

Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 1–2

MAIN POINT: Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful.

SMALL GROUP OPENING (15–20 MINUTES) **LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY** (10–15 MINUTES) **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES** (20–25 MINUTES)
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Nehemiah was a Jew living in Persia. He served as the king's cupbearer, a position of great trust; the cupbearer made sure no one poisoned the king's drink. Sometimes the cupbearer even tasted some of the drink himself to ensure it was safe.

When the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, King Cyrus allowed God's people to return to Judah. Two or three million Jews had originally been deported, but only a remnant—50,000 people—returned. They set up their homes and rebuilt God's temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah's story takes place after Ezra led a second group of exiles back to Judah.

Nehemiah received word about God's people who had returned to Judah. They were in trouble and living in shame; the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the city gates were burned. They lived in fear, unprotected from their enemies. Nehemiah sat down and wept.

Nehemiah fasted and prayed for days. He remembered God's promise to His people. Their disobedience led to exile, but if they turned back to the Lord, their obedience would lead to blessing. God promised to restore their fortunes and give His people a home. (See Deut. 30:1-10.)

The king noticed Nehemiah's sadness, and Nehemiah was afraid. No one was supposed to be sad in the presence of the king; it was an insult to his greatness. Nehemiah explained the plight of his city. The king granted him leave and gave him letters to ensure his safe passage. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. He encouraged the people to rebuild the walls and stood confidently against opposition.

This story is the beginning of Nehemiah's work to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. As you teach preschoolers, point out that Nehemiah trusted God's promise to give His people a home. When we repent and trust in Jesus, we can trust His promise to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, where we will be with Him forever. (See John 14:3.)



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The BIBLE STORY

Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1–2

Long ago, a **man named Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) lived in Persia.** Persia was the place where many of God’s people stayed after they were freed from Babylon. Some of God’s people went home to their country called Judah. **Nehemiah was one of God’s people. Nehemiah had an important job in Persia. He served the king.**

One day, some men came from Judah. Nehemiah asked them, “How are God’s people doing? Are the people who live in the city of Jerusalem OK?”

The men had bad news. **“The people are in trouble,” they said. “The walls around the city are broken down, and the gates have been burned down.”**

This was very bad news! Without a wall, the people could not protect themselves from their enemies. **Nehemiah** was sad. He **sat down and cried.** He prayed to God for several days.

When **Nehemiah prayed,** he said, **“God, please hear my prayer. Your people have sinned. We have disobeyed You.”**

Then Nehemiah asked God to remember His promise. **Many years before, God told Moses, “If you turn away from me, I will scatter you.”** And that is what happened! **God’s people had turned away from God, and He scattered them far away from their homes. But God had also said, “If you come back to Me and do what I say, I will bring you back home.”** Nehemiah wanted God to keep that promise.

The king saw that Nehemiah was sad. “What’s wrong, Nehemiah?” the king asked. “Why are you sad?”

Nehemiah was afraid. The king was an important man. Everyone who was with the king was supposed to be happy. **Nehemiah told the king, “The city where my family is from is in trouble. The walls around the city are broken, and the gates have been burned down.”**

“What do you want to do?” the king asked.

Before Nehemiah answered, he prayed. Then he said to the king, “Please send me to Jerusalem so I can rebuild the city.” The king agreed, and he gave Nehemiah everything he needed.

When he was in Jerusalem, Nehemiah went out to look at the walls in the middle of the night. When he was done, Nehemiah told the people there, “We are in trouble. The city is broken, and the gates have been burned. Let’s rebuild Jerusalem’s wall.”

Nehemiah told the people how God had helped him. He told them everything that the king of Persia had said and done to help him. The people said, “Let’s start building,” and so they did.

Christ Connection: God promised to keep His people safe and give them a home. God always keeps His promises. Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
MORE!**

In vite preschoolers to check out this week’s devotionals to discover that Nehemiah remembered God’s power and faithfulness when he asked God for help. (Neh. 1:5) God later sent Jesus to rescue us from sin. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 1–2

MAIN POINT: Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22–23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful.

Welcome time

- “God Keeps His Promises” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “Why Did It Happen?” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Lead preschoolers to examine the pictures. Guide children to draw a line connecting the picture on top to the picture below that shows what happened before.

SAY • Actions have consequences. God’s people had turned away from God, so God scattered them far away from their homes. But God had also said, “If you come back to Me and do what I say, I will bring you back home.” Listen to today’s Bible story to find out if God’s people came back to Him.

Play a remembering game

Invite preschoolers to sit in a circle on the floor. Ask a question, such as, “What is your favorite food?” “What is your favorite toy?” or “What is your favorite color?” After



each child has answered, ask a preschooler if he remembers another child's answer. Assure preschoolers that it is OK if they don't remember. Give prompts as needed. Continue asking questions and asking preschoolers if they remember each other's answers as time allows.

SAY • Remembering can be hard. In today's Bible story, Nehemiah reminded God of a promise He made. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful.*** Listen to today's Bible study to hear how God kept His promise.

Sample drinks like a cupbearer

Provide bottled water and powdered drink mixes. Invite a preschooler to assist you in adding the drink mix to water. Seal the bottle tightly and invite her to shake the bottled water to mix the drink. Pour a small amount of drink in small cups for preschoolers to sample. Repeat the process with several drink flavors.

SAY • Today's Bible story is about a man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was the king of Persia's cupbearer. A cupbearer made sure no one put anything bad in the king's drink. Sometimes the cupbearer even tasted some of the drink himself to make sure it was safe.

- bottled water
- powdered drink mixes
- small cups
- Allergy Alert download

Transition to Bible study

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to put their hands over their ears to make listening ears as they move to Bible study.

