

LESSON 7

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Nehemiah

Nehemiah means "the comfort of Yahweh." Nehemiah lived up to his name by bringing the comfort of God to the people in Jerusalem. When Nehemiah heard about the state of Jerusalem, he prayed to God and repented for the sins of Israel. As a result of his prayer, God moved the heart of King Artaxerxes to send Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem. Thus, Nehemiah left his position as the king's cupbearer to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. When he arrived, Nehemiah mobilized the people to rebuild the city walls. While rebuilding the wall, the people encountered opposition and attacks from their enemies, but Nehemiah encouraged the people to continue building. He also organized them to guard the city from their enemies. Nehemiah's life serves to teach us that to accomplish things for the sake of God's kingdom, we must pray, take action, persevere, and sacrifice. Nehemiah's constant prayers pervade throughout (Neh 1:4; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31) and remind us that praying and doing go hand in hand.

The Walls and Gates of Jerusalem

A city's wall is very important, because it defends the city against invaders. Strong walls fortified Jerusalem. The Jebusites, who occupied Jerusalem before David conquered the city, built a massive wall on Jerusalem's vulnerable north side. Solomon, David's son, extended the city walls northward to include the area where he would later build the Temple. Jerusalem covered approximately 32 acres. King Hezekiah expanded the city and extended its walls westward to accommodate its growing population. The city then covered approximately 135 acres. Hezekiah built very strong walls that were five meters (16.4 ft.) deep to surround the city. Archaeologists have unearthed large sections of this wall. Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem to repair the wall and gates built during Hezekiah's reign. The western wall was not included in the repair.

The Bible gave a detailed list of Jerusalem's gates. These gates were the Sheep Gate, Fish Gate, Old Gate, Valley Gate, Refuse Gate, Fountain Gate, Water Gate, Horse Gate, and East Gate. The Bible also gave clues as to how the gates were named. For example, the Fish Gate was likely named for the fish market run by men from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem (Neh 13:16). Additionally, Acts 3 of the New Testament mentions the Beautiful Gate, which is likely the eastern gate in Herod's temple, which led from the court of the Gentiles into the court of women.

The city gates were the weakest points along the city walls. If the city gates were destroyed, the enemies could enter the city unhindered. The doors of each gate were made of wood reinforced with metal. Iron beams barred the doors from opening when closed. Guards were posted at towers next to each gate to defend the gate. At night, the gates were shut to prevent enemies from entering the city.

BIBLE TEXT

Ezra 7; 9:1-4
Nehemiah 1:1-2:18; 6:15-16

BIBLE TRUTHS

1. Nehemiah relied on God's power to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem.
2. Nehemiah overcame obstacles through prayer and perseverance.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage students to persevere in doing the right thing, even when it is difficult.
2. To encourage students to rely on God's power to overcome all adversities.

MEMORY VERSE

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

(Philippians 4:13)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Thank You for giving us Your holy Sabbath so we can gather to worship and praise You. We will encounter adversities when we do what is right, but Lord, do not allow our adversities to discourage us from following Your will. You promised to be with us, to help us, and to give us the strength and courage to obey Your commandments. Please open our hearts and ears to receive Your word. May You be praised Lord Jesus. Hallelujah! Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Our students face obstacles and challenges daily. They include temptations, academic difficulties, and family problems. Unfortunately, many of today's children learn that obstacles are either there for someone else to deal with, things to be avoided, or simply not worth the trouble. This creates a mentality of "I can't" or "I give up" in the children. These attitudes are detrimental to the building of character and faith. We need to help our students see struggles, challenges, and even opposition as opportunities to experience the almightiness of God. They

give students a chance to develop strength, faith, perseverance, skill sets, and strategies. Through encouragement, prayer, and reliance on God, our students can experience the joy of overcoming problems rather than defeat.

Despite encountering much opposition, Nehemiah completed rebuilding Jerusalem's city walls in 52 days. Nehemiah succeeded because he had faith and trust in the Lord. In addition, the people worked hard and were united.

VOCABULARY

cupbearer: a person who tests the king's drinks to make sure they are safe to drink
obstacle: something that stands in the way of progress or achievement

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about Ezra and how he brought the people back to God. Ezra had been living in Babylon for a long time, but after a while, Ezra decided it was time for him to return to Jerusalem. He wanted to teach the people about God. King Artaxerxes not only allowed Ezra to go back, but he also provided money and supplies for Ezra and the people going with him on the journey. Altogether, it took them four months to return to Jerusalem. When Ezra arrived, he found that the people in Jerusalem had married pagan wives, and he was so saddened that he tore his clothes. He spent a long time praying for the people and confessing their sins to God. After his prayer, Ezra determined that he would remind the people of God's teaching's. He asked them all to gather around the Water Gate, and Ezra read from the Book of the Law from early morning to noontime. The people listened attentively and cried at first. However, Ezra comforted them and told them not to cry, for they should celebrate instead because now they had heard and understood God's word. Ezra spent seven days reading the word of God to the people and everyone rejoiced after hearing God's word. We learned that it is important to learn and store God's word in our heart, as it will make our lives more good and joyful.

