



Unit 18, Session 2

The Walls Rebuilt

Nehemiah 1-6

Story Point: Text.

Open your Bible and read aloud from Nehemiah 1-6, or tell the story from the following Bible story script.

God's people had lived in Babylon for 70 years. Then King Cyrus, 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. **Nehemiah stayed and worked for the king of Persia.**

One day, some men came from Judah. Nehemiah asked, "How are God's people doing in Jerusalem?" The men had bad news: "The people are in trouble. The walls around Jerusalem are broken down, and the gates have been burned down." Nehemiah cried. Then he prayed and fasted. The king noticed Nehemiah and asked, "What's wrong?" Nehemiah said, "The city where my ancestors are from is in ruins, and the gates of the city have been burned down."

The king sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem. Nehemiah inspected the walls and led the people to start rebuilding the walls and gates.

Not everyone was happy that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt. Some men who lived nearby were angry. God's people kept working on the walls, but their enemies 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. "Our enemies are

everywhere," they said.

Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. "Don't be afraid. God is great and powerful!" Nehemiah said. "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. Their enemies were not in charge of rebuilding the wall; God was!

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 while they worked. **In just 52 days, the wall was complete!** The gates were repaired, and the wall was restored. 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 enemy, sin and death. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue everyone who trusts in Him.



INTRODUCE the Story

WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to talk about the hardest thing they have ever accomplished. (*turning in a difficult school assignment, winning a basketball game, and so on*) How did they feel when they finished? What kept them from giving up?

OPTION 1: Rapid fire response

Supplies: none

Form two teams of kids. Call for a volunteer from each team. Name an item. Volunteers must explain how it is properly used. Name items that offer protection: helmet, bug spray, mouth guard, sunscreen, sunglasses, raincoat, oven mitt, umbrella, shin guards, gloves, soap, winter coat, and so forth.

The first volunteer to answer correctly wins that round and earns a point for his team. Play several rounds. The team with the most points at the end wins.

- What do those items have in common? How do you think God protects His people?

OPTION 2: Fingertip hoop

Supplies: hula hoops (1 per team)

Form groups of six to eight kids. Give each group a hula hoop. Teams will walk across the room, carrying the hoop parallel to the floor. They may only touch the hoop with one finger, and their palm must face the floor. The first team to reach the opposite wall wins. Play again as time allows.

- What did it take to move the hoop across the room?
- What would it take to rebuild a wall around a city?



TEACH the 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 a time when God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.. 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 1–6.

- What does this story teach us about God?

God's people had to trust that rebuilding the walls was God's plan for them. They trusted that God would keep them safe while they obeyed Him. When God asks us to do something, He doesn't guarantee that it will be easy or that everyone will agree. **We can listen to God through His Word and trust that His words are true.**

- How do we show we trust in God?

When we trust God, we will obey Him—even when other people try to get us to stop. God's people knew that they needed to rebuild the wall, even when their enemies were surrounding them. God empowered them to continue, even in a difficult situation. God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

- 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.



TEACH the Story

MISSIONS MOMENT

Remind kids that the members of the Hite family are missionaries in Taiwan. Point out that every family is unique in its own way. One thing that makes the Hite family unique is that three of the children have special needs. God loves everyone, and everyone is an image-bearer of God. God's plan is to use everyone for His glory. Emphasize that in our Bible story, we learned that God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. God will use each of us, just like the members of the Hite family, if we are obedient to Him. Pray for the Hites.

PRAY

God, You have a plan for us. We praise You because You are faithful and trustworthy. We confess that sometimes we trust in ourselves instead of trusting in You. Help us remember that You are good and in control. 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.



APPLY the Story

Big Picture Question

Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Even when the walls were literally crumbling around the God's people, God had a plan to restore them and keep them safe. God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. God's plans are always good.

- Do you think God protects us today? Why or why not?
- In the past, have you experienced or seen evidence of God's protection? If so, when?

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 1. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 1:3-4. When Nehemiah heard that God's people were in danger in Jerusalem, he was sad. Nehemiah wanted to help, but he was in Persia—far from Jerusalem.

Choose another volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 1:3-4 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. What was the first thing Nehemiah did after hearing about Jerusalem?

Help kids find Neh. 1:4, which says Nehemiah “mourned and fasted and prayed.” Nehemiah had the greatest tool of all—prayer! We can approach every situation with prayer. God hears us when we pray. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Thess. 5:16-18.)

2. What feelings might prompt you to pray?

Suggest that kids can pray through all of their feelings—joy, sorrow, confusion, and so on. Point out that in his prayer, Nehemiah thanked God and praised Him. Nehemiah prayed even though he was sad and confused. God heard Nehemiah's prayers and answered them. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 34:17.)

3. What situation do you need to pray about this week? How can you remind yourself to “pray without ceasing”?

Encourage kids to share their thoughts. Emphasize that God wants us to pray about everything! God knows all things, but He welcomes us to come to Him with all of our questions, cares, and concerns. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col 4:2.)



APPLY the Story

KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Supplies: Bibles, 2 cookie sheets or lightweight cutting boards, puzzle (around 30 pieces)

Before the session, put the puzzle together and write the words of 1 Peter 5:10 in order on the back of the puzzle pieces. Break apart the puzzle and mix up the pieces. Then instruct kids to open their Bibles to 1 Peter 5:10. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Text.

Place one of the cookie sheets on a table and challenge the kids to assemble the puzzle with the words facing up. Put the second cookie sheet on top of the completed puzzle and flip it over so the kids can see the picture.

Tell kids that we can't always see the finished picture or plan for what happens in our lives, but God still calls us to obey Him. Even when we can't see the outcome, God gives us direction and reminds us that His plans are always good.

PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for always having a plan and asking Him to help kids trust Him and His good plan.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: Wall ball

Supplies: 2 large pieces of paper, paper balls (1 per kid)

Form two teams of kids. Choose two kids from each team to be goalies. Give each pair of goalies a large piece of paper to hold between them. Position the goalies on opposite sides of the room.

Give each player on the team a piece of scrap paper. At your signal, the teams should crumple up their scrap paper and throw it at the opposite team's goalies, with the goal being to get it behind the paper "wall." The goalies should try to block the incoming paper balls. If a paper ball makes it past the wall, kids may not retrieve it. Once a team throws all of the paper balls behind the walls, instruct the teams to count them. The team with the fewest paper balls behind its goal wins.

Point out that like the goalies tried to protect their team's side from the paper balls, Nehemiah and the Israelites built walls to protect Jerusalem. God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth, and He kept His people safe from their enemies.