

# LESSON 9

## NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL

### OBJECTIVE

To enable your students to help those in need.

### MEMORY VERSE

"Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

(Isaiah 1:17)

### PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for watching over us and keeping us safe this past week. We also thank You for bringing us all together on this Sabbath day to worship You and to fellowship with one another. In this lesson today, we are going to learn about Nehemiah, who returned to Jerusalem and planned a way to help the people of Judah work together to rebuild the wall. Lord, please open our hearts for what we are about to learn so that we may understand the truth and apply it to our daily lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



### Overview

#### 1. Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

- a. Nehemiah Prays for His People (Neh 1)
- b. Nehemiah Sent to Judah (Neh 2:1-10)
- c. Nehemiah Views the Wall of Jerusalem (Neh 2:11-20)

#### 2. Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs—One True Church

#### 3. Life Application

- a. I Can Help, Too!
- b. Reach Out

#### 4. Activity—Nehemiah's Interview



### Background Knowledge for Teachers

Nehemiah wasn't the first of the exiles to return to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel had led the first group back in 537 B.C., more than ninety years earlier (Ezra 1-2). Ezra followed with a second group in 458 B.C. (Ezra 7), and now Nehemiah was ready to lead the third major return to Jerusalem in 445 B.C..

Upon hearing about the conditions in Jerusalem, Nehemiah knew that he had to return to rebuild the wall. Despite Nehemiah's willingness to sacrifice and take risks, Nehemiah knew that he could not do this enormous task alone. First, he approached God through prayer and fasting to determine if his plan was truly God's will. The Book of Nehemiah recorded eight instances where he prayed (2:4; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29). Nehemiah took every opportunity to pray, praying even while talking with others.

After reassurance that the plan was indeed God's will, Nehemiah bravely asked King Artaxerxes to support him. Then, Nehemiah courageously left his familiar surroundings to journey to Jerusalem where he endured the scorn of enemies as he shared his plan with the Jewish people. Equipped with his courage and enthusiasm that he received through prayer, he was able to convince the Jewish people of the importance of rebuilding the wall.

Sanballat and Tobiah labeled the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls a rebellious act and attempted to hinder the reconstruction efforts. These enemies also ridiculed Nehemiah and said the walls could never be rebuilt because the damage was too extensive. Nehemiah did not let their negative words and actions influence him because he knew that he had God's guidance.



## Reaching Out to Your Students

Children at this age can learn to be sensitive to the environment around them. Older E2 students are developing the ability to think and comprehend abstract concepts and to project or imagine the outcomes of an event. They can now imagine what it is like to be handicapped or poor. However, these thoughts may be idealistic and not realistic. It is important to help them learn how to differentiate their ideals from reality by bringing in real-life examples.

While your students may never have had the chance to build something as large as a tall wall at their age, they can still understand the motivation behind Nehemiah's desire to return and rebuild Jerusalem's wall. Have a discussion with your students about the people around them who may be in need. These people could be classmates, church members, or even their family members. Talk about what it is like to be elderly, handicapped, or a new immigrant. You may want to try role-playing by asking students to do a task with only one hand or with their eyes covered. Then, ask the students to share about what it felt like not being able to use both hands or to see. Don't forget to bring in the needs of the church on a local, national, or even international level. Touch upon the needs of the society, the underprivileged, and the unsaved. Emphasize that it is a blessing from God to be where we are today, and that we should always think about how we can help others.

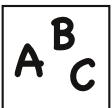


## Opener

5 Minutes

Why do members of a team need a coach to help them play their best? (For encouragement, to know how to play the game, etc.) Why must a coach make game plans to help the team? Why is a coach considered a leader? [Give your students a few minutes to discuss and share their answers.]

In our Bible story, we'll hear about a group of people who needed help from a good leader to accomplish a difficult task.



## Vocabulary

**cupbearer:** an individual who serves the king's food, gives advice to the king, and guards the king from unexpected dangers

**fasting prayer:** a type of prayer in which an individual does not eat or drink for an extended period of time to increase focus in prayer



## Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

30-35 Minutes

### FOR TEACHERS

Before class, prepare a large poster made to look like a wall that has a few pieces missing. The number of missing pieces should be double the number of students in the class or greater. This wall will be incorporated at the end of this section.