BIBLE STORY

Introduction

Ask the students, "Have you ever been asked to do something, and while doing it, encountered a problem?" [Allow the students to respond.] Next, ask, "How did you feel? Did you give up or did you push through the problem and finish the task?" Explain to the students that they will encounter many problems and some of them will appear unsolvable. Naturally, they will feel discouraged, frustrated, or angry. Let the students know that Nehemiah also encountered problems that caused him to be frustrated and angry. But, he was able to overcome the problems.

Nehemiah Prays to God

After the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem, thousands of Jews were taken captive. Later, King Artaxerxes of Persia ruled over the country. Some of the captives were allowed to work in his royal court. In the

palace was a young man who served King Artaxerxes as his cupbearer. A cupbearer is a person who tests the king's drinks to make sure no one has put poison in his cup. It can be a dangerous job!

One day, a messenger from Judah arrived at the palace of King Artaxerxes. He told Nehemiah that Jerusalem's walls had been destroyed and its gates had been burned with fire. The Jews who had returned earlier were poor and suffering because their enemies oppressed them. This news filled Nehemiah with such grief that he sat down and wept. He fasted and prayed for the people in Jerusalem for many days. He repented for Israel's sins and asked God for His mercy.

The King Asks Nehemiah a Question

A few months later, as Nehemiah was serving King Artaxerxes, the king noticed that Nehemiah was unhappy.

"What's wrong, Nehemiah? You're not sick, so why are you unhappy?" asked the king. Nehemiah became afraid when he heard this, as it was custom for the king's servants to appear happy when serving the king. Servants who failed to keep this custom were killed.

"May the king live forever!" Nehemiah responded. "I am sad because Jerusalem, the city of my fathers, lies in waste and its gates are burned."

"What do you wish to do?" King Artaxerxes asked.

Nehemiah quickly prayed in his heart. "If the king permits, and if I have found favor in your eyes, I wish to travel to Judah and rebuild Jerusalem."

"How long will your journey be? When will you return?" asked the king.

Upon hearing this, Nehemiah knew that King Artaxerxes was giving him permission to return to Jerusalem. He told King Artaxerxes how long he would be gone and requested the king to allow him to use the trees from the king's forest as timber to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. The king agreed. The king also sent his army captains and horsemen to protect Nehemiah.

God had truly heard Nehemiah's prayer. Soon, Nehemiah set out for Jerusalem.

Nehemiah Makes Plans

On the third night after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah went around the city to look at the broken walls and burnt gates. He examined the damage carefully and planned what needed to be done. Finally, Nehemiah called the people, the priests, and the leaders together and said to them, "See how Jerusalem lies in waste with its gates burned. Let us rise up and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem." He then encouraged the people by telling them that God would bless their work. As a result, the people were excited and eager to begin. There was much work to be done in repairing the city walls and each person had to help. Each family was given a job to do. Some repaired the gates, while others repaired the walls.

Trouble!

When the enemies of Israel saw that the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem, they became very angry. Sanballat and Tobiah were two of the enemies. They plotted schemes to stop the building of the wall. First, they mocked at the Jews. They laughed and said, "What are you doing? You Jews are weak. Do you think you can build a wall? If a fox walked on the wall, the wall would tumble down."

How do you think Nehemiah and the people felt when they heard this? [Allow students to answer.] When Nehemiah heard this, he prayed to God saying, "God, listen to what they are saying. They look down upon us. May what they say come upon them." Nehemiah returned to rebuilding the wall.

When Sanballat and Tobiah saw that their comments had no effect on the Jews, they plotted another scheme.

They could see that the wall was coming together and was half its height already. They came up with another plan—they would attack the men of Jerusalem and kill them. When Nehemiah heard of their plans, he told the people, "Don't be afraid! Remember the Lord who is great and glorious. Fight for your friends, your family, and your homes." Nehemiah also instructed the people to arm themselves with swords and spears. They worked with one hand and held a spear with the other, always ready to defend if the enemies attacked. Nehemiah also placed guards to watch for enemies both day and night.

