

THE WALLS REBUILT

NEHEMIAH 1-6



KEY PASSAGE: John 20:31

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

CHRIST CONNECTION: God's enemies tried to stop His people, but they still rebuilt the wall. God's enemies tried to stop Jesus by killing Him, but God planned for Jesus' death and resurrection to be the only way for people to be saved.

STORY POINT: Even though their enemies tried to stop them, God's people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

In the first chapter of Nehemiah, we learn that Nehemiah's heart was broken when he heard that the walls around the city of Jerusalem were in disrepair. While Nehemiah was in a place of prestige and importance, he was willing to sacrifice that position, travel back to Jerusalem, and dedicate himself to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah understood that without walls around the city, Jerusalem was in danger of being destroyed or ransacked again by other groups of people living around them.

Once Nehemiah began the work of getting the people together to rebuild the walls, opposition quickly came in the form of a neighboring group of people. The opposition leaders decided that they needed to stop the work by killing Nehemiah if necessary. When confronted with the opposition, Nehemiah refused to give up his place working on the wall. He said to his enemies, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down" (Nehemiah 6:3). The Bible tells us Nehemiah had to refuse their request five times. Despite this opposition and many more in the days ahead, God strengthened His people, and they completed the walls in only 52 days.

Nehemiah reminds us of the importance of staying focused on the task to which God has called us. It is so easy to get distracted in the world in which we live, and yet God has called us to be focused on doing His will. Point kids to see how they can ask God to help them remain focused on His will and His plan for their lives. Invite kids to ponder God's mercy and power, knowing He will help them to accomplish whatever He calls them to.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "Rebuild the Wall" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ marshmallows, 20 per group
- ☐ 6 inch long lollipop sticks, 5 per group

Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ tray
- ☐ small objects such as a toy car, pencil, spoon, sticker, etc.; 10
- ☐ towel



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- ☐ bean bag
- ☐ Books of the Bible Poster (optional)

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "The Walls Rebuilt" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ modern-day archaeology picture of Nehemiah's wall (optional)

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 18, Session 1" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "Partner with Send Phoenix" missions video
- ☐ "Bowman Family Photo" printable

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Life in His Name (John 20:31)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “Have you ever worked on a project that was difficult or took a long time to complete? What was it? Did you ever feel like giving up?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Rebuild the Wall” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will learn how God’s people rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem, even though their enemies tried to stop them.”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: MARSHMALLOW WALLS

Form kids into groups of three or four. Distribute 20 marshmallows and five lollipop sticks to each group. Challenge groups to create a wall using their marshmallows and lollipop sticks. Explain the kids will place a marshmallow on the table and poke a lollipop stick through it. Then kids will skewer more marshmallows onto the stick. Each stick should hold about four marshmallows. Tell groups to line up each marshmallow filled stick next to each other to create the “wall.” The group to complete their wall first is the winner.

SAY “Was it challenging to build the wall? Today, we will learn how God’s people wanted to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem because they were in ruins. We’ll see that **EVEN THOUGH THEIR ENEMIES TRIED TO STOP THEM, GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.**”

☐ OPTION 2: PAY ATTENTION!



Before the session, place 10 small, random objects on a tray and cover the tray with a towel. For example, you may choose a toy car, pencil, spoon, sticker, etc. Invite a volunteer to come to the front of the room. Hold the tray where everyone can see it. Remove the towel for 10 seconds and challenge the volunteer to look at the tray and try to remember as many objects as he can within that time. Then cover the tray. Challenge him to list all the objects he can remember. Ask the rest of the kids to call out objects that he missed. Repeat, as time allows, with other kid volunteers.

SAY “In today’s story, we will see that God’s people had to pay attention and be on guard as they rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem. God’s enemies did not want the walls rebuilt, but we’ll see how God protected His people and helped them to persevere.”





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m so happy you are here to learn from God’s Word, the Bible. If you brought your Bible, can you please hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we will be in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah.

The book of Nehemiah helps us understand how God used Nehemiah to help rebuild the city of Jerusalem. When God’s people returned from exile, much of the city was destroyed. However, not everyone wanted to see Jerusalem rebuilt. Today, we will learn that **EVEN THOUGH THEIR ENEMIES TRIED TO STOP THEM, GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s pray together: ‘God, thank You for Your Word. Help us hear and trust in Your truth, knowing You love us. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “Today, we have a new big picture question: **What is the Bible about?** What do you think the Bible is about? [Allow responses.] The answer we’ll learn is, **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.** Let’s say the answer one more time: **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.**