Nehemiah was a good man who loved God. He lived and worked in the royal court of the Persian king, Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. [Explain what a cupbearer does.] As you have probably guessed, the king trusted Nehemiah very much. The king wouldn't let someone he doesn't trust serve him food. Indeed, Nehemiah was one of the most trusted persons around King Artaxerxes.

Even though Nehemiah was of Jewish background, he had never lived in Jerusalem, where his ancestors had lived. Before Nehemiah was born, the Jewish people of Judah had disobeyed God by worshipping idols. As punishment for their disobedience, God allowed Babylonian armies to conquer the people of Judah and carry them off into captivity. Nehemiah's relatives were among the captives brought to the city of Babylon when Judah was defeated.

Now, Nehemiah was very excited because some of the Jewish people had recently been allowed to return to Jerusalem. One day, some men traveling from Judah came to the palace where Nehemiah worked. Nehemiah anxiously questioned them to find out the conditions of the people in Jerusalem, as well as the state of the city

itself. "The people are not doing well," said one of the men. "The gates to the city of Jerusalem have been burned and the wall is broken down." Nehemiah was shocked. The once great city of Jerusalem where his relatives had lived was in great danger. Nehemiah was so upset at the news that he sat down and cried. He knew how discouraged and afraid the Jewish people who still lived in Jerusalem must have been. He fasted and prayed for many days. Nehemiah wanted to concentrate on his prayers as he asked God for help. For four months, Nehemiah continued to work for the king without letting the Persian officials know of his deep sadness.

### The King Helps Nehemiah

But one day, when Nehemiah brought King Artaxerxes something to drink, Nehemiah couldn't hide his sadness, and the king noticed. "What's the matter Nehemiah?" King Artaxerxes asked, "You don't seem sick, so why do you look so sad?" Nehemiah was afraid to speak. But God gave Nehemiah the courage to explain. "Why shouldn't I be sad when Jerusalem, the city of my fathers, is in ruins and even the gates have been burned?" Nehemiah told the king. Instead of being angry, King Artaxerxes and his queen listened carefully to Nehemiah's words.

"What do you want from me?" the king asked.

Before answering the king, Nehemiah prayed to God for help. Then Nehemiah pleaded, "Oh, King Artaxerxes, if I have pleased you, let me go to the country of Judah, the place where my relatives lived. Please let me go rebuild the city I love!"

"How long would you need to be gone?" the king asked. "And when will you come back?"

When he heard these words, Nehemiah's worried frown disappeared. The king would let him go! Nehemiah agreed upon a time to return and then prepared to depart. Before Nehemiah left on his journey, the king gave him permission to take wood from the king's forest to make the city gates, the walls and the home where Nehemiah would stay while working on these projects. The king also gave Nehemiah letters to give to the rulers of areas through which Nehemiah would be traveling. The letters were to make sure no one harmed Nehemiah on his journey. After making all of the arrangements, Nehemiah was eager to begin his journey!

### The Arrival of Nehemiah

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, accompanied by officers and soldiers from the Persian army, news spread quickly about his arrival. Two men, Sanballat and Tobiah, were upset by this news. They didn't want anyone to help their enemies, the Jewish people. Sanballat and Tobiah probably wondered what Nehemiah was up to! But Nehemiah kept his plans a secret. When he arrived in Jerusalem, Nehemiah waited for three days. Late one night, he went out to look around the city. He took along only a few men and one horse to ride. Nehemiah didn't

want anybody to know about his plans to rebuild the wall yet. That night, Nehemiah looked at the burned gates and at the broken wall. What he had heard from the travelers was true. The wall and gates were in terrible shape! Soon after his inspection, Nehemiah gathered his people together. It was time to announce his plan!

### Nehemiah Shares the Plan

"God sent me back to Jerusalem for a reason," Nehemiah began. "God even gave me the courage to ask permission for my trip from King Artaxerxes. You can see the trouble we are in here. Jerusalem is a pile of ruins and its gates have been burned. Come, everyone, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and then we won't be ashamed and sad any longer." The people knew that building the wall was going to be a big project and lots of people would need to help, but they were excited about this plan and eager to begin. It didn't take long for word to spread to Nehemiah's enemies about what was going on. Sanballat and Tobiah laughed at the plan to rebuild the wall and gates of Jerusalem. However, Nehemiah was full of faith. He told the enemies that God would help them in their work and that they would continue to build.

With God's guidance and Nehemiah as their planner and leader, the people worked together to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Now they had hope for a safer and happier future.

