

# LESSON 12

## NEHEMIAH DEDICATES THE WALL AND CONFRONTS THE JEWS



### OBJECTIVES

1. To encourage the students to dedicate their money, possessions, and lives to God.
2. To remember that, on this uphill journey to heaven, we need to put effort into our faith and spiritual cultivation.
3. To enable the students to encourage others to learn to honor and obey God.

### MEMORY VERSE

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

(Romans 12:1)

### PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, we thank You for bringing us together to worship You on Your Sabbath day and to learn Your word together. We know that You are guiding and protecting us all the time. We also know that You have given us everything, and we are very thankful. So, we want to dedicate our money and our lives—our everything—to You with a willing heart. Please give us the strength to do what we promise to do and follow Your word. Please also help us to encourage those who are disobeying You to change their ways. Amen.



### Overview

#### 1. Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

- a. Dedication of the City Wall
- b. After the Dedication

#### 2. Link to the Ten Basic Beliefs—Sabbath Day

#### 3. Life Application

- a. My Personal Dedication: Testimony
- b. My Covenant with God
- c. Difficult Situations

#### 4. Activity—Our Own Celebration!



### Background Knowledge for Teachers

The dedication of the city wall was characterized by much joy and praise. However, when Nehemiah returned, he found that the people had broken their promises to God. God had commanded Israel not to work on the Sabbath, but to rest in remembrance of His creation and their exodus from Egypt. God also told His people not to marry Gentiles, but the Israelites broke their solemn covenant with Him. Nehemiah's severe treatment of the people shows the contrast between his great faithfulness to God and the people's disobedience. (See also Ezra 10:3.)



## Reaching Out to Your Students

The art of encouragement is not easily learned. At this age, your students are not very good at tactfully explaining rules or guidelines to others nor are they willing to listen to their peers. In part, this is due to their limited language skills and their strong desire to do things independently. You might want to explain that, in order to encourage others to honor and obey God, they must first honor and obey God in their own lives. Discuss what it means to honor and obey God. You can use Nehemiah or any other Bible character as an example. Also, you might want to go over the qualities a person must possess to give effective encouragement (e.g. humility, love). Be honest and open with your students. Share your personal failures, which they can relate to and learn from. Perhaps you can tell them about how you were not successful in encouraging a certain person because you lacked certain qualities.

It may also be difficult for students to speak up and encourage others to do the right thing by honoring and obeying God because "it's too hard." Nehemiah spent years as the governor in Jerusalem: setting good examples, teaching the people God's laws, even going as far as getting them to sign an agreement. If we put ourselves in his shoes, if we returned to Jerusalem and saw the Jewish people backslide in their faith, we probably would have said, "I give up! They will never change!" Nehemiah didn't give up. Instead, he tackled the problem with strong and firm actions. Today, when your students try to encourage others to honor and obey God, they may be laughed at or rejected by their peers. Their friends may think that they are a "goody two-shoes." Encourage them by reaffirming that it's never easy to do the right thing, especially when others don't listen, but that we should never give up on doing the right thing. We may feel like our words are falling on deaf ears. However, this does not mean that we can just let it slip. If we let it slip once, we will do it again, and gradually, we will tolerate it. Over time, we may no longer even think that it's wrong! Keep persisting! And just like Nehemiah did after taking action, let us put it in prayer (Neh 13:14, 22, 29, 31).

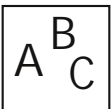


## Opener

5 Minutes

Have you ever promised to do something, but later changed your mind? For example, have you ever promised to practice in order to take violin lessons or be on a sports team, but then later decided you didn't like to practice after all? What are some other examples you can think of? Has someone encouraged you to keep your promises in those situations?

In our Bible story, we'll learn about a time when the Jews changed their minds after having made some promises.



## Vocabulary

**reform:** (n.) an improvement or change of what is wrong; (v.) to stop doing what is wrong and change for the better  
**covenant:** a very serious promise to do or not to do something specifically agreed to  
**contend:** to argue and insist; to struggle against



## Bible Discovery & Spiritual Teaching

30-35 Minutes

### The Dedication (Neh 12:27-13:3)

With the help of God, the Jewish people overcame all the difficulties and their enemies' attacks to finish rebuilding the wall in fifty-two days! Now that the wall had been completed, Nehemiah and the people were going to dedicate the wall and all the work that went into it to God. This was to be a joyful time! A time to celebrate! Let's learn more about the dedication of the city wall.

