



Unit 18 | Session 2

NEHEMIAH REBUILT THE WALLS

Nehemiah 1-7

God's people had lived in Babylon for 70 years. Then the king of Persia took over Babylon and let them go home. Some of God's people went home to Judah, but some of them stayed in Babylon. Nehemiah stayed and worked for the king.

One day, some men came from Judah. The men had bad news: "The people in Jerusalem are in trouble. The walls around the city are broken, and the gates are burned down."

Nehemiah sat down and cried. Then he prayed and fasted. The king noticed him and asked, "What's wrong? Why are you sad?" Nehemiah was afraid; no one was supposed to be sad around the king. Nehemiah said, "The city where my ancestors are from is in ruins."

The king sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem. Nehemiah led the people to start rebuilding the walls and gates. The workers put in doors, bolts, and bars. They cut stones and lifted them into place on the wall, and they filled in gaps and holes. All around the city, people worked side by side. Soon the wall was half as tall as it had once been!

But not everyone was happy that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt. Some men who lived nearby made a plan to attack them and stop their work. God's people

prayed and chose men to guard the walls all day and all night, but the people were discouraged.

Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. "Don't be afraid," he said. "God is great and powerful! Be ready. If our enemies attack us, God will fight for us!" Enemies could threaten God's people, but they could not make God's people stop building.

So God's people went back to work. Some stood guard with weapons, and others worked on the wall. Some men worked with one hand and held a weapon in the other. They were always ready to fight, just in case.

Nehemiah was a wise and good leader for God's people. In just 52 days, the wall was complete! The gates were repaired, and the wall was restored. The city was ready for more of God's people to come home. When all of Jerusalem's enemies heard that the wall had been rebuilt, they were afraid because they knew God was with His people.

Christ Connection: Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our greatest enemies, sin and death. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue everyone who trusts in Him.



1 WELCOME TIME

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

- **Have you ever been discouraged while doing something hard?**
- **Maybe it was a hard school assignment or a game that didn't go your way. How did you deal with discouragement?**

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: CAN YOU DO IT?



Before this session, use masking tape to create a line on one side of the room. Form teams of four or five kids.

Provide each team with an orange or a small ball. Challenge kids to use their noses to push the orange or ball across the room and cross the masking tape line. Direct the first kid that crosses the line to run back to her team so the next kid in line can begin. The first team to complete the challenge wins.

SAY “ You could have given up when this challenge got difficult, but you stuck with it. Today, we will hear a story about a time when God’s people completed a task that required determination and perseverance. We will learn that God is faithful to help His people and give them strength. ”

OPTION 2: CUP STACK

Form a team of two or three kids. Give each kid on the team a small ball. Give the remaining kids 10–20 plastic cups. Instruct the kids to build a wall with the cups. Instruct the kids with the balls to try and continually knock down the cups by throwing the balls at the cups.

Direct kids to rebuild the wall by continuing to stack the cups after they are knocked down. Challenge kids to defend the wall and keep the balls from hitting the cups.

SAY “ It was challenging to stack the cups as the balls were being thrown. In today’s Bible story, we will learn how God’s people faced challenges when trying to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, but God helped them succeed. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about how Nehemiah rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

Read from Nehemiah 1-7.

•What does this story teach us about God?

As Nehemiah prayed, he remembered who the Lord is; that He is the God who always keeps His promises and loves His people. Even in a time of great distress, Nehemiah knew the Lord was with His people and heard their cries. God was in control and helped His people rebuild the walls even when they faced trials.

•How did God complete the work of salvation for us?

If we have received Jesus as Savior, God has completed the work of salvation for us. God sent His Son, Jesus, to conquer sin and death and to save those who receive Him as Lord. We do not have to work to earn salvation because it is a free gift we receive when we place our faith in Jesus.

