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**Restored from Ruins:  
“The God of the Word”  
Nehemiah 8. 1-12**

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**Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:**

*“Christians feed on Scripture. Holy Scripture nurtures the holy community as food nurtures the human body. Christians don’t simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus’ name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son.” – Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book, 18.*

*“God speaks to us: not only to move us to do what he wants, but to enable us to know him so that we may love him. Therefore God sends his word to us in the character of both information and invitation. It comes to woo us as well as to instruct us; it not merely puts us in the picture of what God has done and is doing but also calls us into personal communion with the loving Lord himself.” – J.I. Packer, Knowing God, 110.*

*“When a minister reads out of the Bible, I am sure that at least nine times out of ten the people who happen to be listening at all hear not what is really being read but only what they expect to be read. And I think that what most people expect to hear read from the Bible is an edifying story, an uplifting thought, a moral lesson—something elevating, obvious, and boring. So that is exactly what very often they do hear. Only that is too bad because if you really listen—and maybe you have to forget that it is the Bible being read and a minister who is reading it—there is no telling what you might hear.”– Frederick Buechner*

*“The most precious part of each day for me is the 30-40 minutes I spend each morning before breakfast with the Bible. All the rest of the day I am bombarded with the stories the world is telling about itself. As I take time to immerse myself in the story the Bible tells, my vision is cleared, and I see things in another way. I see the day that lies ahead in its place in God’s story.” – Lesslie Newbigin*

**Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:**

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- What has been your experience with preaching and sermons? How has it changed over the years for you?
- What do you make of Eugene Peterson’s assertion above? Is Scripture/the Ministry of the Word more an object of study or nourishing food for you?
- How does J.I. Packer’s description of Scripture both wooing and instructing us encourage you? When have you sensed a deeper connection and intimacy with God through his Word?
- The sermon discussed hearing the Word, understanding the Word, and responding to the Word. Which of these is the most difficult for you?
- What are you understanding from Scripture lately? How are you connecting with God through the Word?