



Return from Exile

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

Choose one or more ways below to respond to this story.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10

Reflection Section:

Questions for deeper reflection. Think about them on a walk, journal, draw, or talk to a friend or as a family. Whatever feels right. Just be sure to give the questions a few minutes of your undivided attention.

- God is ready to forgive and rebuild people’s lives. What might God be calling you to change or rebuild about yourself?
- The Jewish people had lived in Babylon for two generations before returning. During that time they learned a lot. What do we learn when we lose something? When we can't do things as we have done before?
- What kind of "stones" would we metaphorically build our "walls" with today? (Love, patience, endurance, faith, etc. ??)

Imagination Station:

Option One: Reenact the Feast of Tabernacles (Festival of Booths). Build a fort. Crawl inside. Think about God. Follow the links on our [website](#) or [here](#) and [here](#) to learn more. Send Deacon Beth a photo for fun!

Option Two: Use Legos® or other building materials to build a temple and city walls. Offer a prayer of thanks to God. Text or email photos of your work to Deacon Beth. We’d love to see what you build!

Option Three: Watch one or more of the video links for kids, youth, and adults about Ezra and Nehemiah on our website, and/or enjoy the Song, “[Blessed Be](#)” from Nehemiah 9:5 and Psalm 41:13.

Kitchen Connection:

When the people heard Ezra read the word of God, they were sad because they realized they had forgotten God’s rules for living and had sinned. Ezra and Nehemiah told them that even though they sinned, this was a happy day. Go home and prepare a feast and share food with people who don’t have any. This day is holy. Don’t be sad, because “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10.

Prepare a favorite meal, bake cookies to share with someone, or donate to the food bank. Light a candle while you eat as a reminder that God is present with you. What is something you want others to know or remember about God? In Nehemiah 9:6-31, Ezra helps the Israelites remember all the things God had done for them. What are some things God has done for you?

Faith Practice:

Many elements of our worship services come from the time of Ezra-Nehemiah some 2,400 years ago! In Nehemiah 8, the Torah was read in public for the very first time which initiated a practice that we follow in worship today — hearing and responding to the Word of God. Singers and instrumentalists helped to lead worship. People read or sang antiphonally (back and forth to each other) along with offering communal prayers, profession of faith, and confession of sins. Worship renewed and helped to rebuild the spiritual lives of the Israelites. The gift of worship has been passed down to us for centuries. May you create intentional time for worship, whether online or in person, and be renewed in spirit to love and serve the Lord.