Spiritual renewal often begins with one person's vision. Nehemiah had a vision, and he shared it with enthusiasm, inspiring Jerusalem's leaders to rebuild the wall. From the moment he arrived in Jerusalem, everyone knew who was in charge. He organized, managed, supervised, encouraged, overcame opposition, sought justice, and kept going until the wall was rebuilt. Today, does God have a vision for us? Are there "walls" that need to be built today? God put the desire to rebuild the wall in Nehemiah's heart; what about you? [Let the students write down what they can do for the church and their family in the missing spaces in the wall that you prepared before class.]

#### BIBLE DISCOVERY WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

After students have completed writing in the missing pieces, hand out the Bible Discovery worksheet to the students and go over it with the students. Emphasize the idea that we can pray to God at any time and for any thing.

#### BIBLE DISCOVERY WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 1) **Praise and thanksgiving** (Answer: verses 5, 10)
- 2) **Repentance** (Answer: verses 6, 7)
- 3) **Remembering God's faithfulness** (Answer: verses 8, 9)
- 4) **Specific request for God's mercy and to prosper in all that he does** (Answer: verse 11)
- 5) **Commitment** (Answer: verse 11)



## Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs

2-5 Minutes

### One True Church

Jerusalem's city wall can be seen as the barrier that provides protection for the holy city, and in today's context, our church is the holy city of God and we, as its members, dwell within. There is only one true church, just as there was only one holy city of Jerusalem in the days of the Israelites. We should love the city of God just as Nehemiah and those who worked with him to rebuild the city wall did. We should rely on God's power to maintain the "wall" of our church, and do our part, by staying convicted in our faith and resistant to outside influences, to keep this wall strong when parts start to break down. For this will bring glory to God's name, just as a rebuilt and powerful Jerusalem was a good testimony to God's glory.



## Check for Understanding

5 Minutes

- 1. Why was Nehemiah concerned about Jerusalem?** It was the holy city. It represented Jewish national identity, and it was blessed with God's special presence in the temple.
- 2. Why did Nehemiah want to return to Jerusalem?** He wanted to return to reunite the Jews and to remove the shame of Jerusalem's broken wall. They would bring glory to God and restore the power of God's presence among His people.
- 3. Read Nehemiah's prayers and write down the elements of an effective prayer.** Praise, thanksgiving, repentance, remembrance, request, and commitment.
- 4. When Nehemiah arrived in Judah, he was greeted with opposition. How did he handle it?** He had complete faith in God and believed that God would help him in his task. He refused to allow the negative words from others to stop him from doing what God had called him to do.
- 5. Who were those who opposed Nehemiah?** Sanballat and Tobiah.



## Life Application

10 Minutes

### 1. Helping others who are in need

When Nehemiah found out that the wall of Jerusalem was in disrepair, he was extremely distressed. He sat down and wept, and mourned for many days. Do you remember what else he did? [Let students answer.] He fasted and prayed. Let's revisit the story and really think about Nehemiah's situation again. Firstly, he was a cupbearer, a trusted servant of King Artaxerxes. He had a stable job serving the most powerful person in Persia. What do you think his life was like? Was it rough, or was it fairly smooth? [Let students answer.] His life was definitely not rough. The king treated him well because he trusted Nehemiah to perform his job well. So, why do you think that Nehemiah still cared about the wall of Jerusalem? The wall being in disrepair wouldn't affect his life because he lived comfortably in Persia. What do you think? [Let students answer.] Nehemiah was so concerned about the wall of Jerusalem being in disrepair because he truly cared about the people whose lives were endangered in Jerusalem. They were his brethren, the children of Israel, of God! Even though Nehemiah himself had nothing to worry about, he was anxious for those who were in great distress and reproach. The Bible says, "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17) Nehemiah knew that there was something he could do for his brethren. The love of God abided in him, and he was moved to help the people who lived in Jerusalem. He didn't "shut his heart" from them.

Today, there are many people around us who are in need. They may have physical needs, emotional needs, or even spiritual needs. Can you think of some examples? [Let students discuss with their partners and share their answers.]