God has always had a plan to save people from sin. Little by little, God revealed more of His plan to His people. Through all the Old Testament stories, like our story today, God was at work to one day bring Jesus into the world. As we read the Bible, we begin to see how each smaller story fits into God’s big story of salvation. As we hear our story today, we can remember how God was showing His people that His plans for them would not fail. He would help them rebuild the walls and protect them from their enemies, so that one day Jesus could be born from the Jewish people. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “Last week, we learned that some of God’s people returned to Jerusalem, but others did not. Esther was among those who stayed behind in Persia. Today, we will see how Nehemiah also stayed in Persia. Yet, when Nehemiah heard how Jerusalem was in ruins, he asked the king to let him return. We’ll see how Nehemiah helped rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Nehemiah 1; 2:1-8,11-13,17; 4:7-23; 6:1-9,15-16. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Walls Rebuilt.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

THE WALLS REBUILT

“ When God’s people were freed from exile, Nehemiah stayed behind in Persia and worked for the king. **Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. One day, Nehemiah heard that the people of God in Jerusalem were in trouble. The wall was broken down, and the gates were burned.**

Nehemiah wept over the sad news about Jerusalem. He **prayed to God, saying, “God, please hear my prayer for your people. I confess that we have sinned against you. Please forgive us, and give me favor in the eyes of the king as I go to serve him.”**

King Artaxerxes noticed that Nehemiah looked sad and asked him what was wrong. **Nehemiah told him that he was sad because Jerusalem was in ruins.** The king said, “What is your request?” **Nehemiah** prayed, and then **said, “If it pleases the king, please send me to Jerusalem so that I may rebuild it.”** The king agreed to this request and provided wood for the building of the temple.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he spent time observing the walls and gates and planning what he should do. Then **he went to all the people and said, “You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins. Come, let’s rebuild the wall so we will no longer be shameful.”**

The people started building, but some enemies of God’s people, **Sanballat and Tobiah, were not happy. They planned to attack Jerusalem so the building would stop. So, the people prayed to God and appointed a guard to protect them day and night.** They also had each builder carry a weapon with him to protect himself. In addition, they all carried ram’s horns to blow if they were attacked, so that other workers would come help them.

Then Sanballat and Tobiah started telling lies about the people of God. They said God’s people were rebuilding the wall because they **planned to rebel against King Artaxerxes.** Nehemiah said, “There is no truth to these rumors!” **God’s people did not allow these enemies to stop them from building.**

The people completed the wall in 52 days. The nations were amazed, and they knew that the Lord had helped His people.

Christ Connection: God’s enemies tried to stop His people, but they still rebuilt the wall. God’s enemies tried to stop Jesus by killing Him, but God planned for Jesus’ death and resurrection to be the only way for people to be saved. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Display a picture: Print off and display a modern-day archaeology picture of Nehemiah’s wall that has been discovered by archaeologists in Jerusalem.

Act it out: Act out the story as you tell it, performing motions as needed.



2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ When God’s people finally returned to Jerusalem, they discovered that Jerusalem’s walls and gates were destroyed. Nehemiah was so saddened by this news, so he prayed to God. What did Nehemiah pray? **[Allow responses.]** Nehemiah prayed to God, asking for help and forgiveness for the sins of God’s people. He then prayed that the king would allow him to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he observed the damage. Then he gathered the people, telling them that it was time to rebuild the wall. What happened after the people began rebuilding the wall? **[Allow responses.]** As God’s people began rebuilding the wall, their enemies tried to stop them. Sanballat and Tobiah told lies and planned attacks. The people prayed to God and stayed strong, even carrying weapons for protection while they worked. **EVEN THOUGH THEIR ENEMIES TRIED TO STOP THEM, GOD’S PEOPLE REBUILT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.** With Nehemiah’s leadership and God’s help, the wall was completed in just 52 days. Everyone knew that God had helped His people accomplish this great task.

No one can mess up God’s plan. If God wants to do something, He will do it. Even when we face hard times or people make fun of us for trusting God, we can know God loves us and we can remain obedient. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ God’s enemies tried to stop His people, but they still rebuilt the wall. God’s enemies tried to stop Jesus by killing Him, but God planned for Jesus’ death and resurrection to be the only way for people to be saved. I’m happy to answer questions or tell you more about how you can trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 1” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Are we able to tell little lies, like for a surprise party or something?
2. The gospel is the truth about how Jesus saves people from sin. Who can you share this truth with?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “ Phoenix is the capital city of Arizona in the United States. The city lies near the Salt River in the Sonoran Desert, and it is surrounded by mountains. It has a warm, sunny desert climate, and it’s home to a professional basketball team, baseball team, and football team. ”

Play the missions video. Then display the “Bowman Family Photo” printable. Tell kids that



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Brian Bowman, and his wife Brooke, live in Phoenix, Arizona. Share how they moved to Phoenix from Portland, Oregon, and in 2012, started a church called Valley Life. The people in Phoenix need to hear the good news about Jesus, and Valley Life is a church that wants to start more churches so more people can learn how Jesus saves people from their sin. Valley Life has already started six other churches, but they want to start more.