When the Israelites' enemies saw that the Israelites had armed themselves, they became too afraid to fight. The enemies were really stuck. Nothing they did could stop the people from working on the wall. They came up with a third plan. They approached Nehemiah as a friend to arrange a meeting with him in a remote village. But Nehemiah knew that they were trying to deceive him. They wished to trap him so they could harm or kill him. So, Nehemiah said to them, "I am doing a great work. I cannot leave to speak to you."

The enemies sent the same message four times, and each time, Nehemiah provided the same response. The fifth time, the messenger arrived with a letter for Nehemiah in his hand. It said: "You are rebuilding Jerusalem so that you can make yourself the Israelites' king. I will tell King Artaxerxes about this." Sanballat and the others were falsely accusing Nehemiah of rebelling against the king. Nehemiah answered them, saying, "This is not true. I have not come to make myself a king. You are making things up." Nehemiah knew that they were trying to frighten and scare them. Again, Nehemiah prayed to God and continued with the rebuilding.

The Work Is Done

Nehemiah and the people worked tirelessly, and after 52 days, the entire wall was finished. The people of Jerusalem rejoiced and praised God.

The work had not been easy. Not only were they physically tired and exhausted, they had also met with outside interference from their enemies. However, God helped them complete the repairs in a short amount of time. After seeing the walls completed, even the enemies agreed that it was God who had helped them to accomplish this great and good work.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **Nehemiah was the king's cook.** False; he was the cupbearer.
2. **Nehemiah did not care that Jerusalem's walls were broken and its gates were burned.** False; the news made him very sad.
3. **The Israelites spent two years repairing Jerusalem's wall and gates.** False; fifty-two days.
4. **All the Israelites helped rebuild Jerusalem's wall and the gates.** True.
5. **King Artaxerxes helped Nehemiah by allowing him to take trees from the king's forest to rebuild Jerusalem and by providing soldiers for protection.** True.
6. **What were some of the ways the enemies tried to make Nehemiah and the people stop working on the wall?**
The enemies laughed at them, threatened to attack them, wrongly accused Nehemiah of wanting to be king, and tried to get Nehemiah alone to hurt him.
7. **What are some of the ways Nehemiah and the people overcame the enemies?** They prayed to God, ignored the enemies' remarks, armed themselves with weapons while keeping watch, and continued to work hard on the wall until it was finished.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. C
2. B
3. A
4. C
5. False; fifty-two days.
6. False; they were angry and tried to stop them.
7. True
8. True
9. Answers may vary. Possible answers: Pray to God to tell God our problems; ignore their remarks; keep praying and reading Bible; keep doing what God wants us to do.
10. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

When Sanballat and Tobiah heard that the people of Jerusalem were going to repair the city walls and gates, they were very upset and angry. They tried different ways to prevent Nehemiah and the Israelites from continuing in the work. They laughed at them, threatened to attack them, and even pretended to be nice to them.

Despite all this, Nehemiah and the people did not quit working. They knew that repairing the walls and the gates was a great and noble work that God wanted them to do. They could not allow the enemies to bother or terrify them. If they did, they would have allowed fear to prevent them from doing what God wanted.

How did Nehemiah and the people respond to their enemies? [Ask students to respond.]

- They prayed to God and told Him their problems.
- They ignored their enemies' remarks.
- They armed themselves with weapons and set guards to keep watch.
- They continued to work hard on the wall.

There may come a time when people don't understand what we are doing, even though it's right in God's eyes. They may try to frighten us, say mean things to us, laugh at us, or make us sad. What should we do then? We should do what Nehemiah did! Let's look at some situations that we may face.

Instructions: Prepare the following scenarios on index cards and pick volunteers to act out the different scenarios with you. Ask the other students to think of ways they would deal with the problem,

Scenario 1

Rebecca: Hi, may I sit here?

Lesley: Sure.

(Rebecca takes out her lunch from the lunch bag. Then, she bows her head and prays to give thanks to God for the meal. Lesley laughs when she sees this.)

Lesley: What are you doing? Why do you have to close your eyes like that? You're weird.



Ask the students: What would you do if someone laughed at you for saying grace?

Say to the students: Sometimes, it is difficult to say grace in front of our classmates or people who don't pray before they eat. We need to have the courage to bow our heads and quietly thank God for our food before we eat. People may laugh at us because they neither know God nor understand why we need to pray. We should explain to them it is God's blessing that we have food, therefore, we should thank Him.

If our classmates continue to laugh at us, we can ignore their comments or maybe move to another seat. It is important to be brave and continue to give thanks to God.

Scenario 2

Sarah and Melissa are best friends. On Saturday, Melissa had a pool party for her seventh birthday. Sarah was invited. She wanted to go, but decided to go to church to observe the Sabbath. Then, on Monday, they saw each other at school.

