

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

Overview

Materials You'll Need

- heavy cardboard (six by six inch squares)
- pencil
- markers
- scissors



Scriptures

Neh 1-4, 6:15-19, 8:1-11

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God helps His people accomplish His will

Behavioral Objective(s)

To identify ways we can obey God

Memory Verse

"You shall do what is good and right." (Deut 6:18)



Bible Knowledge

Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra and Nehemiah were actually one book in the ancient Hebrew and Greek Old Testament (Ezra's story is continued in Nehemiah, chapters 8-10). Ezra returned to Jerusalem in 458 BC. He was a part of the second group of exiles who chose to return to Israel. He worked with the people for many years before Nehemiah came in 445 BC to repair the walls.

Ezra was a priest and scribe. His reason for going to Jerusalem was to "seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes (465-424 BC). On receiving news of the desolate state of Jerusalem, he obtained permission to go to his own country, and was appointed governor. Under the grace of God, he was commissioned by the king to rebuild the walls and make it a fortified city. But the work had enemies. Sanballat and others used weapons of scorn and ridicule against this project. Nehemiah replied to their taunts by reminding them that the workers

trusted God for the success of their work. Nehemiah also divided the Jews (re-builders) from the non-Jews (mockers) by reminding them that they had no legal right, no property rights, and no jurisdiction in the city. Then the enemies plotted to attack Jerusalem. With Arabs to the south, Ammonites to the east, Ashdodites to the west, and Samaritans to the north, Jerusalem was isolated. Nehemiah and the people prayed to God, and Nehemiah posted a twenty-four hour guard. The rumored attack never came; Nehemiah credited God with frustrating the enemies' plans. Miraculously, the people were able to rebuild the wall in fifty-two days.

After the city walls were rebuilt, on the first day of the seventh month, the people gathered in a public square, asking Ezra to bring the Book of Law and read it to them. United in purpose, they gathered in a place where everyone could come. Had they gathered in the temple, only the men could have attended. They had built a high, wooden platform for the occasion. Ezra praised God and the people lifted their hands, a gesture of prayer in the ancient Near East. The people said, "Amen! Amen!" Then, as an indication of their worship and reverence for God, they lowered their faces.

The people stood respectfully as Ezra read God's

words for several hours. The Levites helped by explaining exactly what was read. The people responded by crying and weeping for their sins. Ezra, Nehemiah, and the other leaders said, "This

day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." They told the people to go home and feast with choice foods and sweet drinks, and give food to those in need.



Understanding Your Students

Young children are eager to help. This stems from their desire to please grown-ups and to have fun. Unfortunately, many adults assume that young children will cause more problems by helping than not. As a result, they are often brushed aside. It is common to hear phrases like, "You can help when you get older," or "You are too young." It is true that some chores are too difficult or even dangerous for kindergartners. But they should be given opportunities to help out when they can. This can build up a sense of responsibility and pride in them.

There are many things that young children are capable of doing. At home, they can set the table or

help clear the table after meals. They can also wipe the table top if a parent rinses out a cloth for them first.

At church, they should be helping to clean up the room after each lesson. They are not too young to put things away, pick up garbage, or wipe the board. When these jobs become constant and a part of their lives, the students will begin to understand the value of helping. Of course, it is important for parents and teachers to positively reinforce their work. Be specific about their contribution so that their work is not trivialized. By saying something like, "You did a great job putting the Bibles away. They are neat and orderly. You are God's wonderful helper," it can help to strengthen their faith and their continued desire to help.



Vocabulary

Enemy

someone who does not like you, and may even want to hurt you

Encourage

to say things to support someone

Scroll

the words of God written on long pieces of leather or parchment, which are then rolled up between two sticks

Scribe

someone who wrote down the words of God, studied the words of God, and taught other people about them



Before You Teach

Nehemiah and Ezra were two of God's faithful workers. Even though they lived in exile, they both felt a deep connection to God and His people.

When Nehemiah heard about the condition of the walls in Jerusalem, he wept. Moreover, he did not just sit around and mourn. He took proactive steps in solving the problem. First, he prayed to God. Then when the opportunity arose, he asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem. Once there, he surveyed the walls and began the work. When there was opposition to the rebuilding from surrounding nations, Nehemiah encouraged the Israelites by praying with them and setting up

guards to watch the work. As a result of his actions, the walls were rebuilt in fifty-two days.

Ezra was also a man of action. His purpose for going to Jerusalem was to "seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). Therefore, he was not only interested learning God's laws for himself. He taught the people the laws of God. During the public reading of the words, he made sure Levites explained to the people what the laws meant. This helped to revive the faith of the Israelites, as they wept after hearing about all their sins.

Both Nehemiah and Ezra contributed greatly to the faith of the Israelites at that time. They got things done and helped the Israelites become committed to God once again.



Bible Story

Nehemiah Wants to Return to Jerusalem

Last week, we learned about Daniel and how he stood up for God. Even though he wasn't allowed to pray to God, he still prayed three times a day. He was thrown into the lion's den but he was not hurt at all. God sent angels to shut the mouths of the lions. Daniel never forgot about God and God protected him.

Today we are going to learn about two other people who also loved God. They lived after the time of Daniel. Their names were Nehemiah and Ezra.

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king of Persia. That means he served the king and made sure the food and drink the king had was clean and good to eat. Ezra was a priest and a scribe. That means he served God and taught people about God's laws and commands. Both of these people did not live in Israel. Remember how some of the Israelites were taken to Babylon, including Daniel when he was just a young boy? Nehemiah and Ezra also grew up in this land that was far away from their real home. But even though they grew up in a land that was far away from Israel, they loved God.

The king in that land at the time was a good king. He knew that the Israelites had been taken from their land many, many years ago. So he let some of the Israelites who wanted to return to their land go. Many Israelites packed their things and returned to Jerusalem. They were glad to be back after all these years.

One day, Nehemiah heard some bad news about some of the Israelites who had returned to Jerusalem. Nehemiah heard that the wall that went around Jerusalem and protected the city was broken in many places. The gates of the city had been burned down. The city of Jerusalem was very strong and great before, but not anymore. Because the Israelites were brought to another country a long time ago, no one took care of the great city at home. So the walls of Jerusalem had been crumbling and falling for years and years. The Israelites wanted to fix the walls of Jerusalem because it was the holy city of God.

Nehemiah became very sad when he heard this. He prayed to God. He asked God to let him go back to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city. But since he

was the cupbearer to the king and had an important job, the king might not let him go. This was why Nehemiah prayed so hard to God. He asked God for help so that the king would let him go to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem

One day, when Nehemiah was bringing wine to the king, the king saw that he looked very sad. He asked Nehemiah why he looked sad. Nehemiah told the king that he was sad because he had heard some bad news about Jerusalem. He asked the king to allow him to return and repair the city. The king said "Yes," and Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem.

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, the first thing he did was to rebuild the city wall. The wall had been broken by enemies who came into the city. Nehemiah knew that the wall protected the city, so it had to be rebuilt for the city to be safe again. Nehemiah told the people what had to be done. Then the people all said, "Let's start!"

Nehemiah Trusts God

Some of Israel's enemies saw Nehemiah and the Israelites rebuilding the wall. They came and laughed at them. They told Nehemiah that they would never be able to rebuild the wall. Nehemiah encouraged the people of Israel to trust in God, and not to worry about their enemies.

Their enemies didn't want the Israelites to rebuild the wall because then the city would be protected and the people would be safe. So the enemies planned to attack Nehemiah and the people. They wanted to destroy the work that had been done. Some of the Israelites became sad when they heard about their enemies' plans. They felt that they could never finish rebuilding the wall. Again, Nehemiah encouraged them and told them to trust in God. He told them that God would protect them from their enemies. Nehemiah also prayed to God for help. Then he divided the Israelites into two groups. One group worked on the wall while the other group stood guard day and night to protect everyone and the wall. God heard Nehemiah's prayer and the enemies could not attack the Israelites.

The Wall Is Completed

The Israelites worked hard every day to finish

the wall. It was a hard job to fix the broken walls. But the people knew God was watching over them. Do you know how long it took to rebuild the whole wall? It took fifty-two days. That is about two months. That is fast because it is very hard to lift the bricks and make the wall stay up. Do you know why the people were able to rebuild the wall so quickly? God listened to Nehemiah's prayers. God never let anything happen to the wall or to His people while they were rebuilding. When the wall was completed, Nehemiah's enemies realized that God had protected His people.