#### FOR TEACHERS

Hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #1 to the students now. Guide the students to complete the worksheet, by filling in the blank areas, as you go over this section. The answers are underlined.

### (12:27-28) Find the Levites and singers

For the dedication Nehemiah especially sought out the

Levites and brought them back to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication. The Levites were scattered all over the place, but the dedication could not be complete without the Levites because they were chosen by God to do special work in the temple and to lead the people in the dedication celebration. They were expected to help lead the people and guide them to worship God.

### (12:30) Purify themselves

The first thing the priests and the Levites did upon returning to Jerusalem was to purify themselves. Then, they went on to purify the people, the gates, and the wall! Everyone and anyone who desires to serve God must be cleansed from all sins. These could be sins in our thoughts, in our speech, in our actions, or in our hearts.

### (12:31) With thanksgiving

The dedication of the wall was not a time to praise Nehemiah but to praise and give thanks to God! The Levites led the people in this dedication of the wall “with thanksgiving and singing” and with various musical instruments! (12:27b).

Nehemiah organized two special “thanksgiving choirs” to walk in opposite directions on top of the wall until the two choirs met up at the temple. The Bible tells us that these choirs “sang loudly” (12:42)! When we are truly thankful to God in our hearts, we cannot hide it. We will naturally want to praise God loudly. This is how the Jewish people felt. They felt God’s protection and guidance through the wall-rebuilding process, so they used their voices to sing loudly to God!

### (12:43) With joy

God made them rejoice with great joy. Just count how many times “joy” or “rejoiced” was mentioned in this one verse! We can imagine what a happy occasion this was for the Jewish people. Everyone rejoiced: men, women and children! Even people far away could hear their joy! Serving God and dedicating the work of our hands to God is a joy. Let’s never forget this and serve God with joy.

### (12:47) Offer willingly

A heart of thanksgiving and joy naturally led to the people freely giving and offering to the house of God. They could see the importance of the work in the temple and were willing to give the necessary offerings to support the many priests, Levites, gatekeepers, and singers who served there. The people offered because they “rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered” (12:44). This was actually the way God had intended, so the priests and Levites could serve God wholeheartedly in the temple and not need to worry about working for food. This could have been the reason why the Levites were initially scattered and why Nehemiah needed to find them!

### (13:1-3) Read the Law of God

Worship and the word of God go hand in hand. The dedication ceremony was filled with songs of worship praising God. After that was over, the people listened to the reading of the word from the Book of Moses. They realized that God had told them that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God. After reading the Law, the people immediately put it into practice and separated themselves from the foreigners as God instructed! This shows that the Israelites had set a determination to obey God’s commandments.

### Ammonites and Moabites

As the people were being read the Law of God, they came to Deuteronomy 23:3-4. God strictly forbade the entry of the Ammonites and the Moabites into the assembly of God. Why? When the Israelites left Egypt and were in the wilderness, not only did the Ammonites and Moabites refuse to help the Israelites, they hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel (Num 22-24). This made God very angry, and from then on, God would not allow any Ammonite or Moabite to enter the assembly of God.

#### FOR TEACHERS

After completing this section, go over the worksheet with the students to ensure that they have each filled out the worksheet correctly. Then, continue with the next section.

### After the Dedication (Neh 13:4-31)

After the dedication Nehemiah left Jerusalem and went back to his job as the king’s cupbearer (Neh 13:6). The Bible is not clear on how long he was back with the king, but it tells us that after “certain days,” he asked the king if he could leave again. This time when he returned to Jerusalem, what he found made him sad and angry.

They had read in the Book of Moses that God’s law strictly said that no Ammonites and Moabites were allowed in the temple of God. But the first thing Nehemiah found when he returned to Jerusalem was... let’s read Nehemiah 13:7. “And I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.” Do we all still remember who Tobiah was? He was one of the enemies who opposed the building of the wall, and even worse, he was an Ammonite (Neh 4:3).