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our greatest enemies, sin and death. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue everyone who trusts in Him.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 MISSIONS MOMENT

Tell the kids that Stephen and Erin Spencer (names changed) are also missionaries in Southeast Asia and work in the same area as David and Lark Washington. Tell the kids that Stephen and Erin Spencer met an elderly lady in a Southeast Asia village. Explain that the lady wondered if the Bible stories she heard were true. Tell the kids that she said to her family, “There might be something to this living God they’re talking about.” Tell kids that one day, the woman’s daughter came in to tell her that their pig had died. Tell the kids that the elderly lady prayed that God would show that He is real. Tell the kids that after she prayed the dead pig stood up. Explain that the elderly lady believed in God and many other people did as well because of her testimony.

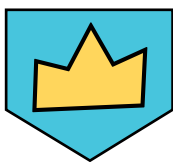
3 PRAY

Thank You, Lord, for sending Jesus to rescue us from sin and death. Help us share the good news of the gospel with others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

THE GOSPEL

GOD’S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.



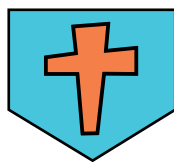
GOD RULES.

Ask: “Who is in charge at home?” Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED.

Ask: “Have you ever done something wrong?” Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



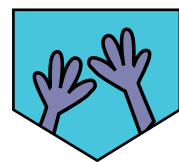
GOD PROVIDED.

Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



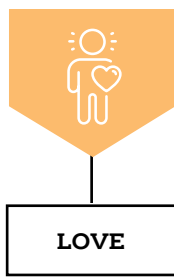
JESUS GIVES.

Ask: “What is the best gift you’ve ever received?” Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND.

Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: “Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus.” Read Romans 10:9-10.



THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- **Why does the Bible say God fights for His people? Isn't fighting bad?**
- **How does Jesus protect us from our enemies, sin and death?**

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 1. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 1:5-9. Remind preteens that Nehemiah showed godly grief when he prayed to God. Tell kids that Nehemiah's godly grief and repentance led him to right action. Remind kids that He trusted in God's Word and remembered God's promises. Explain that because of his faith in God, he obediently acted to rebuild Jerusalem's wall.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 1:5-9 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. What can we learn from Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1:4-11?

Lead kids to understand that Nehemiah's prayer praised God and His character, confessed sin, recounted God's promises, and asked God for help. Help kids understand that there are no special words we have to pray, but that the Bible does help us know how to pray.
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 6:9-13.)

2. Does trusting God mean we always just sit back and wait? Why not?

Help kids understand that Nehemiah trusted the Lord to accomplish the rebuilding of the wall, but he didn't sit back and do nothing. Remind kids that faith calls us to act upon what we believe. Encourage kids to trust God and be reminded that He is faithful to help us follow Him in obedience.
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 7:24.)

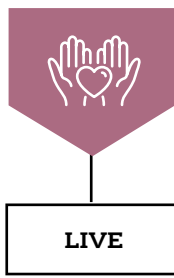
3. What does it mean that God restores our relationship with Him?

Explain that like the broken wall around Jerusalem, our relationship with the Lord is broken because of sin. Remind kids that God did what we could not do by sending Jesus to live a perfect life for us. Help kids understand that Jesus took the punishment our sin deserves, conquered death, and brings us back to God when we trust in Him as Savior. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 5:1.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

How should we feel when we sin?

When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to 2 Corinthians 7:10. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Before meeting together, write out the key passage on index cards, writing only one word on each card. Create several sets depending on the size of your group.

Form kids into small groups and distribute a word card set to each group. Challenge them to place the word cards in the correct order as quickly as possible.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for Jesus' death and resurrection, knowing we have forgiveness and life through Him.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Distribute paper, pens or pencils, and a Bible to each kid. Make sure each kid has their own Bible. Encourage kids that praying does not have to be difficult and they do not have to have the perfect words to say while they pray. Lead kids to understand that we can pray the words of Scripture.

Write the references of several verses on a dry erase board. Some examples may include Psalm 19:14; Psalm 25:4; Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 25:1; Hebrews 13:6; and Ephesians 2:10. Choose to add your own as well. Challenge kids to look up and read one of the verses, turn that Scripture into a prayer, and write the prayer on their papers.

Lead kids to think about how in the Bible story today, we learned that Nehemiah prayed Scripture. Tell kids that praying Scripture helps keep our minds focused on truth and it reveals sin. Explain that it also causes our hearts to be moved to love God so that we desire to turn away from sin.