



9

Rebuilding the Walls

Key Theme

- God uses people to accomplish His perfect plans.

Key Passages

- Nehemiah 1:3–7, 2:1–6, 2:17–18, 4:7–9, 4:16–20

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify examples of Nehemiah's reliance on God.
- Describe the connection between trust in God and acting in faith.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will practice the memory verse by working on a crossword puzzle and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes

page 5

Students will fill out Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

page 5

The Lord allowed Nehemiah to find favor with the king so he could return to lead the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem. And despite much opposition, God blessed their efforts and protected the workers so that the wall was completed.



Activity 2: Pick a Point Review Game

page 10

Divide students into teams. As you ask lesson review questions, students will answer. They will have an opportunity to pick points of random values for each correct answer.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- ☐ Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Memory Verse Review Sheets for each student



REBUILDING THE WALLS CLASS NOTES

- ☐ Print one Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- ☐ Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets
- ☐ Quarter 4, Lessons 5 and 8 Theme Posters



PICK A POINT REVIEW GAME

- ☐ Print and cut apart the Pick a Point Game Point Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Put them into a bag or basket.
- ☐ Print one Pick a Point Questions Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use during the activity.

- ☐ Pick a Point Review Questions Sheet
- ☐ Pick a Point Game Point Cards
- ☐ Bag or basket to hold cards



Memory Verse

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

Nehemiah was another of the descendants of the Jewish exiles who found himself in the service of a Persian king. Just as the captivity of Judah came in three stages, the return to and restoration of Jerusalem was also in three phases. We have already learned about the first return in 538 BC as King Cyrus sent a group of Jews back to Jerusalem and the Temple was rebuilt. Then we learned about the second return of Ezra in 467 at the direction of King Artaxerxes. In this lesson, we will see how Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem in 454 to finalize the restoration of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's brother, who had likely gone with Ezra to Jerusalem about 13 years earlier, had returned from and given a report on the state of affairs there. Things were bleak. The people were in distress, they were being oppressed, and the walls around the city were in ruins (Nehemiah 1:1–3). At this news, Nehemiah was grieved. He fasted and prayed, asking God to forgive the sins of Israel. He recognized that God had redeemed Israel by His power and that it was only by God's hand that they could be restored (1:10). Nehemiah also knew that his prayers were to the God who held the heart of the king in His hand, and he cried out for favor in the eyes of the king.

After hearing the news of Jerusalem's sad state, Nehemiah appeared before the king. As the king's cupbearer, His job was to sample the wine and other beverages to ensure that they were not poisoned. So the life of the king was ensured by putting Nehemiah in harm's way. As Nehemiah served the king, his sadness was apparent and the king asked him for the reason (Nehemiah 2:1–2). Nehemiah shared his concern for Jerusalem, and when the king asked him for his request, Nehemiah prayed to God and then asked the king's permission to rebuild Jerusalem. The king said yes! Then Nehemiah asked for supplies to rebuild the walls and gates and for letters to the local governors to support the project. And the king said yes! Nehemiah knew that it was God's hand in the matter that these requests were granted. Nehemiah prayed and then acted, trusting God in both.

As Nehemiah set out for Jerusalem, he was accompanied by captains of the king's army and letters to the governors of the region. Sanballat and Tobiah were two of these leaders who did not want to see Jerusalem rebuilt (2:9–10). Nehemiah surveyed the task for sev-

eral days and then called the people to rebuild, even in the face of the mocking of the governors of the region. Nehemiah knew what God had called him to do, and he knew God would prosper the work.

Nehemiah 3 describes the work of rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem and lists all of the people involved in the work. The work began in early July (Ab) and was finished in September (Elul)—only 52 days after they had begun (Nehemiah 6:15). During this period of building, the Jews were harassed by Sanballat and the others who did not want to see Jerusalem rebuilt. They mocked and threatened the Jews, but Nehemiah cried out to God for protection and encouraged the people to persevere as they trusted God (Nehemiah 4:4, 4:9).

But Nehemiah did more than pray—he acted! He trusted that God would protect the Jews while they worked, but he also understood the people's responsibility to defend themselves. God uses people to accomplish His plans. Nehemiah knew this truth and knew that the threat of attack from Sanballat and the others was real and required a response (4:7–13).

