

February Teaching Theme: The Book of Nehemiah

讲员 Speaker: Pastor William R. Horne

题目 Topic: The Power of Scripture

经文 Scripture: Nehemiah 7-8

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.

二月 **February:** 尼希米記 **Nehemiah**

February 6th - 尼希米記: 與神立約 The Covenant (尼希米記七至八章 Nehemiah 7-8)

February 13th - 尼希米記: 認承罪孽 The Confession (尼希米記九章 Nehemiah 9)

February 20th - 尼希米記: 落成典禮 The Dedication (尼希米記十至十二章 Nehemiah 10-12)

February 27th - 尼希米記: 功敗垂成 The Failure (尼希米記十三章 Nehemiah 13) (聖容主日 Transfiguration Sunday)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#)

[Sermon Slides](#)

[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 (Pastor William R. Horne):

- (1) Read Nehemiah 8 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage? (Make a note of what is repeated throughout the chapter)
- (2) Nehemiah 7 provides for us a genealogy of the Israelite descendants that returned from exile (also in Ezra 2). Do you believe genealogies are important? Why or why not?
- (3) Read 1 Timothy 4:13. Why do you believe we should be devoted to the Public Reading of Scripture? What are some ways we can better adopt this practice?

- (4) Re-read Nehemiah 8:8. We see that the public reading of Scripture alone is not sufficient, but we need understanding. What are some ways we can better seek understanding of the Scriptures as a community?
- (5) The 11th-century theologian Anselm had a motto that the Christian life is “faith seeking understanding.” What does that phrase mean to you, and how does it help you understand the Christian pursuit of spiritual formation?
- (6) After hearing the reading of Scripture, the people of Israel responded in action. What three actions did they take in response? (See Notes). How can we follow their model?

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. This phrase “All the People” is repeated eight times in the chapter, along with multiple other phrases referring to the whole community acting together - making it a clear theme. All the People in unity choose to gather and seek the face of God - through his Scriptures.

Notes on Q2: As we exit Nehemiah 6 and enter chapter 7, the Jerusalem Wall Project is finally Complete. All that is left to do for Nehemiah is to build more homes and properly repopulate the city with those Israelite descendants who had returned from exile. To do so, Nehemiah refers to the same genealogical record, written down in Ezra 2, and he kindly rewrites it all for us here in chapter 7, with a few changes - so there is no need to turn back a few pages. Now, most of the time, when we are reading our Bible, and we come across a genealogy - we, understandable so, skip over it or at most a quick skim read. But, we must recognize the value of these types of records both in the Scriptures and in our own lives. **They reveal a need for us to remember our ancestral past, not as a measure of exclusion of others, but as a recognition of where we have been and what has made us today. Again, the theme of memory is critical throughout Scripture - remember where you have been, who has gone before you, and what God has done.** Genealogies also are strategically used in parts of Scripture to make theological points, like in the book of Ruth or Matthew, that use them to say something about the Messiah. Here, Nehemiah’s purpose, in using the genealogy, is again to repopulate the city with Israelite descendants - which fits well with his and Ezra’s agenda.

Notes on Q3: The public reading of Scripture is a key to this unity and oneness of identity. When we read the Scriptures out loud together - it calls us to reenter the story of God’s people, grounding our identity in a common history. (See [Slide 7](#) for tracing of this practice in the Bible). Every time the people of God stopped practicing the communal, public reading of Scripture, they forgot their identity and how they should live - leading to idolatry and injustice. Ezra and Nehemiah have returned from this exile and must take up this practice again - publically reading Scripture to remind the people who they are and how they should live. This practice is then carried on throughout Judaism, in Jesus’ day, and the early Christian church. We, too, must commit to this practice - of hearing the Scriptures read together. The public reading of Scripture is also the heart behind the same question we begin every discussion with: Read the passage together and simply talk about what you see, what you hear.

Notes on Q5: Anselm's longer quote concerning "faith seeking understanding" is often misunderstood. Anselm doesn't want to replace faith with understanding or that there are time places where understanding can lead to faith. But, the idea of "Faith seeking understanding" speaks to the spiritual formation process we are on as a community. We have an active love and allegiance to God that seeks a more profound knowledge of God daily. The Christian is daily choosing to walk in loyalty to King Jesus and grow in a deeper understanding of God, ourselves, and others.

Notes on Q6: The three responses we see the hearing and understanding of Scripture in Nehemiah 8 are (1) All the People Responded in Worship [Neh 8:6], (2) All the People Responded in Application (The Feast of Tabernacle) [Neh 8:13-18], and (3) All the People Responded in Celebration (Rejoice) [Neh 8:9-12,17].