Eliashib the priest had done the unthinkable! He was in charge of the storerooms in the temple. He was also friends with Tobiah. So, he decided to clear out one of the large storerooms in the temple and let Tobiah stay there. Upon learning about Tobiah staying in the temple, do you think Nehemiah said, “OK, fine. Let Tobiah stay since Eliashib is a priest, and I don’t want to argue with the priest”? NO! He didn’t. His reaction was so strong. He

threw out ALL of Tobiah's belongings, cleansed the room, and brought back all the things that were supposed to be stored in that storeroom.

Sadly, letting Tobiah the Ammonite stay in the temple wasn't the only thing that Nehemiah discovered when he returned to Jerusalem.

Before the dedication of the wall, the leaders, Levites, priests, and the Jewish people in general all made a covenant. It was a very serious covenant. So serious that they wrote a document of what they promised to do in this covenant and signed it, or as the Bible records, "placed their seal on the document" (Neh 10:1a). Nehemiah came back to discover that the people broke the covenant and didn't keep their promise.

What did the people promise to do in the covenant? And what did Nehemiah do when he discovered the people were disobeying God?

#### FOR TEACHERS

Hand out Bible Discovery Worksheet #2 and go over the worksheet with the students, guiding them to fill in the worksheet by reading the passages. The answers have been underlined.

### The Covenant

The Jewish people made the following promises to keep God's word:

#### 1. We will not marry Gentiles (Neh 10:30)

- Nehemiah came back to discover that the Jewish people had married gentiles of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab (Neh 13:23-24).
- So, Nehemiah dealt with it. Let's read Nehemiah 13:25-28. Nehemiah contended with them, cursed them, hit some of them, pulled out their hair, and made them promise not to marry Gentiles or to let their children marry Gentiles.

#### 2. We will not work or trade on Sabbath day (Neh 10:31)

- The people also worked and traded on the Sabbath day. Let's read Nehemiah 10:15-16.
- So, Nehemiah 13:17-22 tells us, again Nehemiah contended with them saying, "What evil thing is this that you do on the Sabbath day?" He shut the gates and put his servants at the gates to guard it. Later on, he told the Levites to cleanse themselves and go to guard the gates. This way, they made sure the people were keeping the Sabbath day.

#### 3. We will offer tithes and firstfruits, so the house of God will not be neglected (Neh 10:35-39)

- They neglected the house of God, as recorded in Nehemiah 13:10, because they didn't offer tithes and firstfruits. The tithes and firstfruits that the people offered were what the Levites and the workers in the temple survived on. .
- In Nehemiah 13:11-13, Nehemiah contended with them saying, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then he gathered the Levites together again.

It doesn't matter how difficult the situation was, when Nehemiah saw that the people were disobeying God, he was determined to do whatever he could to make the people turn back to God. He even went to the extent of pulling their hair out and shutting the gates to the city, putting people there so that they couldn't physically trade anymore. From today's lesson, we can see two distinctly different types of people. On one hand, there are people like Nehemiah, who was so faithful to God. On the other hand, there are people like the Israelites, who repeatedly disobeyed God and broke their promises to God.

What can we learn from Nehemiah? If we see our friends do something wrong to disobey God, we should encourage them to stop doing the wrong thing. Have we been doing what we can to turn people back to God?



## Linking to the Ten Basic Beliefs

2-5 Minutes

### Sabbath Day

The Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week (Saturday), is a Holy Day blessed and sanctified by God. It is to be observed under grace for the commemoration of God's creation and salvation and with the hope of eternal rest in the future.

The people made a covenant and promised to keep the Sabbath holy. So, they were not supposed to do any work and not supposed to trade, buy, or sell anything on the Sabbath. Nehemiah called what they were doing on the Sabbath an "evil thing." The people were reminded that not keeping the Sabbath was one of the reasons that God punished them.

Today, we don't keep the Sabbath with the same strict restrictions as in Nehemiah's days. Rather, we keep the Sabbath under grace. However, we must still keep it holy, as it is our hearts that truly matter. This means putting aside worldly

things and worldly thoughts, to come focus on God to remember God's creation, salvation, and our home in heaven.

Do you enjoy coming to church on the Sabbath? What is your favorite part about the Sabbath?