Now, it is true that God acts in miraculous ways and that He could have killed the attacking armies just as He did the Assyrian army that encircled Jerusalem 250 years earlier (2 Kings 19), but that miraculous activity seems to be the exception rather than the expectation. God sent His people to battle many times, and He miraculously protected them many times. Nehemiah organized the people so that some would work while some would keep guard, and even those who worked had their weapons ready for battle (Nehemiah 4:14–23).

Prayer and action are not contrary to one another, but both are ways to demonstrate faith and trust in God. Even though Nehemiah and the others were prepared for battle, the credit for their safety and their accomplishments was always directed toward God (Nehemiah 4:14–15, 4:20, 6:9, 6:12, 6:16).

As we live as Christians today, God honors our prayers as well as our actions—the two should not be separated. If we are in need of money, to sit and pray for a miracle without being willing to work to meet our needs is not an attitude that honors Christ. However, we cannot fall into the opposite ditch of thinking that God only helps those who help themselves (a saying that many are surprised to learn is not in the Bible). Our responsibility to act and God's providence are both clearly presented in Scripture.

As we pray for the salvation of loved ones, we should also be speaking gospel truths to them and serving them in love. As we pray for the homeless in our

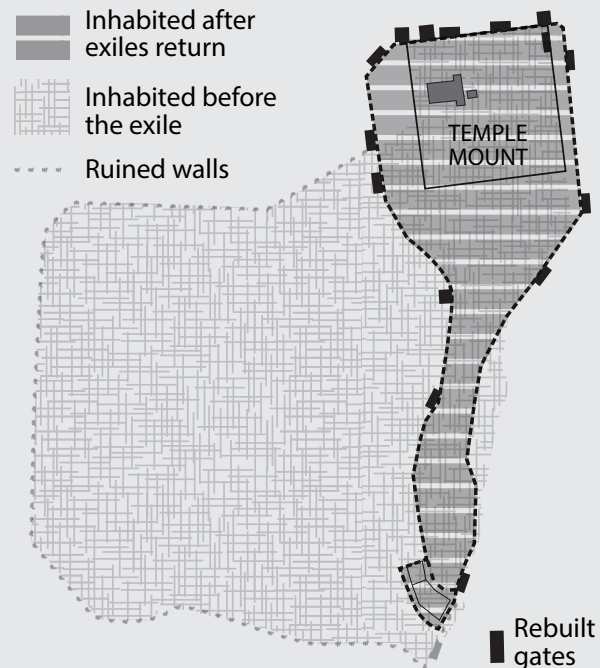
communities, we should also seek to meet their physical needs and offer them true hope in the gospel. As we pray for wisdom from God, we should be diligently seeking truth from His Word and counsel from others. Our prayers should not keep us from acting, nor should our actions keep us from praying. Both are demonstrations of our trust in God. God will accomplish His perfect plans through both.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As we have mentioned before, much archaeological evidence has been found that lines up with accounts from the Bible. That is exactly what we would expect from the trustworthy source of the Bible. Papyrus scrolls found in southern Egypt contain records from the time of Nehemiah. These Elephantine Papyri were recorded by a Jewish community there and were preserved in the dry climate to be discovered 1,200 years later. Within this collection is a letter to the Samaritan governor Sanballat. This is the same Sanballat who harassed the Jews as they sought to rebuild the walls. Also mentioned in these ancient documents is Jehohanan (Johanan), a leader mentioned in Nehemiah 6:18 and 12:23. These details in a source that is dated to the exact time of Nehemiah's return are a great confirmation of the truth we find in Scripture. God has given us a trustworthy revelation.

Why was Nehemiah so interested in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem? Walls were important for defense of ancient cities. Nehemiah recognized the need for the protection of the city and the Temple and for a place for the Jews to seek refuge under attack. The gates that had been burned and the sections of the walls that had been torn down left the Jews practically defenseless. In 2007, a portion of the wall constructed under Nehemiah's leadership was uncovered. Discoveries like these are consistent with the biblical accounts and give skeptics fewer and fewer reasons to doubt the truthfulness of Scripture. Of course, even without archaeological confirmations, we can trust the Word of the God who cannot lie.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

O great and awesome God. You keep your promises and show mercy to those who love you. My heart is heavy, and I pray earnestly for my students who are surrounded by the sin and evil of this cursed world. How I would love to surround them with a thick wall of protection, like the one that surrounded Jerusalem. Instead I pray for a spiritual protection that comes from the knowledge of your Word and a relationship with you. And I pray that you will bring them to the security and peace that only Your truth can bring. Lord have mercy on the next generation. Much of their lives is spent in godless pursuits. But you, Lord, can protect their impressionable minds. Use this lesson to get them excited about living a life dedicated to you. Holy Spirit, move in the lives of my students and in mine. Use us for your glory!



