

LESSON 78

Nehemiah

NEHEMIAH 1 – 6



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD WORKS THROUGH PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS REDEMPTIVE PLAN

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** 5 MIN
Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** 10 MIN
Read Nehemiah 2 from the Scriptures or read story 78, "Nehemiah," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** 10 MIN
Look for God
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ Bibles for everyone in the class
 - ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** 10 MIN
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** 25 MIN
Rebuilding the Walls
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ Bibles
 - ✓ paper and pencil
 - ✓ a large supply of newspaper
 - ✓ packing tape (six rolls)
6. **WORD BIBLE MEMORY** 5 MIN
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** 15 MIN
Rebuilding the City
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** 5 MIN
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** 10 MIN
Quickly, Quickly, Rebuild the Wall
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ building blocks
 - ✓ cardboard paper towel tubes (to represent swords)
 - ✓ masking tape

TOTAL 95 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Nehemiah prays for his people—Even though the temple has been rebuilt, the walls of Jerusalem are still broken down, and the city can easily be attacked. Nehemiah holds an important position in the court of King Artaxerxes. When news of the broken-down walls reaches him, Nehemiah mourns, prays, and fasts for days. The humble prayer in Nehemiah 1:4–11 is probably only a summary of Nehemiah’s prayers during that time.

But what can the prayers of one person do? As we will see, if you are called by God to a certain purpose, one person’s prayers can do a lot!

God gives Nehemiah favor with the king—Though Nehemiah is afraid at first to speak to the king, God gives him courage to explain why he is sad. When Nehemiah boldly asks about rebuilding the city, God gives him great favor with the king. With the king’s permission, Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem and secretly inspects the walls. He motivates the people with the testimony of what God has done through King Artaxerxes. The people agree to help Nehemiah rebuild the walls.

Earlier we learned how God moved King Cyrus to return the people to Judah. Later, God moved in the heart of King Darius to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Here, God selects another king to use for his purposes. King Artaxerxes is used to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nothing will ever stop the plan of God.

The people build the walls in faith—At this time, Sanballat is apparently governor of Samaria. He hates the idea of the walls of Jerusalem being rebuilt. But God’s purpose cannot be opposed. Even though Sanballat has a plan to attack the people working on the wall, Nehemiah learns about it and prepares for it so well that the attack never comes.

There are many things that seem to be working against Nehemiah as he tries to rebuild the wall. But he and the people know God has called them to do it. They keep praying, working hard, behaving wisely, and relying on God for the outcome. Eventually, they succeed. The walls of Jerusalem are completely rebuilt!

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Jerusalem

A Caananite city prior to Joshua's conquest, Jerusalem became the dwelling place for God from the time of David onward. Psalm 87:1–3 describes it as the city most favored by God because it is his dwelling place. When the people of God disobeyed, Jerusalem was sacked and its people taken captive. Jerusalem was rebuilt in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. It continued to be the central location of worship for the Israelites until the time of Jesus.

Jerusalem, as the place where God dwells with his people, has a greater significance than an earthly city. In Revelation 21:10 we learn that the city of heaven where God will live with his redeemed people is called Jerusalem. So, the earthly Jerusalem is a shadow of that greater heavenly reality.

WHERE IS JESUS?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Mark 15:22–24.

One day Jesus would minister in the restored city of Jerusalem. Although the people of Israel rebelled against God, God had a plan to redeem his people through Christ.

Part of that plan was to restore the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified just outside those city walls. Jesus walked through the Judgment Gate in the wall that led to Golgotha, also called the Place of the Skull, where he gave his life for the atonement of our sins.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Nehemiah 2 from the Scriptures or read story 78, "Nehemiah," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Look for God

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for everyone in the class
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

God so often works behind the scenes through the lives of people like Nehemiah. Take time after you read and tell the story to the class to search out the work of God behind the scenes.

God works in ways that are obvious; e.g., Nehemiah obviously knew God and prayed to him. God also works in ways that are not so obvious; e.g., Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king and not a farmer with no access to the king.

Then have the class look though Nehemiah 1—6 and find places where God is at work behind the scenes to accomplish his plan. Jot their findings on the whiteboard.

- Nehemiah prayed to God who heard his prayer and gave him favor with the king (2:1–8)
 - God put the plan to rebuild into Nehemiah’s heart (2:12)
 - the hand of God had been on Nehemiah for good (2:18)
 - the God of heaven will make the work prosper (2:20)
 - they pray to God (4:4, 14)
 - God frustrates their enemies’ plan (4:15)
- **How else did God work to arrange circumstances to ensure that his plan would succeed?**
- Nehemiah found out about the condition of the wall when he could have just gone on unawares (Nehemiah 2:13).
 - Nehemiah was in a close position to the king as cupbearer (Nehemiah 1:11).
 - The king was willing to allow Nehemiah to go when he could have been greedy and even imprisoned Nehemiah for his less-than-cheerful demeanor (Nehemiah 2:6).
 - The people were willing to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 2:18).
 - Sanballat did not immediately oppose the rebuilding of the wall with force (Nehemiah 2:19).
 - There were enough weapons around to enable God’s people to defend themselves (Nehemiah 4:13).
 - There were enough supplies to complete the rebuilding of the wall (Nehemiah 6:1).

The amazing thing is that God worked it out for the wall to be completed!

TEACHING/DISCUSSION **10 MIN**

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 **25 MIN**

Rebuilding the Walls

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles
- ✓ paper and pencil
- ✓ a large supply of newspaper
- ✓ packing tape (six rolls)

The story of the rebuilding of the wall starts in chapter one and finishes with the completion of the wall in chapter six.

Divide the class into six groups and assign each a chapter to act out. Assign chapter one to the first group, chapter two to the second group, and so on until all six chapters are assigned.

Allow fifteen minutes for groups to read their chapter and decide how to act it out. Explain that as soon as they finish figuring it out they should move to create costumes from the newspaper and tape. Give them a warning at the five-minute mark and have them move to making costumes. At the ten-minute mark shout “Stop.” Then give each team one minute to perform their skit.

When the acting is complete, read Mark 15:21–28 and share with the class that the greater purpose of God was that Jerusalem would be complete so that it could serve as the city in which the Son of God would be crucified. God so loved us that he arranged for this city to be restored as a setting for the killing of his Son.

Share the gospel with the class and help them understand that when we read about the restoration of Jerusalem in Nehemiah, we cannot separate that from the cross.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY **5 MIN**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

Rebuilding the City

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Have the children draw a picture of the rebuilding of the wall.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Quickly, Quickly, Rebuild the Wall

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ building blocks
- ✓ cardboard paper towel tubes (to represent swords)
- ✓ masking tape

Prior to class lay a ten-foot line of tape on the floor.

Divide the class into builders and enemies. The goal of the builders is to make a long line of blocks from one end of the tape to the other. This represents the last breach in the wall. Tell the enemies of Jerusalem that when you say Go, they should try to jump across the line into the city before the other team can finish building the wall. Once the wall is completed they cannot get in.

Say "Go." The enemies will easily be able to jump across the line before building is complete.

Now have them start over again, only this time give the builders the paper towel tubes and position others as guards in front of the construction work. Explain to the enemies that if they are touched by a cardboard tube they must fall to the ground dead. Now have them try again. They should see how pointless it is to try and attack a well-guarded wall.

Read Nehemiah 4:9–23, and use this exercise to talk about how God helped Israel defeat her enemies and rebuild the wall. Then use the "Where Is Jesus?" section of this lesson to help the children understand how this story fits into the larger picture of God's story of redemption.