## Check for Understanding

5 Minutes

1. **What did Nehemiah do in preparation for the city wall dedication?** He went to find the Levites and singers.
2. **What did the Levites and singers need to do before the dedication?** They needed to purify themselves.
3. **What happened during the dedication?** The thanksgiving choir sang loudly; God filled the people with joy; the people offered willingly for the house of God; and they read the Law of God and separated themselves from foreigners.
4. **Who did God say would never be allowed into the assembly of God and why?** The Ammonites and Moabites, because they refused to help the Israelites when they journeyed in the wilderness and even plotted to make the Israelites sin against God.
5. **When Nehemiah returned after serving as cupbearer, what was the first thing he saw?** The priest Eliashib had given one of the temple storerooms to Tobiah the Ammonite, an enemy of the Jewish people who tried to disrupt the building of the wall.
6. **How did Nehemiah react to Tobiah's room in the temple?** He threw out all of Tobiah's things, cleansed the room, and brought back the things of the temple.
7. **What else did he find the Jewish people doing wrong?** They had married Gentiles; they hadn't kept the Sabbath day holy; they hadn't offered tithes or firstfruits; and they had left the house of God neglected.
8. **What did Nehemiah do when he saw the people disobeying God?** He contended with them each time, hit them, pulled their hair out, shut the city gates, and put his servants to guard the gates.
9. **What can you learn from Nehemiah?** Answers may vary.



## Life Application

10 Minutes

### 1. My Personal Dedication

#### What can I dedicate to God?

Think about what we can dedicate to God and write it in the box.

(Time, pocket money, caring for others, helping others, cleaning the church, helping out around the church, etc.)

#### What attitude should I have?

Read the Bible verse relating to the attitude.

Then write in your own words what the verse means to you, and how you can apply it to what you would like to dedicate to God.

#### Testimony

Sister Elizabeth who specializes and is gifted in flower arranging was asked by the church to do a few special flower arrangements for the church dedication. Sis. Elizabeth wanted the flower arrangement to be as nice and fresh as possible for the dedication, so as per her usual practice to ensure fresh flowers for the day, she started the flower arrangements the night before. She spent lots of time on one particular arrangement because it was the largest one and it was going to be at the main entrance. She worked really hard and even stayed past midnight to finish all the flower arrangements allocated to her. This was a big church, and there were many things to be done in the chapel as well as outside, so many members stayed to help clean and organize the church for the dedication. Finally, she finished for the night and went home to rest. She planned to come an hour early the next morning to do one final check, and perhaps give the flowers a quick mist spray before everyone arrived for the dedication.

To other people, this may just have been another pot of flowers. But to Sister Elizabeth, this was what she felt God had gifted her with, so she was especially dedicated to ensuring that it was done to the best of her abilities.

However, early next morning, she arrived an hour beforehand, only to find that the main flower arrangement for the entrance was no longer there. After asking around, she found out that sometime between last night after she left and this morning before she arrived, a church member felt the floor needed another cleaning and vacuuming. Unfortunately the member who did the vacuuming accidentally knocked over the flower arrangement, and it was completely ruined.

Sister Elizabeth was devastated. It was too late to do anything about it. She didn't have the time, the equipment, or the flowers to make a replacement. After spending hours last night on the arrangement and sacrificing her sleep, in the end, she couldn't present the nice arrangement the church had asked her to make.

So, in the prayer during dedication, she asked God, "Why did you let this happen? I did that work for you, God. That arrangement was done for this dedication to glorify You. Why did this accident have to happen?"

Praise God that, during the dedication, God opened her heart and comforted her. She felt God's comfort, but more importantly she felt God teaching her. God let her understand that the flower arrangement was her offering to God, not to the people attending the dedication. Whether or not other people saw it wasn't important. God had seen it. God had accepted her offering. When she came to realize this thought, she felt peace and joy fill her heart.

The most important aspect of our dedication to God is what God sees, and not what other people see. If we dedicate our work to God with a pure, willing, joyful, and thankful heart, God will see it, even if other people do not see it.

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## 2. My Covenant with God

Think about the covenant that the people made during the time of Nehemiah and how it relates to your life today.

What can you pledge to God today?

In the box, draw something that will remind you of your pledge. Then, write the actual pledge.

Finally, put your signature on it and seal it!