Pray, thanking God for the Bowman family and for Valley Life Church as they help people know about Jesus. Pray God will help Valley Life start more churches in the Phoenix area.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 20:31 together.

SAY “As we learn our new key passage, we can be reminded that God kept His promise to send the Messiah, Jesus, into the world. Just as God was faithful to His people, helping them rebuild the wall, God is faithful to provide us with the way to have eternal life.”

Form kids into groups of four or five. Challenge kids in each group to work together to come up with motions for the key passage. Provide some examples of motions like pretending to write with a pencil for the word “written” or pointing to your head for the word “believe.” Then invite each group to perform their motions for the entire group.

Lead kids to sing “Life in His Name (John 20:31).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “Thank You, Lord, for Your good and perfect plans. Thank You for Jesus and for giving us everything we need to do the work You have called us to. Help us honor and glorify You with our lives. Amen.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 6. Explain that the book of Nehemiah is in the History division of the Old Testament. Invite kids to see how many chapters are in Nehemiah.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 6:16 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “When God’s people completed the wall in only 52 days, the enemies of God’s people and the surrounding nations were amazed and feared God! It was obvious to everyone that the people were only able to accomplish this task with the Lord’s help and in His strength.

God works in and through the lives of His people so other people can see God’s power, goodness, and faithfulness. This brings glory to God! When we surrender to God and the good work He has called us to, God can use us to point other people to Him. We can tell others how God saves people so they can bring glory to Him as well.”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “God’s people had enemies. Do Christians have enemies today? Who?”

Explain that yes, Christians do face enemies today, but these enemies are not always people. Instead, the Bible teaches that Christians’ real enemies are spiritual forces like Satan and his lies, which try to keep people from following God. However, just like Nehemiah and God’s people in Jerusalem, Christians can trust that God is stronger than any enemy.

SAY “God’s people worked together to rebuild the wall. Do Christians need to work together? Why should they?”

Yes, Christians are called to work together with other believers. Just like God’s people worked together to rebuild the wall in Nehemiah’s time, we are called to support and help each other in our faith today. The Bible tells us that the church is like a body, and each person has a special role to play. When we work together, we can build up each other’s faith and help grow God’s kingdom.

SAY “How did Nehemiah trust God when facing the enemies who tried to stop the rebuilding?”

Remind the kids that Nehemiah trusted God by praying first and asking for His protection. Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them and encouraged them to keep working. Share how Nehemiah also took wise action to show he trusted God. He set up guards to protect the workers and had them carry weapons while they built the wall. Discuss how we can show we trust God through prayer and by being obedient to what He calls us to.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: SHIELDS UP!



Challenge kids to listen to statements you say. If kids think it's true, direct them to remain standing. If they think it's false, direct them to pretend to hold up a shield. Consider the questions below and create more of your own:

- Nehemiah served King Artaxerxes of Persia. (true)
- Nehemiah refused to confess his sins or the sins of the people. (false)
- The king would not let Nehemiah return to Jerusalem. (false)
- Tobiah and Sanballat told lies about God's people. (true)
- The wall was completed in 90 days. (false)

SAY “ God’s enemies spread lies to stop the walls from being rebuilt. We have spiritual enemies that want to turn us away from God. But like a shield protects people from enemy attacks, our faith is like a shield that we can use to extinguish the enemies’ lies. Through faith in Jesus, we can stand firm against the enemies’ lies (Eph. 6:10-20). ”

☐ OPTION 2: PASS THE BEAN BAG

Lead kids to sit in a large circle. Hand a bean bag to one kid and challenge her to say the first book of the Old Testament. Then direct her to pass the bean bag to the kid on her right who will say the next book. Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster if kids need help. Or allow other kids to chime in if a kid is stuck. Repeat, until all the Old Testament books have been named. If time allows, play again, naming all the New Testament books.

SAY “ What is the Bible about? [Allow responses.] The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus. Like you passed the bean bag around the circle, the stories in the Old Testament were passed down from generation to generation, reminding God’s people that He was working to one day bring Jesus into the world. When we read the New Testament, we see how God’s plan came true—Jesus was born to save us from sin! The New Testament authors continue to point back to God’s plan in the Old Testament and also remind us that people can be saved when they trust in Jesus. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.