

In Nehemiah chapter 12, we encounter a powerful celebration that goes far beyond the dedication of rebuilt walls. The Israelites gathered with such joy and worship that their rejoicing could be heard from far away. But what were they really celebrating? They were remembering God's faithfulness across generations—how He brought them back from captivity, provided resources through unlikely sources, united workers despite opposition, and turned their hearts back to Him. This passage challenges us to become a people of remembrance. In our fast-paced culture, we often rush forward, accumulating anxiety about what's next, forgetting to pause and reflect on what God has already done. The Old Testament shows us that God's people built altars of remembrance, like the stones from the Jordan River, so future generations would ask, 'What do these stones mean?' and hear the testimony of God's intervention. When we remember God's faithfulness in our past, it builds our faith for tomorrow. Our testimonies aren't meant to be hidden—they're powerful tools that stir faith in others. Whether it's a miraculous healing, a restored relationship, or simply God's sustaining grace through hardship, sharing what God has done opens hearts and creates divine appointments. The vision of restoration runs throughout this message: God desires to bring us back to our original purpose, to restore what the enemy has stolen. And when we praise Him anyway—even in our weakness, even in our waiting—we discover that He is enough.

Title: Remembering God's Faithfulness: A Call to Testimony and Praise

Sermon Summary:

This sermon centers on the importance of remembering and celebrating God's faithfulness in our lives. Drawing from Nehemiah 12, Pastor Riley emphasizes how the Israelites' dedication of the rebuilt walls was not merely about construction, but about recognizing God's restorative work throughout generations. The message challenges believers to remember God's past faithfulness as a foundation for present faith and future confidence. Through personal testimonies of healing, deliverance, and restoration, the sermon demonstrates that sharing our stories stirs faith in others and brings glory to God. The central theme emphasizes that even in trials and weakness, God's grace is sufficient, and we are called to "praise anyway" - in both mountaintop experiences and valley struggles.

Key Points:

- The Israelites celebrated and rejoiced as they dedicated the finished work to God, remembering His faithfulness across generations
- Remembering God's restorative work in our lives brings us to a place of celebration and rejoicing
- When we remember God's faithfulness, it enables us to walk forward with faith and confidence
- Remembering and sharing what God has done stirs up faith in others and opens hearts to the Gospel
- Our testimonies of God's power and faithfulness were not meant to be hidden but shared boldly
- Mount Zion's vision is to be a place where Jesus makes restoration a reality in people's lives
- Restoration means bringing people back to their original state and purpose as created in God's image

- Even when God doesn't immediately remove our struggles, His grace and strength are sufficient for each day
- We are called to praise God "anyway" - regardless of our circumstances or whether we see immediate answers

Scripture Reference:

- Nehemiah 12 (primary focus - the dedication of the wall and celebration of God's faithfulness)
- Joshua 4:4-7 (building memorial stones to remember God's faithfulness)
- Mark 5:18-20 (the demon-possessed man sharing his testimony)
- Psalm 107:1-2 (let the redeemed tell their story)
- Psalm 66:16-17 (come and hear what God has done)
- Psalm 78:4 (telling the next generation of God's praiseworthy deeds)
- 2 Corinthians 12 (Paul's testimony about God's strength in weakness)

Stories:

- The Israelites' journey from captivity to rebuilding the walls and temple in Jerusalem over 52 days despite opposition
- Joshua and the Israelites crossing the Jordan River in flood stage, with God stopping the waters and commanding them to build a memorial altar
- The demon-possessed man in Mark 5 who was set free by Jesus and sent to tell others, resulting in thousands gathering when Jesus returned
- Bob Hannis's testimony of being diagnosed with leukemia five years ago with 89% cancer cells, now having non-detectable cancer through God's healing
- Bob's testimony of leading his Uncle John to Christ after witnessing to him for 39 years
- Bob's spring break ministry leading 1,858 young people to salvation in one season
- Denise Ray's testimony of being kicked by a horse named "Keep the Faith," suffering liver laceration and hip/pelvis fractures, and experiencing complete healing without surgery at age 70
- Cheryl's testimony of deliverance from a religious cult, learning to understand God's love, experiencing neck and arm pain from a car accident, and receiving miraculous hip healing after being told she needed full hip replacement
- Pastor Riley's testimony of sharing the Gospel with a contractor in his basement who accepted Christ
- Kyla's testimony of battling cancer while choosing to "praise anyway" despite intense pain and sleepless nights