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes

MATERIALS

- ☐ Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Rebuilding the Walls Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will complete the class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work

ahead. I'll let you know when to fill something in.

After completing each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see how Nehemiah was able to lead the Jews in the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to the History of Israel Poster as you introduce this lesson. We have been talking about the Jews' return to Jerusalem after their 70 years in captivity. Refer to Lesson 5 Theme Poster. The first return came under the leadership of Zerubbabel when God moved King Cyrus to let some of the Jews go home. Refer to Lesson 8 Theme Poster. Then we read that God moved the Persian king Artaxerxes, and he allowed Ezra to lead more people home to Jerusalem. Ezra found that the

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

people Zerubbabel had taken back to Jerusalem were already falling into idolatry and sin. But God honored Ezra's prayers and brought the people to repentance. Ezra restored God's Law in Jerusalem.

And today, we will see that God brought one more group of Jews back to Jerusalem. This time He used Nehemiah. This was the final return, and it was 13 years after Ezra's return. God again used King Artaxerxes of Persia—like He had done in Ezra's day.

We will be reading about Nehemiah today—what he heard, what he did, and what he completed! Let's get started.

Our lesson today starts with some bad news—what Nehemiah heard about the people who had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Ezra. That is what we'll read now. This is the news Nehemiah received. We will be reading Nehemiah 1:3–7. *Choose students to read the verses.*

Nehemiah 1:3–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? First, tell me about verse 3. Who was this verse about? *Nehemiah 1:3. The survivors.*
That's right. This message was about the survivors in Jerusalem. Remember, Nehemiah was still in Persia. And this is about those Jews in Jerusalem.
- ? How were the survivors doing in Jerusalem? *Nehemiah 1:3. They were in distress and reproach.*
- ? The people were in distress. But why? Why were they upset? What did the messenger say about the walls around Jerusalem? *Nehemiah 1:3. The wall was broken down. The gates were burned with fire.*
- ? And what did Nehemiah do when he heard this news? *Nehemiah 1:4. He was sad. He wept and mourned.*
- ? Take a look at #1 on your class notes. Will someone read that? How will you complete it? *Assign a reader. Wept.*
- ? What else did Nehemiah do? *Nehemiah 1:4. He fasted and prayed to God.*
- ? That's right. Nehemiah's first reaction was to pray. Now will someone read #2 on your class notes? How will you finish that? *Assign a reader. Prayed.*
- ? Who was Nehemiah praying to? *Nehemiah 1:5. Lord God of heaven.*
- ? Which attribute of God are we reminded of when we think of God controlling kings' hearts and giving Nehemiah a way to go to Jerusalem to help? *Sovereign.*

SOVEREIGN

(Refer to Attributes Poster)

Discover the Truth

Nehemiah knew that things were not good in Jerusalem. He prayed to the God of Israel. He confessed the sins of the people to God. And he prayed that

God would grant him mercy before the king. Nehemiah wanted to return to Jerusalem to help his people in distress. But he needed the king's permission.

- ? Can someone say the memory verse we learned a few weeks ago? I'll give you a hint; it is Proverbs 21:1. *Have someone recite the verse, say it all together, or read it to them. Refer to the Memory Verse Poster if it is still in the room.*

That's right. The heart of the king is in the Lord's hand.
Let's see how God moves this king's heart!