During the whole time of rebuilding, Nehemiah never stopped trusting in God. He never stopped encouraging his people to depend on God to help them. Nehemiah knew that whatever the enemies planned, God was much greater and He would protect His people.

Ezra Reads God's Words to the People

After the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, everyone was very happy and they gathered together by the gate of the city. Now that Nehemiah had helped to rebuild the wall, it was Ezra's turn to do God's work. Remember that Ezra was a priest and scribe. That means he read, wrote, and studied the words of God. He was also a teacher. He studied the words of God very hard, and God gave him wisdom. Ezra wanted to read God's words to all the people. Many people had not heard the words of God for a long time and had forgotten about them. Ezra knew that it was important to remind the people again about how great and wonderful God's words were. So he asked workers to build a big wooden stand for him. They built a tall one and put it in an open area by the gate. Now, when Ezra stood on this stand, everyone in the city would be able to see him and hear him very well.

So everyone gathered together in the open area. All the people who were old enough to understand came to listen to the laws of God. Ezra stood on the stand and he opened the scrolls. Everyone paid attention. Ezra said, "Thanks be to God, our Lord!"

The people said, "Amen! Amen!" and they lifted up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and showed their respect to God with their faces to the ground. When Ezra started to read the words of God with a loud and clear voice, the people listened very carefully to him. As Ezra read the words, some of the

helpers helped Ezra by holding the scrolls. Other helpers tried to help the people understand what was written in the scrolls; they read the rules and explained to the people what these laws of God meant.

The People Cry

After hearing and understanding the words of God, the people started to cry. They felt sad because they had not heard God's words for a long time and they knew they had not been doing things the way God wanted them to. They cried because they did not obey the laws. The people understood now that God loved them very much, and He wanted all of them to keep His laws.

When Ezra saw the people crying, he said to them, "Now, do not feel sad. This day is holy to the Lord your God. Go home, eat good food, and be happy, because today is a happy day."

Ezra wanted the people to know that they should feel sorry for the wrong things they did. They should say sorry to God and ask Him for forgiveness. Then in the future they should do what the laws of God tell them to do. But now, instead of being sad, they should be happy because they knew what to do.

So the people went home. They told God how sorry they were for all the wrong things that they had done. They decided to obey God's laws from then on. Everyone was happy after that and they ate good food with their friends and families. They promised God that they would remember to keep the laws that Ezra had read to them.

Let's Follow Nehemiah and Ezra's Examples

In today's lesson, we learned about two people who really loved God. One was Nehemiah. He went to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls so that the Israelites would be protected from their enemies. Nehemiah told the people to trust God to help them and they rebuilt the wall in fifty-two days. Then Ezra read the words of God to the people. He wanted them to know what God wanted them to do. The people were glad Nehemiah and Ezra helped them.

Nehemiah taught the people to trust God, and Ezra taught the people the words of God. Today, we should also trust God like Nehemiah did and read the words of God like Ezra did. Then God will be with us and help us at all times.



Check For Understanding

1. **What was Nehemiah's job?** (He was the cupbearer.)
2. **What did Nehemiah want to do when he returned to Jerusalem?** (He wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.)
3. **What problems did Nehemiah and the Israelites face?** (Enemies tried to stop them from finishing their work.)
4. **What did Nehemiah and the Israelites do?** (They prayed to God to help them.)
5. **Did the Israelites give up?** (No.)
6. **How did Nehemiah encourage the Israelites?** (He told them that God would protect them and help them. He told them not to worry about their enemies, but trust in God.)
7. **How long did it take the Israelites to**

rebuild the wall? (Fifty-two days.)

8. **Who helped the people learn God's words?** (Ezra and his helpers.)
9. **Who was Ezra?** (Ezra was a priest and scribe. He taught people about God's words and rules.)
10. **What happened when the people heard God's words?** (They cried because they knew they had not been following God's words.)
11. **What did the people promise to do after they heard God's words?** (They would obey God's commands.)
12. **How can we show God we are doing what he wants us to do?** (We can come to church on Saturdays, listen to Bible stories at church and at home, obey our parents and teachers, etc.)
13. **How can we be good helpers like Nehemiah and Ezra?** (Allow students to answer.)