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## 3. Difficult Situations

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he discovered the people breaking their covenant and doing the wrong things in the eyes of God. In the face of this difficult situation, Nehemiah didn't just give up. He did what he could to turn the people back to God.

*What would you say in these difficult situations?*

1. You see your sister hide a secret and lie to your parents about something bad she's doing.
2. Your friend keeps telling you about how much he wants a video game.
3. You haven't seen your friend come to church for Sabbath for a long time. One day you see him in the shopping mall.



## Activity

### Our Own Celebration

10-15 Minutes

With the help of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people made a covenant to keep God's word. Then, they dedicated the wall, a super joyous occasion! Let's try to reproduce a smaller version today!

#### 1. Firstly, write down the covenant.

Ask everyone to write down one pledge they want to make to God. It can be an improvement on a current aspect of their life or a pledge for the future. The only rule is that it must be shortened to 3-4 words (3-5 syllables). A few examples are listed.

2. Now, make some shakers with the students—to accompany the lyrics!

*Materials*

- Small drink bottles
- Dried rice, beans or pasta
- Decorative stickers

*Instructions*

1. Dry the bottles thoroughly.
2. Fill one-third of the bottle with rice, beans, or pasta.
3. Glue the lid shut.
4. Decorate it.

3. Finally, time for the celebration!

Ask all the students to bring their shaker and form a circle.

Sing the song “My Desire” together as a class, using the shakers.

When the class gets to the blank underlined part of the lyrics (underlined orange in the example below), everyone will take turns to sing their pledge, starting with the teacher. Continue singing until everyone has had a chance to sing their pledge.

**My Desire**

My desire, my desire, my desire,  
 My desire is to keep God’s word!  
 My desire! My desire!  
 My desire is to keep God’s word!

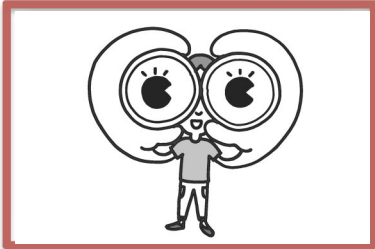
**MY DESIRE**

The musical score is written on three staves in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is simple and repetitive. The lyrics are written below the notes, with blank lines for student pledges. The first staff starts with 'MY DE - SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE IS TO \_\_\_\_\_ MY DE'. The second staff continues with 'SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE IS TO \_\_\_\_\_ MY DE -'. The third staff ends with 'SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE, MY DE - SI - RE IS TO \_\_\_\_\_'.

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

Check that they have completed the homework accordingly.

THE DEDICATION

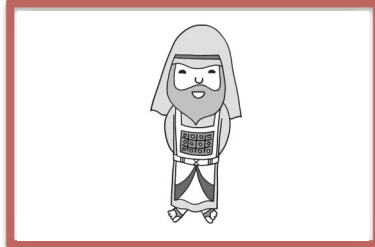


**(12:27-28) Find the Levites and singers**

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**(12:30)**

- Priests and Levites
- The people, the gates, and the wall

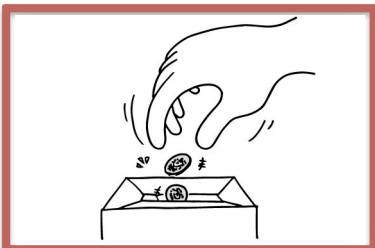


**(12:31) With thanksgiving**

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**( \_\_\_\_\_ ) With joy**

- God made them rejoice with great joy
- Everyone rejoiced: men, women, and children



**(12:47) \_\_\_\_\_**

- For the singers and gatekeepers
- For the house of God

**(13:1-3) Read the Law of God**

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- 





THE COVENANT

**The Covenant  
Covenant  
(what they  
promised)**

We will not marry  
Gentiles  
(10:30)

We will not work or  
trade on Sabbath day  
(10: )

We will offer tithes and  
firstfruits, not neglect the  
house of God  
(10:35-39)

**What  
happened?**

They married Gentiles  
of \_\_\_\_\_  
(13:23-24)

They worked and  
\_\_\_\_\_ on the  
Sabbath  
( : )

They neglected the  
house of God  
( : )

**What did Nehemiah do  
when he saw this?**

He \_\_\_\_\_ with them, cursed them,  
hit them, pulled out their hair and made  
them promise not to \_\_\_\_\_  
(13:25-28)

He \_\_\_\_\_ with them,  
"What evil thing is this that you do  
on the \_\_\_\_\_?" He  
shut the gates and put his servants  
at the gates to guard it (13:17-22)

He \_\_\_\_\_ with them, "Why is the  
house of God \_\_\_\_\_?" He  
gathered the Levites together again  
(13:11-13)

# My Personal Dedication

What can I dedicate to God?

