

Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10 & Luke 4: 14-21 **Notes for home groups** Sunday 27 January 2019

Sunday series '**Advent & Christmas**' - study 9 Theme – '**The Word**'

What do you understand (in a Christian context) 'the Word' to mean?

1a. I can think of 3 meanings, but can you think of more? What are they?

1b. Where in the Bible would you find passages using 'the Word' in different ways?

**Read Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10**

The context in which this passage is set is that the Israelites have (with grateful hearts and with God's help and protection) returned from exile in Babylon, have rebuilt the city walls of Jerusalem and have settled peacefully in the surrounding towns of their ancestral home. It would seem some years have passed and Nehemiah (leader) and Ezra (priest) believe the people may have forgotten by whose grace and provision they are back in the promised land. A special event is prepared (the seventh month is Jewish new year).

2a. What, if any, parallels can we draw with the society in which we live today?

2b. Would it be appropriate to organise a similar event today? What response and what impact would you anticipate your planned event to achieve? Is Isaiah 55: 11 relevant here?

2c. Verse 8 appears to be a key verse. Are there passages in the Bible you would like explained? What are they?

3. There are parts of the world where Bibles are hard to obtain, even dangerous to own.

3a. What do you make of the people's response to hearing 'the Word' read (verses 5-6)?

3b. As Bibles are so freely available to us, I wonder if we hold 'the Word of God' in the reverence it deserves. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of having the Bible being freely available to read or reject?

**Read Luke 4: 14-21**

Notice in this passage how much Jesus is appreciated when he confirms his anointment to bring 'good news for the poor' and 'freedom for prisoners' and 'recovery of sight and 'release the oppressed'.

4a. Would you say that this is what is popularly believed to be the message Jesus Christ brings today, or something different?

4b. What does this passage say about the value and authority Jesus placed in Old Testament scriptures? What, if anything, recorded in the New Testament has changed anything about the value and authority of the Old Testament?

4c. Verse 21 – "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". Is it still being fulfilled today?