Life Application Story

A Good Helper

Benjamin got up early one Sunday morning. He went to the kitchen and found his sister Susie waiting for breakfast at the table.

"Good morning, Mom. Where's Nicole and Lisa?" Ben asked.

"Nicole is at a morning swim class. Lisa is sick and sleeping," answered Mrs. Lim.

"Oh, can I do something to help?" asked Ben.

"Well, it is nice of you to ask. You can take the clean clothes out of the dryer and put them in that basket," Mrs. Lim said, pointing to the basket. Just then the phone rang. Ben ran to answer it. He asked who was calling and then told his mom. Mrs. Lim came to the phone as she put Susie's breakfast on the table.

After the clothes were taken out, Ben helped to fold them. After Mrs. Lim hung up the phone, she

said, "Thanks for folding them. I didn't even have to ask."

"I know you are busy, Mom," replied Ben.

"Well, how about I fix you some breakfast then?" offered Mrs. Lim.

"Okay," said Ben, as he continued to fold the clothes.

After breakfast, Ben helped clean the table and dry the dishes. Susie was playing in the family room.

"You know Ben," said Mrs. Lim as she put away the plates, "you are being a wonderful helper this morning."

"Thanks, Mom," said Ben with a big smile.

"You are becoming a big boy on the outside and on the inside," said Mrs. Lim.

Just then, Susie poked her head into the kitchen doorway.

"Mom, you promised you would read me a Bible story this morning."

"Well, I am a little bit busy. But I will read it to you like I promised, okay?" said Mrs. Lim.

"I can read to her, Mom," said Ben. "Then you

can finish your work.”

“Ben, you are an angel,” Mrs. Lim said.

“Ben’s an angel?” asked Susie.

Mrs. Lim laughed. “Well, he’s not a real angel. What I meant is that he is so helpful this morning. It’s like God sent him to help me because I am very busy today.”

“Oh,” said Susie as she skipped back to the family room.

Mrs. Lim continued to say to Ben, “You know, Ben, God loves good helpers. I am sure He sees how helpful you have been this morning. Thank you.”

“You are welcome, Mom,” Ben said as he

walked to the family room.

Ben felt proud to be a good helper, to his mom and to God.

Questions to Think About

1. **How did Ben help his mom?** (He took out the clothes from the dryer, folded the clothes, answered the phone, cleaned the table, dried the dishes, and offered to read to Susie.)
2. **How can you be a good helper of God?** (Allow students to answer.)
3. **How does it make you feel when you help someone?** (Allow students to answer.)



Activity 1

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls

Look at the pictures. Which ones happened in the story? Which ones did not? Cross out the ones that did not happen.

1. Nehemiah helped the people rebuild the wall.
2. Ezra read the words of God to the people.
3. Everyone fought with each other. (This did not happen.)
4. The people cried when they heard the words of God because they knew they had not obeyed God’s word.
5. Enemies came to mock the Israelites as they rebuilt the wall.
6. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king.



Activity 2

How Can We Obey?

Look at the pictures. How can the people obey God?

1. What can you ask for before taking it?
2. How can you listen to your parents?
3. How can you listen to your teachers?
4. What can you share with your friends?
5. When can you say “please” and “thank you”?
6. Why do you go to church?



Activity 3

Doing What is Good and Right Puzzle

Materials:

