

Nehemiah



The Book of Nehemiah



Old Testament 8
Part 2: Exile and Post-Exile

SUNDAY MORNING

Old Testament 8 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Nehemiah

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: “[D]o what is right and good in the sight of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:18a).

OLDER CHILDREN: “Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right” (Proverbs 20:11).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- [“Bow Your Head”](#)
- [“Three Good Men”](#)
- [“God Is Listening”](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP’s Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [The Divided Kingdom 2](#) Bible fact cards (provided under “O.T. 8 Bible Facts”)
- “Summary of the Bible” from [“Kids Prep”](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from any books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/ Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens’ felt pieces
- [“Maps of Babylonian and Persian Empires in Daniel’s Time”](#) (provided in map section of curriculum Web site)
- Ezra and Nehemiah A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)
- Invite a man from the congregation to dress up as Nehemiah and describe his efforts/struggles to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I need to remember that one person can make a difference by choosing to do the right thing (what God says is right) every time. With God's help, I can do things I might have thought were too hard or impossible.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

In our lesson last week, what happened when the Jews stopped reading and learning from God's Word? Who helped them by reminding them what God had to say?

Do you ever need help? What are some things you need help with? (Tying shoes, opening a container, fixing a toy that is broken, etc.) Today, we are going to learn how the Jews were trying to build a wall, but became very discouraged. Then one man came and told them they could do it together with God's help. Let's see what happened.

INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Review last week's lesson, focusing on the importance of making sure we read/study God's Word every day.

Have you ever tried to do something by yourself and then realized you really needed someone else's help? (Let children give examples of this.) Sometimes isn't it easier to do something with help? In our lesson today, we will learn how Nehemiah, with God's help, tackled a **huge** project! Let's see what happens.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Working in the palace of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, was a Jewish man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a special servant—a cupbearer. His job was to taste everything that the king drank before it was served (to make sure of the wine's quality and to make sure the wine had not been poisoned). Nehemiah had been born and raised as one of the many thousands of Jews in the Persian Empire, but he had been taught about the land of Palestine (Judea) and about God's Laws. He knew very well about the Jews who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.



NOTE: See **Historical Notes** from the previous lesson on Ezra. Some scholars believe that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book. The book of Nehemiah, which is written mostly in first person, contains several of his very personal prayers. Seventeen times the book mentions that Nehemiah and the people prayed to God.

2. Nehemiah's brother went to Jerusalem, and when he returned to Persia, Nehemiah was anxious to hear what the city and the Temple looked like. He was very sad and disappointed to hear that the city was still in ruins and that the gates and walls of the city still had not been repaired. Nehemiah was so upset that he cried, fasted, and prayed to God. He asked God to forgive the Jews for their failure to rebuild Jerusalem, and he asked God to help him find a way to go there to help.

3. Nehemiah had never been sad in the presence of the king before. But after hearing the bad news, he was sad in the presence of the king. The king noticed that Nehemiah was very sad (which apparently was dangerous—Nehemiah was “dreadfully afraid” that his sadness was noticed, 2:2) and asked him why. Nehemiah immediately prayed that God would help him say the right words to the king. Then he explained why he was so upset and asked for the king’s permission to go to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city. Nehemiah could have stayed in the comfort of the palace, but he wanted to give up his comfortable life to help his people, the Jews, in faraway Jerusalem.



NOTE: Comparing Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1, it is evident that four months passed between the time Nehemiah learned of Jerusalem’s condition and the day that his sad face was noticed by the king. [Relevant Jewish month sequence: Chislev, Tebeth, Shebat, Adar, Nisan]

4. King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah how long he would be gone, and Nehemiah told him how long he thought it would take. The king gave him permission to go **if** he would promise to return to the capital city (Shushan) when the work was completed. The king even gave Nehemiah important papers to prove that he was traveling under the king’s orders and protection. These papers would help Nehemiah get through dangerous territories and protect him from harm. The king also wrote a letter ordering that lumber and supplies be provided for Nehemiah to use in Jerusalem, **and** the king sent soldiers and horsemen with him to provide more protection.



NOTE: We are not told how long Nehemiah told the king he would be gone. It was likely a relatively small amount of time that had to be extended by permission from time to time, considering that he was governor of Judah for some 12 years (Nehemiah 5:14).