**Examples:****Physical Needs**

- Sick / in the hospital / recovering from illness
- Handicapped
- Needs help with moving to a new house
- Has questions about homework
- Homeless
- Does not have enough money for needed clothes or school supplies

**Emotional Needs**

- Loneliness; needs a friend
- Seeks advice for a problem
- Needs a shoulder to lean on
- Just wants someone to listen

**Spiritual Needs**

- Needs prayers
- Wants someone to study the Bible and pray together
- Feels weak in faith and needs spiritual encouragement
- Has questions about the Bible

**2. Reach Out**

The Bible encourages us to “look out not only for [our] own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil 2:4). Too often, we make ourselves the “center of the world,” meaning that we are preoccupied by only the things that relate to or affect us. If Nehemiah was this way, do you think that he would have cared to help rebuild the wall of Jerusalem? Probably not. How often do we pay attention to other people’s needs? Are we sensitive about other people’s feelings? Are we willing to reach out and help with what they need? The Bible says, “Give, and it will be given to you” (Lk 6:38). If we are not willing to help others when we are able to, do you think that God would still be happy to help us when we are in need? God wants us to love one another just as He loves us. We should always remind ourselves and be thankful for how much God loves us and has given us. That way, we can be inspired to treat others the same way God treats us. Let me share a story with you.

[Hand out Life Application Worksheet #2. Read the scenario together with the students or ask the students to read it to themselves. Then, divide the students into groups of two or more, depending on class size. Give the groups a few minutes to discuss and write down the things that they would say to Stephen. Afterwards, ask one student from each group to share their answers with the rest of the class. Once each group has shared, continue with the story. The following section of the story is not on their worksheets.]

“Let’s find out how Peter responded!”

Peter said to Stephen, “I’m so sorry to hear this. I didn’t know that your dad has been in the hospital. I hope he gets well soon! If you need help with anything, just let me know. I can also come over to your place to study after school if that helps since you have to go home for your little brother. I will definitely be praying for your dad and your family!” Not only did Peter give Stephen the comfort that he needed that day, he also continued to show support and encouragement to Stephen every day. Even though Stephen’s dad is still in the hospital recovering, Stephen seems happier these days to have a friend who supports him and cares about him so much.



## Activity

### Nehemiah's Interview

10-15 Minutes

**Objective:** To reinforce the Bible story in the students' minds.

In this activity, students will pair up to complete an interview between Nehemiah and a reporter. The students will work together to fill in the blanks with the correct answers by referring to chapters 1 and 2 of Nehemiah. Afterwards, choose volunteer pairs to act out the dialogue.

**Reporter:** Nehemiah, we would like to ask you a few questions.

**Nehemiah:** I would be glad to answer them.

**Reporter:** What made you look so upset while serving the king?

**Nehemiah:** I was upset because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** Why did you fast and pray for God's help?

**Nehemiah:** I fasted and prayed because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** After King Artaxerxes gave you permission to go to Jerusalem, you came up with a plan. What was it?

**Nehemiah:** My plan was \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** Sanballat and Tobiah opposed your efforts. How did the Jewish people react?

**Nehemiah:** They \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** Why do you think the people were willing to follow you and help you rebuild Jerusalem's wall?

**Nehemiah:** \_\_\_\_\_.

#### HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. Artaxerxes; cupbearer
2. Judah; Jerusalem
3. C
4. A
5. C
6. He sat down and wept, and mourned for many days. He also fasted and prayed (1:4).
7. He "prayed to the God of heaven" (2:4).
8. Answers may vary.

Nehemiah was an ordinary person in a unique position. He was serving the Persian King Artaxerxes as a faithful cupbearer. He was trusted by the king to go back to the people with their spiritual needs.

# understanding NEHEMIAH'S Prayer

From the very beginning, Nehemiah was concerned about Jerusalem because it was the holy city. It represented Jewish national identity. Nehemiah loved his homeland, so he prayed for God's help. He is indeed a prayerful man of character and perseverance. He prayed anytime and anywhere. The Book of Nehemiah records a total of eight of his prayers. He had an intimate relationship with God. If we want to reach God with our prayers, we need to take the time to cultivate a strong relationship with God through in-depth prayer.



After receiving the bad news about the condition of Jerusalem, Nehemiah was deeply grieved. Immediately, he poured out his heart to God and asked God for ways to improve the situation. He fasted and prayed for several days, expressing his sorrow for Israel's sin and his desire that Jerusalem come together again to worship the one true God.

Let's study how Nehemiah used prayer to help him overcome difficulties. His prayer contained many important elements that we should strive to include in our prayers! After reading Nehemiah 1:5-11, write down the verses that correspond to the different elements of a complete prayer.