Sarah: Hi, Melissa! Did you have a nice birthday party? You must have gotten lots of presents! (Melissa ignores Sarah.)

Sarah: Sorry, I couldn't go to your party, but I needed to go to church. I've brought your present, though.

Melissa: I don't want your present. I thought we were best friends. If going to church is more important than my party, then I don't want to be friends. (Melissa storms away.)



Ask the students: If you were Sarah, what would you do? Have students respond.

Say to the students: Melissa is very upset, hurt, and disappointed, because her best friend did not come to the party. When people are hurt and angry, they may say mean and hurtful things. We need to be patient, be forgiving, and give them time to calm down.

Meanwhile, we can make a card to let them know that we would still like to be friends. We can explain to them that Saturday is the Sabbath. It is our special time with God, and a day we spend at church. We may also invite our friends to church so they can also spend time with both God and us. Let our friends know that we can get together with them at other times. If our friends value our friendship, they will understand.

Scenario 3

The school is holding its annual Halloween Parade. All the students are eager to put on their Halloween costumes and parade around the auditorium. Mike is talking to his friends Fred and Colin in the schoolyard.

Colin: I'm coming as Batman. What about you, Fred?

Fred: I'm going to be Raphael the Ninja Turtle. (Fred does a few karate moves.)

Colin: Hey Mike, what you are coming as?

Mike: I'm not coming in a costume.

Fred: What?! It's Halloween. Everyone dresses up.

Mike: I'm a Christian. I don't celebrate Halloween.

Fred: Christians are so boring! You can't do this! You can't do that! You're no fun!



Ask the students: If you were Mike, what would you do?

Say to the students: Halloween may seem like a fun event, however, it is something that displeases God. When something is fun, but goes against God's teachings, it is important to obey God, even when our friends are taking part in it. When our friends laugh at us, it may make us feel hurt or left out. During these times, we can speak to our parents and God. They will understand and encourage us. Then, we can explain to our friends why we do not celebrate Halloween. If they are true friends, they will understand.

ACTIVITY**1****Rebuilding the Wall**

Objective: To reinforce the truth that our God is a powerful God.

Materials

- Construction paper
- Glue
- Markers
- Large poster board
- Scissors

Instructions

1. Before class, using construction paper as bricks, create an unfinished wall, filled with holes, on a large poster board.
2. Explain to the students that Nehemiah could not have completed the repairs to Jerusalem's wall in fifty-two days without the power of God.
3. Tell the students that they will finish the wall together.
4. Have them cut out "bricks" using construction paper.
5. The students will write what they think God is like on the "brick."
6. Afterward, ask them to paste their "bricks" in the gaps on the wall to repair it.
7. Repeat steps 4-6 until all the gaps on the wall have been filled.

My God Is Wise.
He Knows What I Think.

Remind the students that they do not need to be afraid when they face problems, because the almighty God will help them solve their problems.

E1 Year 3 Book 4 Lesson 7—Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truths: 1. Nehemiah relied on God's power to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem.
2. Nehemiah overcame obstacles through prayer and perseverance.

Lesson Objectives: 1. To encourage students to persevere in doing the right thing, even when it is difficult.
2. To encourage students to rely on God's power to overcome all adversities.

Bible Reading: Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a checkmark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Philippians 4:13)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Multiple Choice

1. ____ : Nehemiah was the king's ____.
 - a. Cook
 - b. Hunter
 - c. Cupbearer
2. ____ : What did Nehemiah do when he heard that the city walls were broken and the gates were burned?
 - a. He got mad at the people in Jerusalem.
 - b. He was filled with grief and wept.
 - c. He didn't care. It was not his business.
3. ____ : After fasting and praying for a long time, what did Nehemiah decide to do?
 - a. Go to Jerusalem and help rebuild the city walls.
 - b. Find someone to go to Jerusalem in his place.
 - c. Write a letter to the people in Jerusalem, telling them to fix the wall.
4. ____ : When the enemies laughed and threatened to attack the city, ____.
 - a. Nehemiah and the Israelites were so scared that they decided to quit working.
 - b. Nehemiah and the Israelites argued and fought with the enemies.
 - c. Nehemiah and the Israelites armed themselves and continued working.

True or False

5. It took two years to repair Jerusalem's wall and gates. _____
6. The enemies of Israel were glad that the wall was being rebuilt. _____
7. All the people did their part in rebuilding the walls and the gates. _____
8. King Artaxerxes helped Nehemiah by allowing him to take trees from the king's forest to rebuild Jerusalem, and by providing soldiers for protection. _____

Short Answer

9. Nehemiah and the people taught us what we should do if we meet with problems. Name some of the things you would do when you face a problem.

10. Write down this week's memory verse without looking.