Scripture References from the Sermon

1. ****Nehemiah 12:1-47**** - The entire chapter was read, focusing on the dedication of the wall and celebration
2. ****Joshua 4:4-7**** - Building memorial stones after crossing the Jordan River
3. ****Mark 5:18-20**** - The demon-possessed man's testimony in the Decapolis
4. ****Psalm 107:1-2**** - "Give thanks to the Lord... Let the redeemed tell their story"
5. ****Psalm 66:16-17**** - (Verse quoted but not fully transcribed in the text)
6. ****Psalm 78:4**** - Not hiding God's deeds from the next generation

7. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - Paul's statement about weakness and strength (paraphrased: "when I am weak, then I am strong")

8. **John 10:10** - "The devil comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus came that you may have life and have it to the full" (paraphrased)

Alluded To/Thematic References:

9. **Acts 1:8** - Being empowered by the Spirit to be witnesses (theme of testimony and witnessing)

10. **Genesis 1:26-27** - Created in the image of God (mentioned in context of restoration)

11. **Exodus 14** - Crossing the Red Sea (contextual background for Joshua 4 memorial)

12. **Matthew 7:11** - God as Father who gives good gifts (mentioned in closing prayer)

13. **Isaiah 9:6** - Prince of Peace (mentioned in closing prayer)

Relevant Verses for Main Themes:

- **Deuteronomy 8:2** - Remembering how God led you

- **1 Chronicles 16:12** - "Remember the wonders he has done"

- **Revelation 12:11** - Overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony

- **Lamentations 3:22-23** - God's faithfulness is new every morning

- **Isaiah 43:18-19** - God doing a new thing (restoration theme)

- **2 Corinthians 5:17** - New creation in Christ (restoration)

How does the practice of building 'altars of remembrance' in the Old Testament challenge our modern tendency to constantly look forward without reflecting on God's past faithfulness?

Pastor Riley mentioned that remembering God's faithfulness allows us to walk forward with faith and confidence. What specific moments of God's faithfulness in your life could serve as 'stones of remembrance' when facing current or future challenges?

The man freed from demon possession in Mark 5 was told to go tell his own people what God had done rather than follow Jesus. Why might sharing our testimony with those who know us be more powerful than we realize?

Cheryl shared how her understanding of God's love was distorted and it took time and truth from others to be 'deprogrammed and reprogrammed.' How can we help others who have distorted views of God's character find healing and truth?

The sermon emphasized that our testimonies were not meant to be hidden, yet fear and shame often keep us silent. What spiritual disciplines or practices might help us overcome these barriers to sharing what God has done?

Kyla's shirt said 'Praise Anyway' even while walking through cancer and pain. How do we reconcile praising God in suffering with the natural human desire for Him to remove our hardships immediately?

Paul's statement 'when I am weak, then I am strong' suggests that God's strength is sometimes revealed through our continued weakness rather than instant healing. How does this challenge our expectations of what it means for God to answer prayer?

Bob shared about praying with 1,858 young people for salvation during spring break and later seeing the fruit of those prayers. How does this long-term perspective on evangelism encourage us when we don't see immediate results from sharing the gospel?

The Israelites' rejoicing in Nehemiah 12 was so great it could be heard from far away, celebrating not just completed walls but God's restoration of their hearts and people. What would it look like for our church communities to celebrate God's restorative work with that same intensity and joy?

Denise was told by her doctor to give up horses, but she responded 'you don't know my God.' How do we discern when to accept medical or practical advice versus when to stand in faith for what we believe God has called us to?

Small Group Guide: Remembering God's Faithfulness

Based on Nehemiah 12

"Look What You've Done" - A Testimony of God's Restoration

Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Ice Breaker Question:

What's one thing that happened this week that made you excited or brought you joy? (It can be as simple as finding an onion ring in your fries!)

Key Scripture

Nehemiah 12:27, 43

"At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps, and lyres... And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced, and the sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away."

Main Takeaways

The Israelites were celebrating and rejoicing as they dedicated the finished work to God - Their celebration wasn't just about walls, but about God's faithfulness through generations.