1. heavy cardboard (six by six inch squares)
2. markers
3. pencil
4. scissors

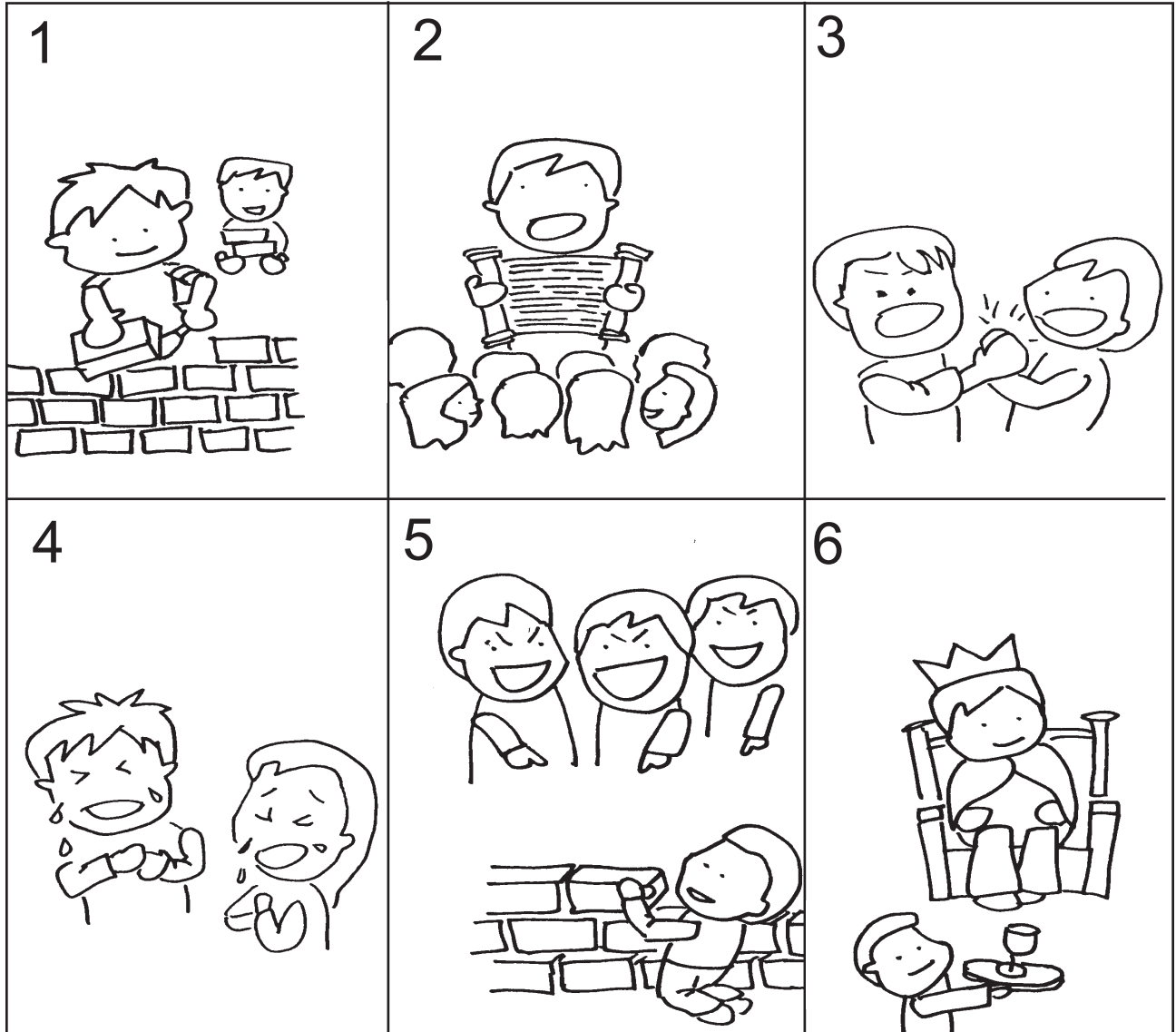
Directions:

1. Provide each student with a square board.
2. Help them write today’s memory verse near the top of the board.
3. Have them draw a picture under the verse that shows how they are doing what is right and good.
4. Have them color in the picture.
5. Help the students cut the picture into six or seven interlocking pieces like a jigsaw puzzle. (Teacher may want to draw lines on the back in pencil before students begin cutting.)

Activity 10:1

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls

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Cross out the ones that did not happen in the story.



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Activity 10:2

How Can We Obey?

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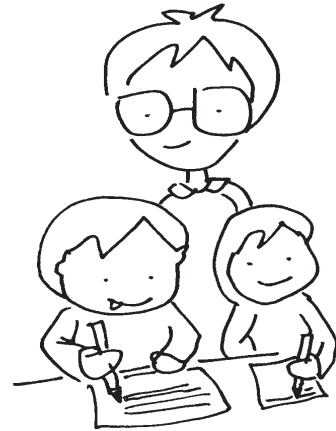
1. What can you ask for before taking it?



2. How can you listen to your parents?



3. How can you listen to your teachers?



4. What can you share with your friends?



5. When can you say "please" and "thank you"?



6. Why do you go to church?