5. When Nehemiah finally arrived in Jerusalem, he and the soldiers with him rested for three days. Then one night he rode his horse around the city to get a good look at the city walls so he could decide exactly what needed to be done. The next day he called all the people together and told them that they could rebuild the walls of Jerusalem if they would work together and believe that God would help them. They agreed to begin work right away.
6. The idol-worshipping people around them did not want the Jews to finish rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Sanballat, governor of Samaria, and some other men, came to make fun of and discourage the Jews as they worked. These men even threatened to stop the work by force. But the Jews paid no attention to them. The men worked in shifts so that the rebuilding could continue night and day. While half of the men worked on the walls, the other half served as guards. They all wore their swords while they worked, and one man had a trumpet to blow in case there were enemy attacks.
7. “The people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6). The people worked so hard together that they were able to completely finish rebuilding the walls in only 52 days (less than two months)! Their enemies were amazed that the work could have been completed so quickly. Nehemiah and the other Jews thanked God for His help in this great work and asked for His continued help against their enemies.



NOTE: Notice the number of times the phrase “next to him” is repeated throughout chapter three, indicating that they worked side-by-side, united in purpose for the first time in many years.

8. Sanballat and the other enemies of the Jews accused Nehemiah of trying to make himself king of Judah, and they tried to trick him into coming out of the city walls so that they could kill him. But Nehemiah responded by praying to God, and God protected him.
9. Nehemiah was governor of Jerusalem for 12 years before returning to the king. (Later, the king allowed him to return to Jerusalem to stay.) While he was gone, the Jews turned away from God again. One of the men who served in the Temple even married the daughter of Sanballat, the wicked governor of Samaria who had caused the Jews so much trouble. When Nehemiah returned, he made the man leave the Temple. He wanted the Jews to always remember what God had done for them and to obey His Word, so he made sure that they heard the Law read by Ezra.



NOTE: Ezra is not mentioned in the book of Nehemiah until the walls were finished; he probably was not in Jerusalem when Nehemiah arrived. Apparently Nehemiah sent for him to come to Jerusalem and help teach the people.

10. When the people heard the Law read, they again promised to obey God. They celebrated the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Ingathering), and they heard the Law read each day for seven days. There were many other times that Nehemiah (and Ezra) had to teach the people how to live according to God’s Law. They were important teachers and leaders for the Jews.
11. We probably will never have to work on a project as big as the rebuilding of a city, but we have many things happening in our lives every day that we can (and should) talk to God about. We have to make many decisions and choices, just as Nehemiah did. We need to remember that one person—with God’s help—can make a difference!

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

Ages 2-5:

- [“Nehemiah Coloring Sheet”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- Let children “build the walls of Jerusalem” with large building blocks, or shoe boxes covered in brown butcher paper. Talk with them about the importance of cooperation, individual effort, and attitude as they work.
- Use paper plates to make a sad face and a happy face, one on the front of the plate and one on the back. Explain how Nehemiah was sad and happy. After the story, give examples from the story of when Nehemiah was sad and happy. As you read each example, ask the children to use the faces on their plates to show if Nehemiah was happy or sad during each situation.
- Let the children use graham crackers and icing to build a four-walled structure on a paper plate. (The kids will likely want to eat their “buildings”!)
- On a half sheet of card stock (or a styrofoam tray), print/write the words, “I will choose to do what is right.” Take each child’s picture with an instant camera, and tape or glue the pictures on the card stock. Let them decorate the card stock with stamps, stickers, markers, etc. Attach ribbon or yarn to the back of the card stock so the picture can be hung. (“[I Will Choose To](#)

[Do What Is Right' Activity](#)” provided in activity sheets)

1st-2nd Graders:

- Memory work exercise: Ask the children to sit in a circle. Repeat the memory verse several times with them. Say the first word of the verse and then pass a ball (or beanbag, or some other object) from child to child as each one adds a word of the verse. Continue around the circle until the entire verse is said two or three times. Continue this exercise with other memory verses from this unit.
- [“Nehemiah Questions and Word Search Activity”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
- “Bible Jeopardy”: Using information from all the lessons in this unit, write review questions (some more difficult than others). Assign point values to the questions, making the harder questions worth more. Put the questions into jars or bags by category and value. Divide the class into two teams. Members of each team take turns choosing a question and then trying to answer it. ([O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) provided on Web site)
- Memory Game: Write the names of characters from this unit (and something about each one) on index cards. Shuffle the cards and turn them face down, spreading them out. The children should try to match the cards by turning over two cards at a time—the person and what he/she did. If a match is found, the child keeps it. Play until all matches have been found. (You may want to make enough sets to divide the class into groups to make the game go faster.) ([“Memory Game Activity”](#) provided in activity sheets)

