Hold Fast to Joy
Nehemiah 8:10-17
September 13, 2026
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Nehemiah 8:10-17: Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." [11] The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve." [12] 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. [13] On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the teacher to give attention to the words of the Law. [14] They found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters during the festival of the seventh month [15] and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make temporary shelters"-- as it is written. [16] So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves temporary shelters on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. [17] The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great. (NIV)

Our Vision: Connect with Christ, Church and Community

1. _____ power of God's joy

_____: You have turned my mourning into dancing! You have ripped off my sackcloth and girded me with the fine silk of joy, so that I can praise you and celebrate your goodness!
Psalm 30:11-12 (JOT)

_____ presence: You love him (Jesus) even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.
1 Peter 1:8 (NLT)

2. _____ to the strength of God's joy

_____ loss: Nehemiah said, "Do not grieve what you have lost because this day is about holy redemption! God has helped us rebuild! Don't fall apart because God's joy is your strength!"
Nehemiah 8:10 (JOT)

_____ the joy: So, the people went away to eat a festive meal and to send presents; it was a time of great and joyful celebration because they could hear and understand God's words.
Nehemiah 8:11-12 (TLB)

_____ to honor God: They hadn't celebrated the Feast (of Booths) with so much joy for a long time. In fact, they had never celebrated it like that from the days of Joshua…until that very day. So, their joy was very great.
Nehemiah 8:17 (NIRV)

3. _____ the source of strength

_____: Jesus called out: "Anyone who is thirsty, come, and I will give you drink! Whoever puts their faith in me, rivers of living water will flow in their heart, and they will know my strength!"
John 7:37-38 (JOT)

Spiritual Action Step:

How can you refocus your life on God's goals for you? Does it feel as if your joy has dried up? Are you focused on the grief of your loss rather than the joy of God's presence? God wants you to find the truth of Isaiah, the prophet*: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3, NIV).* Acknowledge the truth of God's Word for your life, that you cannot save yourself and your best efforts are not good enough. Accept God's salvation through Jesus Christ and realize that you are bought with a great price. Let God adopt you as his child! This week, read Isaiah 12 and John 7, and let the spring of living water flow into your heart!

Translations: NIV: New International Version; JOT: Jon's Own Translation; TLB: The Living Bible; NIRV: New International Reader's Version.