

January Teaching Theme: The Book of Nehemiah

讲员 Speaker: Elder Yin/Dr. Hamilton

题目 Topic: Opposition

经文 Scripture: Nehemiah 4

Monthly Theme: As we enter a new year, we will spend some time walking through the book of Nehemiah over the next nine weeks. Although Nehemiah is its own book in our English Bibles, the whole book is actually Ezra-Nehemiah together. So as we approach Nehemiah, we have to keep in mind that we are coming into the story 3/4th of the way through. If we go back to the beginning of the story in Ezra, we are told that God moved King Cyrus' heart to let the Israelites return to their land to fulfill the prophecy spoken by Jeremiah (Ezra 1). The hope that exile will not be forever should trigger the reader to pick up all the other prophetic hopes of return, including hope for the Messianic King, God's presence in the Temple, and God's Kingdom to be established. We must keep these hopes in mind as we read to the story to properly understand both the ups and downs. Most characters in the Biblical narrative, including Nehemiah, are deeply flawed individuals who have a mix of successes and failures - just like you and me. And this mix of success and failure we will keep confronting as we move through the story of Nehemiah. Let's see what we can learn from Nehemiah's story.

一月 January: 尼希米記 Nehemiah

January 2nd – 尼希米記: 尼希米的祈禱 The Prayer (尼希米記一章 Nehemiah 1)

January 9th - 尼希米記: 城牆工程 The Project (尼希米記二至三章 Nehemiah 2-3)

January 16th - 尼希米記: 敵黨擾阻 The Opposition (尼希米記四章 Nehemiah 4)

January 23rd – 尼希米記: 民生貧苦 The Poor (尼希米記五章 Nehemiah 5)

January 30th - 尼希米記: 敵黨陰謀 The Adversary (尼希米記六章 Nehemiah 6)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (Elder Yin)

Sermon Slides (Elder Yin)

[Sermon Video](#) (Dr. Hamilton)

[Sermon Slides](#) (Dr. Hamilton)

[Overview: Ezra-Nehemiah \(Bible Project\)](#) [English]

[Overview: Ezra-Nehemiah \(Bible Project\)](#) [Mandarin]

* If your group hasn't watched the overview video yet, please do so. *

Discussion Questions (Elder Yin/Pastor William R. Horne):

- (1) Read Nehemiah 4 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) 在我们生命中有没有困境？什么是我们的困境？Do you have difficulties in your life, what are they?
- (3) 困境的根源是什么？如何来面对困境？What is the source of your predicament? How to face it?
- (4) 重建是重建什么？如何来重建？What does rebuild mean to you? How to?

- (5) 犹太人为什么害怕？ Why were the people of Judah afraid?
- (6) 对尼四：14里面的"记得"你如何理解？为什么要记得？ Reading Nehemiah 4:14 how do you understand "remember" and why we need to remember?
- (7) 你有没有你的"记得"？请分享？ Share your remembrance?
- (8) Dr. Hamilton pointed out two ways to respond to opposition: The Nehemiah Model or The Jesus Model.
 - (a) Re-read Nehemiah 4:4-5, 9. What does Nehemiah's model look like?
 - (b) Read Luke 23:34 & Matthew 6:12. What does Jesus' model look like?
 - (c) How can we hold these two approaches in tension? (We aren't told if Nehemiah's method is right or wrong)

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q1: As you read through this chapter, make sure you recall the context from both the [Monthly Theme](#) section and the [Bible Project video](#). Context is key to understanding the movements of the story.

Notes on Overcoming Opposition: When we face opposition, we should ground ourselves back in God's wisdom and grace through prayer (which Nehemiah does), reevaluate if our plan is the right way to go (sometimes we might need to switch it up), and if it is the right way to go, we must refuse to be stopped. The work of God in a world plagued by evil and a culture of death will face opposition. To think that we can do good things or even "God things" without facing opposition is naive. Throughout the Scriptures, we are reminded that a bigger battle is going on behind the scenes between good and evil. When we remember this, we are freed to not hate those opposing us but to fight against the evil behind the opposition rightly. We must walk with the attitude of the Apostle Paul, who wrote, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" If we are walking in the will and power of God, then nothing can stop us. We have to "fight the good fight," and endure the race until the day the Father tells us "well done, good and faithful servant."

Notes on Q6: Throughout the Scriptures, memory and our ability to remember are key to our walking in the faith. When Israel forgot their origin story and what God had done in the past, they would fall into sin, idolatry, and perpetuate injustice. The prophets had to continually call them to remember. Remember where you've been, what God has done, and those who have gone before you in the faith. Our ability to remember our rootedness in the people of God throughout history will determine our ability to run this race with endurance or not. The Christian faith is not some new fad or recent invention but has deep and long roots in the history of God's work in the world. The Church of Jesus Christ crosses borders, cultures, and spans time - and if we forget our rootedness in this history - we will not be able to endure the race ahead.

Notes on Q8:

- Nehemiah 4 reminds us of many other portions of Scripture where the people of God prayed for vengeance like Psalm 137 and Jeremiah 20:12. Though these prayers can be pretty ugly (and violent!), they can function as a means of trusting vengeance and our emotions of anger to God. The mistake is understanding these types of prayers and justification for violence and hate. Remember, God is big enough to handle all of our

emotions, and we can rightly trust God with them. Nehemiah's model consists of both prayer and posting guards with weapons to act as self-defense against attacks. Many use this to justify armed self-defense, but remember, we aren't told if Nehemiah's tactics were right or wrong. Indeed, there needs to be some level of wisdom in how he should defend his workers from attacks and keep them safe. I (Pastor Will) believe the trajectory of Scripture (and the Jesus model) calls Christian to a wise and creative non-violence. How can we creative defend ourselves without restoring to the cycle of violence? As stated earlier, we aren't told if Nehemiah's tactics should be viewed positively or negatively, giving us space to apply possible interpretations on both sides wisely. (But, we should also note that God doesn't appear to answer Nehemiah's prayer, which should give us a clue).

- When we look at the "Jesus model," we see an overcoming opposition by a radical extension of grace and forgiveness. Jesus takes this model all the way to this death on the cross. Grace, forgiveness, and non-violence are counter-intuitive to the ways we have been trained, but they are the way of Jesus. We must seek to foster these postures, attitudes, and actions in our lives. The temptation will be (especially with groups of opposers) to hate those who oppose you and even advocate for violence against them. Church's love to say "hate the sin, love the sinner," but do we really do that? This is a tough call to live out, but again, it is the way of Jesus and the Kingdom.
- The challenge for us as the people of God today is to hold these models in tension wisely. How can we overcome opposition (even defend against it) while never succumbing to hating the opposers or acting in violence towards them? How can we forgive those against us while not being stopped by them?