**His prayer demonstrated the elements of effective prayer. They are:**

① PRAISE & THANKSGIVING  
Verse \_\_\_\_\_

Repentance ② Verse \_\_\_\_\_

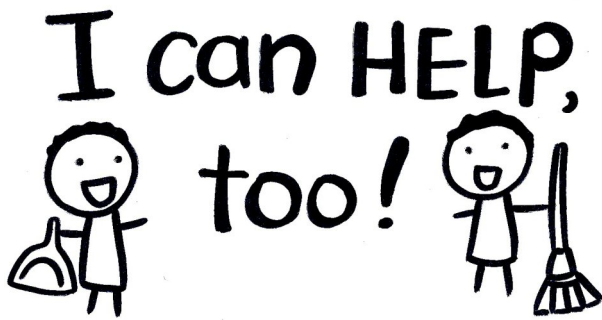
Remembering GOD'S Faithfulness ③ Verse \_\_\_\_\_

④ Specific Request for God's mercy & To PROSPER in all that he does  
Verse \_\_\_\_\_

⑤ Commitment Verse \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions to Think About**

- How often do you pour out your heart to God?
- How often do you give Him a specific request to answer?



Put a check mark by one person you would like to help.

Then, create a plan detailing how you can help that person. Use the questions below to help you plan.

- \_\_\_\_\_ An elderly neighbor who is always home by herself/himself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A homeless person who needs food.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A student who is often absent from Religious Education classes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An elderly person who needs help to buy food and do things around the house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A sick friend who needs help.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_



Who do you know who needs help? \_\_\_\_\_

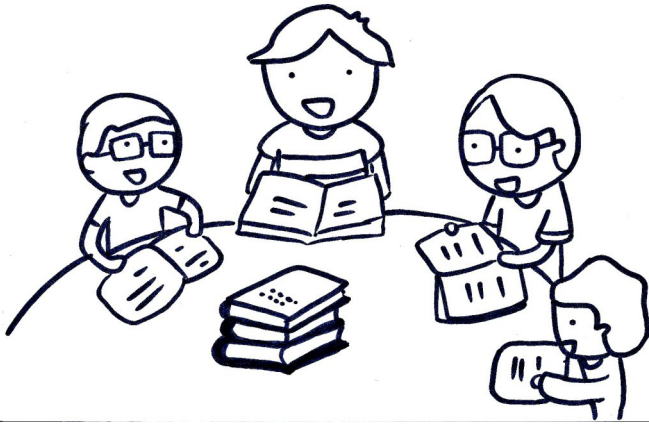
What can you plan to do this week to help and encourage that person?



1. How do I want to help this person?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What will I need in order to help?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How can I get what I need?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How long will my plan take?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What problems could I face?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How will I overcome these problems?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How will I know when I've succeeded?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## REACH OUT



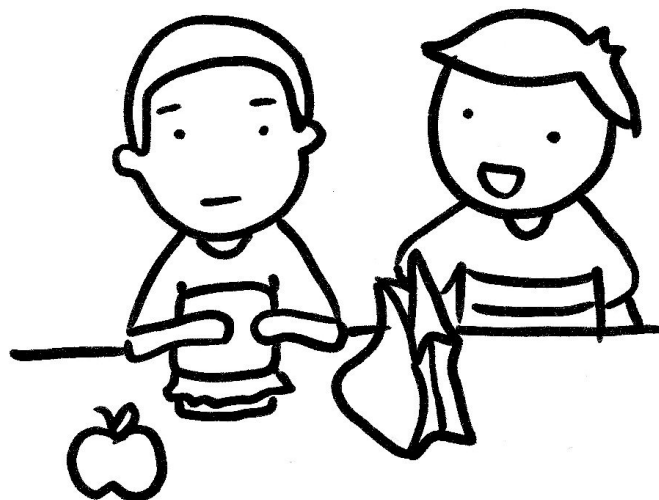
For the past few weeks, Peter and his friends have been staying after school almost every single weekday to study together for their final exam this year. Each time, they come up with questions at the end to test each other on what they have just studied. Peter noticed that Stephen, however, hasn't been showing up for the past few days. Everyone thought that Stephen was no longer interested in studying with them, and they didn't bother asking him to join them again. Nonetheless, Peter decided to take a step further and see if everything was okay with Stephen. By paying more attention, Peter realized that Stephen hasn't

been very happy at school lately. During lunchtime, he always sits by himself to eat. He also frantically leaves the school every day as soon as the bell rings.