READ THE WORD

We are going to read Nehemiah 2:1–6. Turn there in your Bibles. *Choose students to read the verses.*

Nehemiah 2:1–6

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What was Nehemiah bringing to the king? *Nehemiah 2:1. Wine.*
That's right. Nehemiah was very close to the king. He was the king's cupbearer.
- ? Now what did the king notice about Nehemiah? Look in Nehemiah 2:2. *Nehemiah looked sad.*
- ? The king asked Nehemiah why he was so sad. What did Nehemiah tell the king? It was something about Jerusalem—the city Nehemiah was from. Look in Nehemiah 2:3 and find the answer. *Nehemiah 2:3. The city of Jerusalem was in waste. The gates were burned with fire.*
Nehemiah had heard the bad news about Jerusalem. The news made him very sad. The city was in ruins and had been burned with fire.
- ? Then what did the king ask him? *Nehemiah 2:4. What do you request?*
- ? What did Nehemiah do right away? *Nehemiah 2:4. He prayed to God.*
- ? And after he prayed, what did Nehemiah ask for? *Nehemiah 2:5. To go back to Judah—to Jerusalem.*
- ? Why did Nehemiah want to return there? *Nehemiah 2:5. So he could rebuild the city wall.*
- ? And did the king allow Nehemiah to go? *Nehemiah 2:6. Yes. It pleased the king to send him.*
- ? Will someone read #3 on your class notes? How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Prayer.*
- ? And someone read #4 on your class notes. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. City.*
- ? And someone read #5 on the class notes. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Walls.*

Nehemiah 2:17–18

The king allowed Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem. When he got there he checked out the wall, the gates, and the people. God gave Nehemiah a plan, and Nehemiah shared that plan with the people. Let's read about that in Nehemiah 2:17–18. *Choose students to read the verses.*

- ? What did Nehemiah want to rebuild? *Nehemiah 2:17. The wall of Jerusalem.*
- ? Whose hand had been upon Nehemiah? *The hand of God!*
- ? And what did the people say after hearing Nehemiah's plan? *Nehemiah 2:18. Let's rise up and rebuild the walls.*
- ? Will someone read #6 on your class notes? How will you answer that? *God.*
- ? And how about #7? Someone read that. How will you answer it? *Rebuild.*

Discover the Truth

Nehemiah had heard the bad news that the city he loved was in ruins. He wanted to return to Jerusalem to fix the wall and the gates. But would the king let him leave? When the king asked Nehemiah what was wrong and what he wanted, Nehemiah prayed to God. Nehemiah trusted God to supply him with answers. And Nehemiah trusted and depended on God to help rebuild the wall. The king allowed him to go and the people agreed to help him with the wall. The rebuilding had begun.



READ THE WORD

This was a big job that required a lot of people! Many in the surrounding areas wanted to stop the building project. They made fun of Nehemiah and his helpers. Many tried to stop them from completing the wall. But Nehemiah would not stop. He trusted that God would lead him and protect him. And the whole time, Nehemiah continued to pray. Let's read Nehemiah 4:7–9 next. It's referring to the troublemakers—the people who were trying so hard to stop Nehemiah. *Read Nehemiah 4:7–9. Assign a reader.*

Nehemiah 4:7–9

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Nehemiah 4:7 tells about some of those around Jerusalem who were not happy about Nehemiah's building project. How did these people respond? It is at the end of the verse. *Nehemiah 4:7. They were very angry.*
- ? What did these people want to do? *Nehemiah 4:8. Attack Jerusalem and create confusion.*
- ? Nehemiah would not stop building. Instead who did the people turn to? *Nehemiah 4:9. God.*
- ? What plan did they come up with? *Nehemiah 4:9. They set a watch against the enemies.*

? Will someone read #8 on your class notes? How will you answer that?

Assign a reader. Angry.

? And will someone read #9? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Attack.*

The threat of attack was real. The people prayed. And God gave them a plan that would help them finish the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. What was the plan? We are going to find out right now. Turn to Nehemiah 4:16–20. We'll read that. *Assign readers. Read Nehemiah 4:16–20.*

Nehemiah 4:16–20

? It sounds like a great plan! Did you get it? Nehemiah started by splitting up his workers. Look at Nehemiah 4:16. How did he split them up? *Nehemiah 4:16. Half worked at construction. The other half had spears and shields, bows and armor.*

? What about those who worked on the wall? What did they do? Look at Nehemiah 4:17. *Nehemiah 4:17. They worked with one hand and carried a weapon in the other.*
All the builders carried their swords! Nehemiah wanted the people to be prepared if an attack came on the walls of Jerusalem.

? And if trouble did come, Nehemiah would warn everyone. What would the warning of danger be? *Nehemiah 4:20. The sound of trumpet.*

Yes. At the sound of trumpet the men and workers on the wall would come together and fight.

