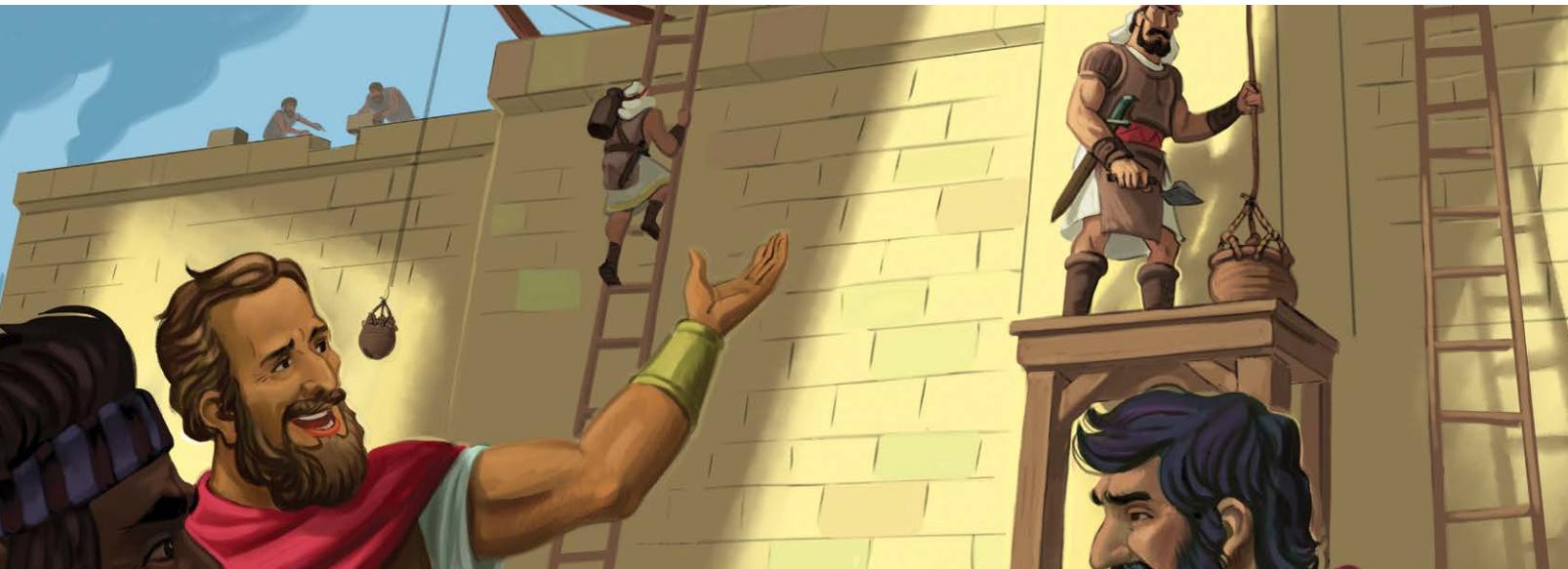


THE WALLS REBUILT

Nehemiah 1-6



When God's people were freed from exile, Nehemiah stayed behind in Persia and worked for the king. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. One day, Nehemiah heard that the people of God in Jerusalem were in trouble. The wall was broken down, and the gates were burned.

Nehemiah wept over the sad news about Jerusalem. He prayed to God, saying, "God, please hear my prayer for your people. I confess that we have sinned against you. Please forgive us and give me favor in the eyes of the king as I go to serve him."

King Artaxerxes noticed that Nehemiah looked sad and asked him what was wrong. Nehemiah told him that he was sad because Jerusalem was in ruins. The king said, "What is your request?" Nehemiah prayed and then said, "If it pleases the king, please send me to Jerusalem so that I may rebuild it." The king agreed to this request and provided wood for the building of the temple.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he spent time observing the walls and gates and planning what he should do. Then he went to all the people and said, "You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins. Come, let's rebuild the wall so we will no longer be shameful."

The people started building, but some enemies of God's people, Sanballat and Tobiah, were not happy. They planned to attack Jerusalem so the building would stop. So, the people prayed to God and appointed a guard to protect them day and night. They also had each builder carry a weapon with him to protect himself. In addition, they all carried ram's horns to blow if they were attacked, so that other workers would come help them.

Then Sanballat and Tobiah started telling lies about the people of God. They said God's people were rebuilding the wall because they planned to rebel against King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah said, "There is no truth to these rumors!" God's people did not allow these enemies to stop them from building.

The people completed the wall in 52 days. The nations were amazed, and they knew that the Lord had helped His people.

Christ Connection: God's enemies tried to stop His people, but they still rebuilt the wall. God's enemies tried to stop Jesus by killing Him, but God planned for Jesus' death and resurrection to be the only way for people to be saved.



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 worked on a project that was difficult or took a long time to complete?**
- **Did you ever feel like giving up? Why?**

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: HUMAN WALL

Form kids into two teams. Place a line of painter's tape across the floor and direct each team to line up on either side of the tape. Kids may not cross the line. Then direct one team to be the "wall." Tell the "wall" they are to keep paper balls from flying past them. They can use their arms or feet to stop the balls. Provide the kids on the other team with a piece of paper to crumple into a ball. On your start, direct them to throw their balls, trying to get them past the "wall." Count how many balls make it past the wall. Then lead teams to switch roles, allowing the paper ball throwers to become the wall and vice versa. Count the number of balls that made it past the "wall." The team who had the fewest number of balls make it past their "wall" wins.

SAY **“**Today, we will see how God's people rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem. The walls of a city were an important feature that offered protection and defense from enemy attacks. As God's people returned to Jerusalem, they desired to help their city become strong once again. **”**

OPTION 2: STONE, SWORD, SHIELD



Invite kids to form pairs and play a game of rock, paper, scissors, but replace the names with stone, sword, and shield. Explain that kids will make a fist for "stone" which beats "shield." Kids will hold out their pointer finger for "sword" which splits or beats a rock. And kids will hold their palm up for "shield" which deflects or beats a "sword."

Guide pairs to play three rounds of stone, sword, shield. Kids who win the best two out of the three rounds remain in the game, while their partner is out. Pair up the remaining kids and continue playing until only one kid remains.

SAY **“**The words stone, sword, and shield remind me of our Bible story. Today, we will see how God's people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. The people used stone to rebuild the walls, and they held swords to ward off their enemies while they built the walls. **EVEN THOUGH THEIR ENEMIES TRIED TO STOP THEM, GOD'S PEOPLE REBUILT THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM** because God acted like a shield, protecting His people. **”**



LEARN

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 led the people to rebuild the walls of 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 1–6.

•What does this story teach us about God?

Even though their enemies tried to stop them, God's people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. God raised up Nehemiah to lead God's people in rebuilding the walls. Nothing can stop or mess up God's plans!

•How did Nehemiah and the people respond to their enemies?

Read Nehemiah 2:20 aloud. Nehemiah told Sanballat and Tobiah that it would be the Lord who would allow them to succeed in building the wall. **Nothing or no one could keep God from helping His people rebuild the wall, just like nothing could stop God's plan of saving people from their sin.** The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through 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.

2 MISSIONS MOMENT

Phoenix is the capital city of Arizona in the United States. The city lies near the Salt River in the Sonoran Desert, and it is surrounded by mountains. It has a warm, sunny desert climate, and it's home to a professional basketball team, baseball team, and football team.

Tell kids that Brian Bowman, and his wife Brooke, live in Phoenix, Arizona. Share how they moved to Phoenix from Portland, Oregon, and in 2012, started a church called Valley Life. The people in Phoenix need to hear the good news about Jesus, and Valley Life is a church that wants to start more churches so more people can learn how Jesus saves people from their sin. Valley Life has already started six other churches, but they want to start more.

Pray, thanking God for the Bowman family and for Valley Life Church as they help people know about Jesus. Pray God will help Valley Life start more churches in the Phoenix area.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

God's enemies tried to stop His people, but they still rebuilt the wall. God's enemies tried to stop Jesus by killing Him, but God planned for Jesus' death and resurrection to be the only way for people to be saved. I'm happy to answer questions or tell you more about how you can trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

4 PRAY

Thank You, Lord, that we can know Your plans are good and will always succeed. You planned to save people from sin through Jesus, and we praise You for keeping this promise. Help us trust You and remember that You love us. 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. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.



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.



1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- Are we able to tell little lies, like for a surprise party or something?
- The gospel is the truth about how Jesus saves people from sin. Who can you share this truth with?

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 4. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 4:20.

Remind preteens that even though their enemies tried to stop them, God's people rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem because God was fighting for His people. Nehemiah and the people displayed their faith in God by continuing to work on the wall even though it might mean they would be attacked. They worked hard unto the Lord, believing that He had called them to this work, and He would help them complete it. Choose another volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 4:20 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

1. Before Nehemiah began rebuilding the walls, he went to God in prayer. Why do you think he did this?

Discuss how Nehemiah prayed before rebuilding the walls because he knew he needed God's help, wisdom, and strength to do such an important job. Nehemiah also prayed because he was sad for his people and wanted God to forgive them for their sins. Nehemiah trusted God and knew that prayer was the best way to begin any big task. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 6:18.)

2. What is something, big or small, you can pray about before you take action?

Answers will vary. Remind kids that God desires we come to Him in prayer, seeking His will in any situation. Encourage kids to recognize how prayer shows our dependence on God and invites us to cast all our cares on Him. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 4:2.)

3. What are some ways we can be encouraged when we face challenges, like Nehemiah and the people of God did as they built the wall?

Remind kids that the Bible tells us that as we follow Jesus, we will face hardships, but we can be encouraged knowing that God will give us everything we need to accomplish His will and purpose for our lives. We can also be encouraged by reminding ourselves that God has already won. One day, He will return and make all things right. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 16:33.)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION

What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.



THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 20:31. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together.

Lead preteens in memorizing the key passage that reminds them that God is faithful to provide us with the way to have eternal life.

Form kids into groups of two or three. Distribute sticky notes and a marker to each group. Direct kids to write out the key passage on the sticky notes, writing one word on each sticky note. Then, challenge kids to mix up the sticky notes and work together to put them back in the correct order. If time allows, challenge kids in each group to take turns arranging the notes in order by themselves to see who can do it the fastest.

2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, thanking God for His faithfulness, knowing that nothing can stop His good plans.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

NAME THAT BOOK

Form kids into two lines. Challenge the first kids in each line to answer a question about a book of the Bible such as: "Name a book of the Bible starts with a D," "Name one of the Gospels," or "Name a book of the New Testament that begins with an R". The first kid to shout out a correct answer earns a point for his team. Then, direct both kids to go to the back of their team's line. Continue playing as time allows or until each kid has had a chance to answer a question.

Remind preteens of the new big picture question: **What is the Bible about?** Ask who remembers the answer. Remind preteens that the Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus. As preteens continue to read each book of the Bible, they will be able to see more clearly how the whole Bible points to Jesus and God's plan to save sinners. Encourage preteens to continue reading God's Word throughout the week, thanking God for His good plan.