One day, Peter went over to where Stephen was sitting by himself to eat during lunchtime, and he sat down next to Stephen. He said to him, "Stephen, is everything okay? You don't seem very happy lately. You've been missing every day after school and we miss you!" Stephen answered, "Hmm, I'm okay..." Peter knew that something was wrong. He said, "Well, I won't force you to say anything. But just letting you know that if you need somebody to talk to, I'm here for you!" Stephen thought for a moment and he finally opened up to Peter. He said to Peter, "My dad's been in the hospital. My whole family is very worried. I can't stay after school to study with you all anymore because my mom needs me to go home and take care of my little brother while she is in the hospital with my dad. I'm very worried about him, too!"

### Question

- What would you say to Stephen if you were Peter?



## NEHEMIAH'S INTERVIEW

**Reporter:** Nehemiah, we would like to ask you a few questions.

**Nehemiah:** I would be glad to answer them.

**Reporter:** What made you look so upset while serving the king?

**Nehemiah:** I was upset because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** Why did you fast and pray for God's help?

**Nehemiah:** I fasted and prayed because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** After King Artaxerxes gave you permission to go to Jerusalem, you came up with a plan. What was it?

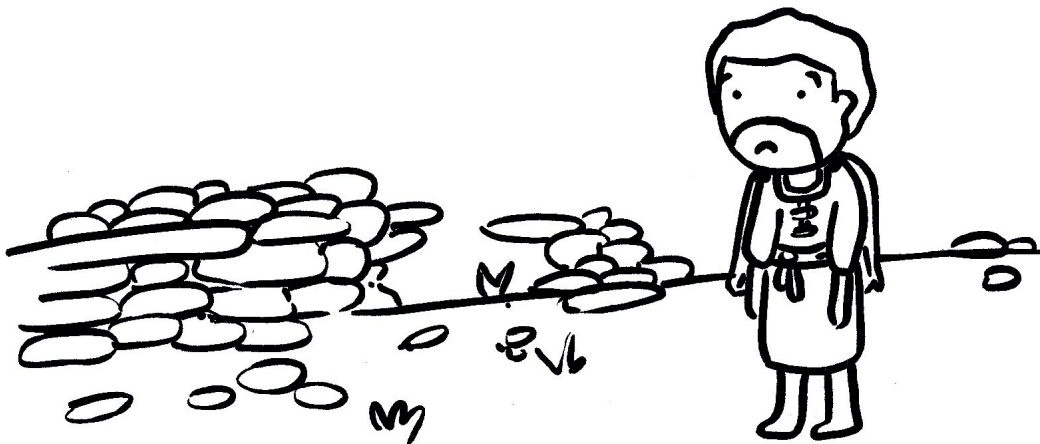
**Nehemiah:** My plan was \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** Sanballat and Tobiah opposed your efforts. How did the Jewish people react?

**Nehemiah:** They \_\_\_\_\_.

**Reporter:** Why do you think the people were willing to follow you and help you rebuild Jerusalem's wall?

**Nehemiah:** \_\_\_\_\_.



E2 Year 3 Book 2 Lesson 9—Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

# Homework Assignment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Weekly Bible Reading:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Bible Reading:** Check each box when you complete that day's reading.

**Prayer:** Check each box after you pray to God that day.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Read							
Pray							

## What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse. (Isaiah 1:17)

\_\_\_\_\_

### Fill In the Blank

1. Nehemiah worked for King \_\_\_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Nehemiah asked for the king's permission to return to \_\_\_\_\_ to rebuild the wall of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Multiple Choice

3. \_\_\_\_\_: The king knew that something was bothering Nehemiah because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Nehemiah wrote him a letter.
  - b. Nehemiah broke one of his cups.
  - c. Nehemiah looked sad.
4. \_\_\_\_\_: After Nehemiah told the king about the wall of Jerusalem, the king \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Permitted Nehemiah to go back to Judah
  - b. Had Nehemiah killed
  - c. Wrote letters to his other servants commanding them to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's place
5. \_\_\_\_\_: As soon as Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Gathered everyone together and started rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem
  - b. Found out that the wall had already been rebuilt
  - c. Stayed there for three days without telling anyone his plan

### Short Answer

6. How did Nehemiah react when he first heard about the wall of Jerusalem?
7. What did Nehemiah do before letting the king know his request?
8. What can you learn from Nehemiah's actions?