Remembering God's restorative work in our life will bring us to a place of celebration and rejoicing - We need to intentionally stop and remember what God has done.

Remembering and sharing what God has done stirs up faith in others - Our testimonies have the power to impact those around us.

Our testimonies of God's power and faithfulness were not meant to be hidden - God wants us to share our stories boldly.

Mount Zion is a place where Jesus makes restoration a reality - God desires to restore people to their original state and purpose.

Discussion Questions

Reflection on the Message (15-20 minutes)

The Power of Remembering

Why do you think we struggle to remember and celebrate what God has done in our lives?
What are some practical ways we can create "altars of remembrance" in our modern lives?

Looking Back at God's Faithfulness

Share a time when God came through for you in a situation that seemed hopeless. How did that experience impact your faith?

How does remembering past faithfulness help you face current challenges?

The Impact of Testimony

The sermon shared several powerful testimonies (Bob's healing from leukemia, Denise's horse accident recovery, Cheryl's hip healing). Which story resonated most with you and why?

Have you ever shared your testimony with someone and seen it impact their faith? What happened?

Going Deeper (15-20 minutes)

Hiding vs. Sharing Our Stories

What holds us back from sharing our testimonies? (Fear, shame, uncertainty, etc.)

Read Psalm 107:1-2 together. What does it mean to "let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story"?

Praising Anyway

Discuss the testimony of Kyla who chose to "praise anyway" despite her cancer diagnosis and pain. What does it look like to praise God when He hasn't answered our prayers the way we hoped?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. How does Paul's perspective on weakness challenge our typical approach to hardship?

Divine Encounters

Pastor Riley mentioned that every place we go could be a divine encounter. When was the last time you felt prompted to share your faith with someone? Did you act on it?

What would it look like to live with more intentionality about sharing God's work in your life?

Practical Application (15-20 minutes)

Individual Reflection

Take 3-5 minutes of silence for each person to reflect on these questions:

Where am I currently needing God to work in my life?

What testimony do I need to remember and celebrate?

Who in my life needs to hear my story?

Group Activities

Option 1: Testimony Sharing

Go around the circle and have each person share one specific way God has shown His faithfulness in their life. Keep it to 2-3 minutes per person.

Option 2: Create a Remembrance

Have each person write down or draw a "stone of remembrance" - one significant way God has been faithful to them. Share these with the group and consider taking a photo to remember this moment.

Option 3: Prayer Partners

Pair up and share one area where you need God's intervention. Commit to praying for each other throughout the week and checking in on how God is working.

Action Steps for This Week

Choose at least one of the following to commit to:

Write Your Testimony

Take 30 minutes this week to write out your salvation story or a significant testimony of God's faithfulness. Keep it ready to share when opportunities arise.

Share Your Story

Intentionally look for one opportunity this week to share what God has done in your life with someone (at work, in the grocery store, with a neighbor, etc.).

Create a Remembrance Journal

Start a journal or note on your phone where you record answered prayers and moments of God's faithfulness. Review it regularly.

Reach Out

Contact someone who prayed for you during a difficult time and let them know how God answered. Encourage them with the testimony.

Practice "Praise Anyway"

If you're currently in a difficult season, commit to praising God daily this week regardless of your circumstances. Write down what you're praising Him for.

Closing Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

Thank God for specific testimonies shared in your group

Pray for those facing current battles and needing God's intervention

Ask for boldness to share testimonies with others

Pray for opportunities to be witnesses this week

Closing Scripture:

"I sought the Lord and He heard and He answered. That's why I trust Him." - Based on Psalm 34:4

For Next Week

Come prepared to share one way you saw God work this week

If you wrote your testimony, be ready to share it (optional)

Bring any stories of divine encounters you experienced

Additional Resources

Suggested Scriptures for Further Study:

Joshua 4:1-7 (Stones of Remembrance)

Mark 5:18-20 (Go and tell what God has done)

Psalm 66:16-17 (Come and hear what God has done)

Psalm 78:4 (Telling the next generation)

Revelation 12:11 (Overcoming by the word of our testimony)

Reflection Question for Personal Devotion:

If you were to build an "altar of remembrance" today, what would it commemorate about God's faithfulness in your life?