What attitudes should I have?

Write these verses in your own words. How can you apply these attitudes to what you want to dedicate to God?

## PURE HEART

• 2 TIM 2:21-22



## THANKSGIVING

• EPH 5:19-20



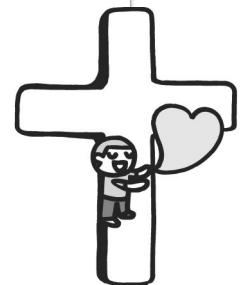
## JOY

• PS 100:2



## WILLINGNESS

• 2 COR 8:12



## Testimony

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However, early next morning, she arrived an hour beforehand, only to find that the main flower arrangement for the entrance was no longer there. After asking around, she found out that sometime between last night after she left and this morning before she arrived, a church member felt the floor needed another cleaning and vacuuming. Unfortunately the member who did the vacuuming accidentally knocked over the flower arrangement, and it was completely ruined.

Sister Elizabeth was devastated. It was too late to do anything about it. She didn't have the time, the equipment, or the flowers to make a replacement. After spending hours last night on the arrangement and sacrificing her sleep, in the end, she couldn't present the nice arrangement the church had asked her to make.

So, in the prayer during dedication, she asked God, "Why did you let this happen? I did that work for you, God. That arrangement was done for this dedication to glorify You. Why did this accident have to happen?"

Praise God that, during the dedication, God opened her heart and comforted her. She felt God's comfort, but more importantly she felt God teaching her. God let her understand that the flower arrangement was her offering to God, not to the people attending the dedication. Whether or not other people saw it wasn't important. God had seen it. God had accepted her offering. When she came to realize this thought, she felt peace and joy fill her heart.

The most important aspect of our dedication to God is what God sees, and not what other people see. If we dedicate our work to God with a pure, willing, joyful, and thankful heart, God will see it, even if other people do not see it.

## My Covenant with God

Think about the covenant that the people made during the time of Nehemiah and how it relates to your life today. What can you pledge to God today?

In the box, draw something that will remind you of your pledge. Then, write the actual pledge.

Finally, put your signature on it and seal it!

Dear God,



I pledge to



I pledge to



I pledge to

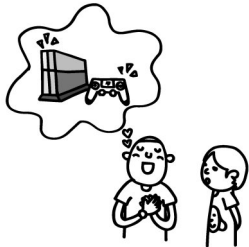
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## DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he discovered the people breaking their covenant and doing the wrong things in the eyes of God. In the face of this difficult situation, Nehemiah didn't just give up. He did what he could to turn the people back to God.

What would you say in these difficult situations?

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Your friend keeps telling you about how much he wants a video game.

You haven't seen your friend come to church for Sabbath for a long time. One day you see him in the shopping mall.



E2 Year 3 Book 2 Lesson 12—Nehemiah Dedicates the Wall and Confronts the Jews

# 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. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



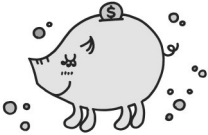
## Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse. **(Romans 12:1)**

\_\_\_\_\_

## What Do We Need to Do?

Nehemiah confronted and rebuked the people regarding intermarriage, the Sabbath, and taking care of the temple through offerings. For each point, write down:

		
<h3>In Marriage</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God wants us to...</li> <li>• How did the Jewish people disobey God?</li> <li>• What I can do now is...</li> </ul>	<h3>Sabbath Day</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God wants us to...</li> <li>• How did the Jewish people disobey God?</li> <li>• What I can do now is...</li> </ul>	<h3>Offering &amp; Tithes</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God wants us to...</li> <li>• How did the Jewish people disobey God?</li> <li>• What I can do now is...</li> </ul>