? Nehemiah believed someone would fight for them. Who was that? *Nehemiah 4:20. God.*

? Let's look at the class notes. Will someone read #10? *Nehemiah 4:18. Assign a reader. Swords.*

? They were ready! Who can read #11 for us? *Assign a reader. Trumpet.*

? And #12? Who can read that? *Assign a reader. Fight.*

Discover the Truth

Nehemiah trusted God to help him. He knew that God would fight for the people as they defended the rebuilding of the wall against their enemies. Nehemiah prayed to God for wisdom, guidance, and protection. And he got it! Thanks to God's protection and Nehemiah's plan, the threats and plots against the Jews were stopped. The re-building continued. God protected the work and it was finished!

In this account we see a man who prayed and trusted God AND took action in a very real way to protect his work. Prayer and action go together. We trust God to give us wisdom and protection, and then we do what we have to do in order to complete our jobs. Trusting God and acting in faith go hand in hand. The people in Nehemiah's day did both. They knew God would fight for them, but they were prepared to defend the rebuilding of the wall.





Pick a Point Review Game

MATERIALS

- ☐ Pick a Point Questions Sheet
- ☐ Pick a Point Game Point Cards in a basket or other container

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the children into teams of 4–5 students each. Have each team take turns answering a question. After each correct answer, let a member of the team draw a number card from the basket. If no one can answer the question, you may want to allow teams to look the answers up in their Bibles. Allow the first team to get the answer to draw a point!

The number of points on the cards will vary so the score will have nothing to do with how skilled one team might be. The effort to earn points will keep the students tuned into the game. Keep a list of the teams' points to determine the "winner" for the day. If time allows, repeat the questions!

OK. Now you are going to get into teams. This game is called "Pick a Point." Your team

will get a chance to answer a question. If you get the answer right, you will draw a point to see what that answer was worth! I'll keep score here on the board.

Get together with your team, and let's get started.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God worked the events in Nehemiah's life so that he would be permitted to return to the city of Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. God granted Nehemiah and his workers wisdom, protection, and guidance. Nehemiah and his workers relied on God to help them. And they acted on the wisdom God granted to them.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

In today's lesson we saw that Nehemiah was far away from Jerusalem when he heard about the trouble. The walls of the city were broken down and the gates were burned. Nehemiah relied on God to direct his way. He prayed when he heard about what was happening in Jerusalem. And God answered his prayer by moving in the king's heart to allow Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall which had been destroyed.

Nehemiah prayed and relied on God. But then he acted on what he thought God wanted him to do. As Nehemiah acted, he trusted that God would help him, fight for him, and permit him to finish the job of rebuilding the wall.

Prayer and action go together. We trust God to give us wisdom and protection and then we do what we have to do in order to complete our jobs. Trusting God and acting in faith go hand in hand. The people in Nehemiah's day did both. They knew God would fight for them, but they were prepared to defend the rebuilding of the wall.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God used Nehemiah to do something special for him. He used Nehemiah to accomplish His will. And God is still using people to accomplish His will. There will be times when we will know that God is calling us to do something. Oh, we won't hear His voice out loud, but we will know He wants us to serve Him. He may want us to buy a gift for someone. He may want us to call or visit someone who is sick or lonely. God may want you to be more loving at home to your family or your neighbors. Maybe He wants you to volunteer here at church or at school. I'm pretty sure if you are praying to God, reading your Bible, and trusting Him, you'll know when God is calling you to do something.

Following Him when you are young will prepare you to follow His call when you are older. Maybe one day, God will move you to teach a Sunday School class—like He did for me. Or go on the mission field, or something else! If you hear Him, if you think He is calling you to do something, don't ignore it. God can use all of us to accomplish His perfect plans. God used a lot of very ordinary men to do amazing things all throughout the Bible and through all of history.

He wants to use us. But like Nehemiah, we have to remember to pray, trust Him, depend on Him, and then listen to what He might be calling us to do. And, just as He did for Nehemiah, He will give us the strength, the plan, and the way to get it done for Him!



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God because He calls us to do good things, and He helps us do them!
- Thank God for speaking to our hearts through His Word and through prayer.
- Ask God to help us do the things He has called us to do and to trust Him when we are afraid.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.