lord had commanded...

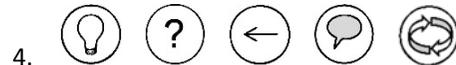
Notes (See back page for authors)
After this first day of praise and worship, of hearing the Word of God read and explained, after weeping replaced with joy, the people continued to seek God in His word. And they continued to respond with obedience to what they found in God's word. As Wiersbe notes *it is not enough to hear the Word of God; we must obey what it tells us to do (James 1:22-25)*.

Because these exiles found God's command to celebrate the annual Feast of Booths they called all the resettling Israelites to prepare and come to Jerusalem for this feast. And prepare they did! They brought branches and made booths all throughout Jerusalem to live in for this feast. The RSB notes that *this temporary living arrangement was a reminder of life in the wilderness after the redemption from Egypt and before entering the Promised Land*. Like them, we have to remember our temporary residence in the land (1 Pet 2:11).

Kidner notes that *we get the impression that the rules for the feast, found in Lev 23:39-43, now came as something of a discovery... Custom, as happens so often in religious history, had overlaid and modified 'the faith once delivered to the saints', so that the freshly studied Scripture, like a cleaned painting, now revealed some long-forgotten colours*. Are you regularly checking your customs and traditions by God's word?

Questions (see back page for explanation of symbols)

- How did these exiles respond to what God's word commands?
- Why do we need to remember our temporary residence?
- How should we check our customs, beliefs, and traditions?



Praise Psalm 110b
Pray

- Rejoice with Your family in all that God has commanded
- Pray for a member of your church
- Pray for your family
- Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Nehemiah 8:4-6 Praise and Worship

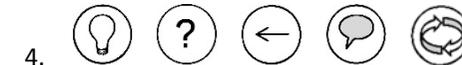
Notes (See back page for authors)
Praise and Worship. Those words most often in our modern Christian Church assemblies have come to mean singing. A quick Google search found 2-, then 4-, then 6-hour "praise and worship" videos on YouTube, and "101 greatest praise and worship songs".

Yet for Ezra and the returned exiles of Nehemiah's day, their praise and worship centred on God and His Word. Wiersbe notes that *after he opened the Word, "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God" (v. 6). In many churches, there is a blessing after the reading of the Scripture; but there is certainly nothing wrong with praising the Lord for His Word before we read and hear it. The people affirmed his words by saying "Amen, Amen" (see 5:13), which means "So be it!" It was a united congregation (8:1) that honored the Scriptures and was willing to devote half of their day to hearing it read and taught. They didn't worship the Book; they worshiped the Lord who spoke to them from the Book*.

Ezra's pulpit was a tall platform so all the people could see and hear. Thirteen other men, probably priests, stood with him, perhaps alternating the reading between them. As Ezra opened the Book, Kidner notes, *what is strikingly apparent is the royal reception given to the Word of God. This day was to prove a turning-point. From now on, the Jews would be predominantly 'the people of a book.'* Again, does that describe you?

Questions (see back page for explanation of symbols)

- What was praise and worship for these believers?
- How did they respond to the opening of God's word?
- What would it look like to be 'the people of the book'?



Praise Psalm 110b
Pray

- Commit yourself and your family in prayer to be 'people of the book', with God's help.
- Pray for a member of your church
- Pray for your family
- Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Nehemiah 8:7-8 Giving the meaning

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Ezra, Nehemiah, and thirteen Levites were involved in helping the people understand the application of God’s law to their lives. The RSB notes that *the Law was not only read but explained, to ensure that the people grasped the meaning. There may also have been translation from Hebrew to Aramaic. The doctrine of the perspicuity (“clarity”) of Scripture is that the things necessary for salvation can be understood from the Bible without special techniques or higher education. This truth does not eliminate the need for faithful exposition of the Scriptures by persons trained for this (Ezra 7:6–10).*

It is not entirely clear how these 15 (28? v4) men arranged the reading and explaining. Smith comments that *G. Campbell Morgan suggested that the public reading was followed by a separation of the assembly into groups led by one of the thirteen Levites. They explained and applied the various passages which Ezra had read. Merely reading the word without understanding it has no benefit for God’s people (8:5–8).*

So, today, in faithful Christian churches, the word of God is read, then explained. While the Holy Spirit must be the teacher (1 Thess 1:5, 1 Jn 2:20), He uses mere men to announce the message which He then applies to hearts. Christ gave teachers to His church (Eph 4:11ff). Are you giving yourself to hearing them?

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Who explained the word as it was read to the people?
2. Who ultimately teaches us from God’s word?
3. Why then do we need human teachers?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 110b
1. Commit yourself and your family in prayer to attend the public reading and preaching of God’s word, with His help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Nehemiah 8:9-12 The joy of the Lord is your strength

Notes
(See back page for authors)

Notice first that even though 15 (or more) men were involved in the reading and explaining of God’s word, there was a unified message. This unity came from God’s word – not from these men. Unity among God’s people must always be based on the Word.

As the Word was read and explained to them, the people began to weep. Yet, they were commanded not to weep. The HCSB notes that *Nehemiah’s command (or Ezra’s?), Do not mourn or weep, seems baffling since the leaders would have been encouraged by the contrition and repentance of the people. However, this dedication of the wall occurred on the “first day of the seventh month” (v. 2) during the New Year celebration. The feast days were to be days of joy (Lv 23:24; Dt 12:12; 16:11), not mourning.*

Rather than weep at their sin on this occasion, they were to rejoice that their place of strong refuge was the Lord and their joy in Him. So, we too have joy in the Lord that reminds us that He is our strong refuge – joy in our redemption, joy in our forgiveness, joy in fellowship with God, for us through Christ who has come, for them, through the Christ who was to come.

And the people responded with obedience. They turned from weeping to rejoicing in their Lord. Their motivation in their joy was having understood God’s word as it was read and explained.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Should we weep when we read God’s word? Why/not?
2. Should we rejoice when we read God’s word? Why/not?
3. Where does unity among God’s people come from?

4.     

Praise Pray

- Psalm 110b
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer that your joy in the Lord is your stronghold
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member