3rd-4th Graders:

- Memory work exercise: Ask the children to sit in a circle. Repeat the memory verse several times with them. Say the first word of the verse and then pass a ball (or beanbag, or some other object) from child to child as each one adds a word of the verse. Continue around the circle until the entire verse is said two or three times. Continue this exercise with other memory verses from this unit.
- [“Nehemiah Questions and Word Search Activity”](#) (provided in activity sheets)
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- Have the children read the following:
 - Nehemiah. [This could be assigned Sunday, to be completed by Wednesday.] Print out copies of the Nehemiah quizzes from AP’s [Advanced Bible Reader](#) site for the children to take.
 - *Why Did Nehemiah Work So Hard?* by Pauline Youd, Wonder Books
 - *Nehemiah’s Greatest Day*, by Penny Frank, The Lion Story Bible
 - *Nehemiah: Builder for God*, by Neil M. Ross, A Bibletime Book, Christian Focus Publications (DISCLAIMER: p. 29—skip the first paragraph, which starts with “We, too...”)
 - *Nehemiah’s Greatest Day*, by Penny Frank, The Lion Story Bible, Lion Publishing (DISCLAIMER: p. 16—change “to even keep out a fox” to “to hold a fox”)

SONGS:

“BOW YOUR HEAD” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*
(Tune: “Taps”)

Bow your head, close your eyes,
Send a prayer, send a prayer to the skies.
God is list’ning above.
God is love.

“THREE GOOD MEN” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*
(Tune: “Three Blind Mice”)

Three good men, three good men,
Came back home, came back home.
The Temple was repaired by Zerubbabel,
The Law was repeated by Ezra, and
Then Nehemiah rebuilt the walls.
They’re three good men.

“GOD IS LISTENING” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook
(Tune: “Frère Jacques”)

God is listening, God is listening, (put your hand to your ear)
While we pray, while we pray, (put hands together as if to pray)
Bow your head so lightly, (bow your head)
Close your eyes so tightly, (close your eyes)
Let us pray, let us pray.

*Author Unknown: Please contact us through the feedback button for this lesson if you are aware of any copyright information for this song.

*** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.



Nehemiah

BONUS LESSON

The Book of Nehemiah



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WEDNESDAY EVENING

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PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I need to remember that one person can make a difference by choosing to do the right thing (what God says is right) every time. With God's help, I can do things I might have thought were too hard or impossible.

INTRODUCTION:

Review [O.T. 8 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 8 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

Review Sunday's lesson. (See [O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) for example questions.)

Talk to the children more about the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Ingathering). This feast was the last of the yearly festivals that were sacred to the Jews. It began five days after the Day of Atonement and lasted for eight days; it marked the end of the harvest. During this Feast, the Jews would live in booths and tents to remind themselves of the long journey of their ancestors through the wilderness, after leaving slavery in Egypt. It was also a time of thanksgiving to God for their harvest. [To harvest the grapes from local vineyards, entire villages would move into the vineyard and live in tents or shelters because the harvest had to be done quickly. They had to work together to have a successful harvest, just as Nehemiah and the other Jews had to work together to successfully complete the walls of Jerusalem.]

YOUNGER CHILDREN: Provide the children with large craft sticks, cutout "leaves," and clay. Give each child a styrofoam tray (or sturdy paper plate) and help them make a three-sided foundation for their "booths" using the clay. Then help them put craft sticks side by side in the clay, standing upright, to form three walls for the structure; put on the roof of leaves. If you have small pumpkins or other foods that remind the kids of fall, they can also be added around the shelter. This feast was important to the Jews because it reminded them of how God gave them their crops, food, etc. It was a time to be thankful, similar to our Thanksgiving Day in the U.S.

OLDER CHILDREN: Play "Bible Basketball" with review questions from each of the lessons in this unit. Write review questions on index cards and separate into "2 point" and "3 point" piles. Divide the class into two teams. As it's his turn, a student selects the point value of his question, and tries to answer it. If he answers correctly, his team receives that many points. If he answers incorrectly, the other team gets a chance to answer and receive the points if answered correctly. (This is even more fun if you can bring an indoor basketball goal to class.)

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- See Sunday morning's lesson.

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