- countdown video (optional)

Large Group LEADER

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Introduce the Bible story

- broken bowl

Display a broken bowl for preschoolers to see.

Tip: Be careful of sharp edges.

SAY • Can this broken bowl hold anything? No. When things are broken, they cannot do what they are meant to do. Jerusalem’s walls were broken down. Without a wall, the people were not protected from their enemies.

Watch or tell the Bible story

- bookmark
- Bible
- “Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem” video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Place a bookmark at Nehemiah 1 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • The Bible is God’s Word. Every word in the Bible is true. Today’s Bible story comes from Nehemiah.

Show the Bible story video “Nehemiah Heard News of Jerusalem,” or tell the Bible story in your own words using the script provided. Use the bolded version for younger preschoolers.

Talk about the Bible story

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

SAY • Nehemiah was sad to hear that Jerusalem’s walls were broken. **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people.** God did help His people! He made a

way for Nehemiah to go home and lead the people to rebuild the city.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. What news did Nehemiah hear about Jerusalem?
(*The walls around the city were broken down, and the gates had been burned down.*)
2. What did Nehemiah do when he heard that Jerusalem was in trouble? (*He cried and prayed.*)
3. What had God promised to do if His people came back to Him and did what He said? (*God would bring them back home.*)
4. What did the king do to help Nehemiah rebuild Jerusalem? (*sent him there with everything he needed*)

Learn the big picture question

SAY • *Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful.* God promised to keep His people safe and give them a home, and He did. Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.

• Big Picture Question Poster

Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Lamentations 3:22-23. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, “Great, Great, Great.”

• Key Passage Poster
• “Great, Great, Great” song

SAY • Nehemiah was right; God’s people had disobeyed God. Our key passage reminds us that God’s mercies never end. God was merciful to His people and made a way to bring them back home.

Transition to small groups

Small Group ACTIVITIES

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Sing prayer requests

Invite preschoolers to sit in a circle. Ask one preschooler at a time to share a prayer request. Explain that you will pray by singing to God. Sing the following song to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

“I can pray, I can pray, I can pray to God.

[sing prayer request here]

God is always faithful.”

Sing and pray for each child’s prayer request.

SAY • Nehemiah heard that God’s people were in trouble, so he prayed. When we hear what is going on with people, we can pray for them too. Praying for someone is the best way you can help them because when you pray, you are asking God to help them.

Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people. God promised to keep His people safe and give them a home. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful.*** Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.

Sort emotions

Print and cut apart several copies of the “Emotions” printable. Tape one of each emotions card to the outside of a basket or bin. Invite preschoolers to sort the emotion cards. Guide preschoolers to make a face that expresses each emotion as they sort.

- “Emotions” printable
- baskets or bins
- tape

SAY • Nehemiah was sad when he heard about Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was afraid when the king noticed he was sad, but then he was happy because the king sent him to help God’s people. **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people**, and God sent Nehemiah to help them. God promised His people a home. God always keeps His promises. Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.

Look for holes

Before the session, cut out hole shapes from black construction paper. Tape the “holes” in various spots around the room. Hide some holes and place others in plain sight. Dim the lights. Give each preschooler a flashlight. Invite preschoolers to use their flashlights as they search the room for holes.

- black construction paper
- scissors
- tape
- flashlights, 1 per child

Tip: Cover windows to darken a brightly lit room.

SAY • Nehemiah went out to look at the walls of Jerusalem in the middle of the night. Nehemiah told the people, “We are in trouble. The city is broken, and the gates have been burned. Let’s rebuild Jerusalem’s wall.” Nehemiah told the people how God had helped him. The people said, “Let’s start building.” **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people**, and God did!

- various broken or damaged items
- tape or other repair tools

Fix things that are broken

Gather damaged or broken classroom items such as books, toys, puzzles, or posters. Invite preschoolers to help you repair the broken items. If damaged or broken items are unavailable, you may rip apart paper plates or print pictures to rip apart. Provide tape for preschoolers to tape the items back together.

SAY • Nehemiah prayed that God would help His

people. The walls around Jerusalem were broken and needed to be fixed. God promised to keep His people safe and give them a home. God always keeps His promises. Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.

Make a God's promises jar

- Bible
- plastic jars, 1 per child
- "God's Promises" printable, 1 per child
- scissors
- markers
- stickers
- self-adhesive labels

Provide a plastic jar and a copy of the "God's Promises" printable for each preschooler. Guide preschoolers to cut out their promise cards while you read each one. Show preschoolers where each promise is found in the Bible.

Preschoolers may decorate the back of their promise cards with markers and their jars with stickers. Write *God's Promises to [child's name]* on a self-adhesive label to place on each preschoolers' jar. Invite preschoolers to fold up the cards and place them in their jars.

SAY • God always keeps His promises. We can remember God's promises like Nehemiah did, and then we can watch God keep them! **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people.** God promised to keep His people safe and give them a home. Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.

Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Serve crispy rice marshmallow treats for snack. Lead preschoolers to set the snack on its side to resemble a wall. Remind children that even though Jerusalem's walls were broken down, God promised to keep His people safe and give them a home. God always keeps His promises. Jesus died on the cross for our sin so we can have a home with Him. When we trust in Jesus, we will be with God forever.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

Transition

When a child finishes his snack, guide him to throw away any trash. He may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of a time they can pray. Remind preschoolers that **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people**. God answered Nehemiah's prayer and sent Nehemiah to help the Jews rebuild their wall. Pray for the children.

SAY • God, thank You that You hear us when we pray. You are always here to help us. Thank You for sending Jesus so we can have a home with You forever. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- *Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers*