

Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 3:1–6:16

MAIN POINT: God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

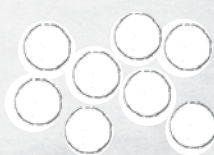
SMALL GROUP OPENING
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 174



LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 176



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 182



4

Leader BIBLE STUDY

When the Babylonians took God's people to Babylon, they destroyed Jerusalem. God's people returned years later to rebuild the temple, but when they faced opposition in rebuilding the rest of Jerusalem, they stopped. Some 70 years passed, and the walls and gates around the city were still ruined.

City walls and gates were very important in Bible times. Walls were built to be several feet thick. They protected a city from its enemies and provided a sense of safety and security. Gates were the center of city life, the meeting place for commercial and social transactions. Without these structures, the surviving remnant of God's people struggled

and was vulnerable to attack.

Nehemiah traveled from Persia to Jerusalem to lead the effort in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. Nehemiah's leadership was effective. Nehemiah 3 describes all the people working together to rebuild the gates and walls.

But it wasn't long before Nehemiah met opposition from local governors who planned to attack God's people. God's people armed themselves and kept working. They completed the wall in just 52 days.

Note how their enemies reacted: "All the surrounding nations were intimidated and lost their confidence, for they realized that this task had been accomplished by our God" (Neh. 6:16).

Now God's people were protected from their enemies. Help kids see that God provided the way for us to be protected from our enemies, sin and death. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. When we repent and trust in Jesus, He frees us from sin and death. We still sin, but we are no longer slaves to sin. (See Rom. 6:17-18.) We may die a physical death as a result of sin, but we have eternal life. (See John 11:25-26; Rom. 6:23.)

4



MINISTRY GRID
training made simple

Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt

Nehemiah 3:1–6:16

Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) **went to Jerusalem to help the people rebuild the city walls. The people started working together to fix the walls and the burned-down gates.** The walls and gates had special names. Some of the people worked on the Fish Gate. The Fish Gate was the entrance to the fish market. Some people worked on the Sheep Gate; this gate led to the place men gathered to sell sheep. Others worked on the Valley Gate, the Old Gate, and the Horse Gate.

The workers put in doors, bolts, and bars. They cut stones and lifted them into place on the wall, and they filled in gaps and holes. All around the city, people worked side by side. Soon the wall was half as tall as it had once been!

Not everyone was happy that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt. **Some men who lived nearby were angry. Sanballat** (san BAL uht) **and Tobiah** (toh BIGH uh) **mocked the people. Sanballat said, "What do these people think they are doing? These walls are just piles of trash and dirt. They can't be rebuilt!"**

Nehemiah prayed. 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 assigned men to guard the walls all day and all night, but they were discouraged. "Our enemies are everywhere," they said.

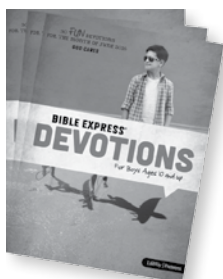
Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. "Do not be afraid. God is great and powerful!" Nehemiah said. "Be ready. **If our enemies attack us, God will fight for us!**" Sanballat and Tobiah could threaten

God's people, but they could not make God's people stop building. Sanballat and Tobiah 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 of God's people while they worked. He helped them solve any problems they had, and he did not give in to their enemies. **The people kept working very hard. 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 enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that enemies tried to stop God's people from building. Nehemiah and the Jews trusted in God. We can trust in God to save us.

(Ps. 56:3)

Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 3:1–6:16

MAIN POINT: God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Ask kids how they were helped or encouraged by someone else this week.

SAY • God has put many people in our lives to encourage and help us. Can you imagine trying to do everything all by yourself? God designed us to need other people; He wants us to live life together. We have lots of opportunities to remind each other of God's goodness, and we can encourage one another to trust God.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Timed Art" on the activity page. Set a stopwatch or timer and challenge them to draw a favorite animal in 10 seconds. Then allow 2 or 3 minutes for kids to draw the same animal in the second frame.

SAY • Which of your drawings looks better? Why? Which drawing did you work harder on? In today's Bible story, God's people worked very hard to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem.

- "Timed Art" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers
- stopwatch or timer

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Materials list

Draw three columns on a dry erase board. Label the columns with the following activities: *doing math homework*, *planting a garden*, and *building a birdhouse*.

Invite the kids to list materials or tools they would need to complete the tasks. Write their ideas in each column.

SAY • Today we will hear a Bible story about the Israelites rebuilding the city wall around Jerusalem. They needed many tools to complete this task, but most importantly they needed God's help! Their enemies didn't want them to finish building the wall, so they relied on God to give them success in their work.



- dry erase board or chalkboard
- dry erase marker or chalk

OPTION 2: Block pass relay

Form two teams of kids and instruct each team to form a single-file line. Pile 24 blocks at one end of each line. Explain that each team will pass the blocks one at a time down the line. The last player in line should use the blocks to build a wall for their team. The first team to use all their blocks wins.

SAY • Today we will hear the story of how **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls**. No one could manage to rebuild the walls on his own! The people needed to work together to complete this big task.

God often calls us to do difficult things that we can't do on our own, but God always gives us what we need. We can rely on Him and fellow believers to accomplish His plan!

- blocks, 48

Option: Use two different colored sets of 24 blocks. Teams will work together to build one wall. After a set amount of time, the team with the most blocks in the single wall wins.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 3:1–6:16

MAIN POINT: God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• large gym bag
• Bible

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a track suit and carrying a large gym bag. Leader sets the gym bag on the floor and pulls out a Bible.]

LEADER • Welcome back, boys and girls! It is wonderful to see you all here today. Do you remember what kind of race I've been training for? That's right, a triathlon. There are three different parts to a triathlon: swimming, biking, and running. It's not easy to complete such a big race, and I need a lot of help from my friends! I can easily get discouraged when I try to do all my training by myself. My friends encourage me to keep going when I get tired and feel like giving up. How do your friends encourage you when you feel like quitting?

That reminds me of our Bible story today. We will hear how **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls**. Rebuilding so

much of the city was a huge task, and Nehemiah knew he couldn't do it alone. He needed the help of all the people living in Jerusalem. They also needed God's help to complete such a big job!

God's Word is such a gift. It encourages me to keep going when I am tired because it shows me that God is good and in control.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Last week, we learned about Nehemiah. He was the cupbearer for the king of Persia. Nehemiah heard news from people living in Judah that Jerusalem's wall and gates had been destroyed. Without a city wall to protect them, the Jews were vulnerable to attack from their enemies. Something had to be done, so **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls.**

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Does anyone remember the big picture question we've been trying to answer the last few weeks?
Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not. Today we will see God's faithfulness to His people as they relied on His protection to help them rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Nehemiah 3:1–6:16. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt."

LEADER • **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls.** God had a plan

• Bibles
• "Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

for the city of Jerusalem to be restored, and no one could stand in His way! Nehemiah trusted God to protect His people, and he encouraged the Jews to trust God too. Rather than giving in to fear, they prayed for God to take care of them. God answered their prayers!

Do you ever get discouraged or afraid? Sometimes we need friends like Nehemiah who can remind us of God's faithfulness. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.***

Did you know that, like the Jews, we need protection too? Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.

Our biggest enemy, sin, can't be kept away by a wall because sin is inside our hearts. We must rely on Jesus to protect our hearts from sin and to cleanse us from the inside out! You don't have to be afraid of sin because Jesus has come to save you! You can trust that when you put your faith in Jesus, He will forgive your sin!

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Lamentations 3:22-23.

- Key Passage Poster
- “Your Faithfulness” song

LEADER • Remember, *mercy* is not getting the punishment you deserve. We are all sinners and deserve to be punished, but God shows us so much mercy! How did God show mercy to the Jews? He did not let their enemies attack them as they worked to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls. The people prayed for God to protect them, and God answered their prayers.

How does God show us mercy every day? He doesn’t strike us down when we sin. In fact, He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve for our sin so that we can be forgiven and live with Him forever! Every day, God gives us grace—good gifts we don’t deserve—like air to breathe, sunshine to enjoy, friends and family, and so much more.

Lead boys and girls to sing “Your Faithfulness.”

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • God’s people worked hard to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls. Do you always work hard at the projects or jobs you have to do? Let’s watch this video.

- “Unit 18, Session 4” discussion starter video

Show the “Unit 18, Session 4” discussion starter video.

Guide kids to discuss which kid could be more proud of her painting—the one who worked hard and did it the right way or the one who rushed through and finished faster?

Prompt kids to answer the following questions:

- Are you ever tempted to take shortcuts or only give a little effort to a task? Why?
- How do you feel when you work hard and are successful?

- Why should we try our best at everything we do?

LEADER • God wants us to work hard and do the right thing as an act of worship to Him.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • I love to hear stories from the Bible about God's faithfulness to His people because it reminds me of the ways that God has shown His faithfulness to me! That always makes me want to praise God. Let's stand and worship Him together by singing!

Sing together "He Rescues and Delivers."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for the story of Nehemiah encouraging Your people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. You are always faithful. We confess that we are not always faithful to You. Forgive our sin, Lord. Thank You for Jesus, who was faithful in every way that we are not. We look to Him alone for our salvation. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

• "He Rescues and Delivers" song

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 3:1–6:16

MAIN POINT: God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: Lamentations 3:22-23

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- blocks
- masking tape or adhesive labels
- marker

Write the key passage in words or phrases on adhesive labels or pieces of masking tape. Apply the labels to a set of blocks. Create two sets.

Form two groups of kids. Instruct each group to work together to build a wall by putting the key passage in order. When kids finish, show the key passage poster. Guide them to read it aloud and check their work.

SAY • What was easy about working together to build your wall? What was difficult? **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.** Working with other people is not always easy, but throughout God's Word we are reminded that He created us to be in community with others and to work together! We need each other to fulfill God's purposes.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Invite the kids to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 3:1–6:16. Point out that the Book of Nehemiah is in the Old Testament. Guide kids to see what books come before and after Nehemiah. (*Ezra and Esther*) Ask for a few kids to

share some details they remember from the Bible story.

SAY • Raise your hand if you had heard this Bible story before today. **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.** Whether you've heard a Bible story one time or a hundred times, there is always something new that we can learn. God's Word is living and active, so there is always more that God can reveal about Himself through what we read in Scripture! Let's review some of the details from today's story.

Ask the following review questions. If kids don't know an answer, guide them to look up the Scripture reference in their Bibles and read the verse or passage aloud.

1. Where did Nehemiah live before going back to Jerusalem? (*Persia, Neh. 2:1*)
2. Why did Nehemiah travel to Jerusalem? (*to lead the people to rebuild the city walls and gates, Neh. 2:5*)
3. True or false: Everyone was happy that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt. (*False, some men who lived nearby were angry; Neh. 4:1-3*)
4. What men opposed the Jews building the wall? (*Sanballat and Tobiiah, Neh. 4:1-3*)
5. What did the Jews do when their enemies opposed them? (*They prayed for God to help them, Neh. 4:4-5*)
6. How did Nehemiah encourage the people? (*He reminded them that God is powerful and would fight for them against their enemies, Neh. 4:14*)
7. How many days did it take to complete the wall? (*52, Neh. 6:15*)
8. **Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.**

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



LOW PREP

- paper
- pencils

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: In-person interview

Help the kids think about the Bible story from different points of view. Encourage them to work with a partner and conduct in-person interviews. One kid will play the part of the interviewer while the other will choose a person from the story. (Suggestions: Nehemiah, Sanballat, Tobiah, other Jews building the wall, children of Jerusalem, and so forth)

Prompt the interviewers to ask questions and write down the answers. Guide the interviewee to imagine how the Bible times person might answer:

- How did you feel about the walls being rebuilt?
- Were you involved in the rebuilding process?
- Did God help His people? How do you know?

SAY • God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. Imagine how different people experienced the rebuilding process.

Remember, the stories in the Bible actually happened. These were real people who experienced God's faithful protection and blessing!

OPTION 2: Construction stations

Set up stations around the room, each equipped for a group of three or four kids. Supply each station with blocks, poster board, scissors, and markers.

Form groups of three or four kids and assign each group to a station. Explain that kids should use the provided supplies to build a gate—an opening in a city wall—complete with a plaque identifying the gate's name.

Remind kids that in Bible times, a gate was an entrance into a city. Gates helped protect a city from enemy attack and were important places where people met to do business

- blocks
- poster board
- markers
- scissors

and make announcements. Encourage kids to give their gates creative names.

SAY • God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls. The people also rebuilt the gates around the city. The gates in today’s Bible story had names like the Fish Gate, Sheep Gate, Valley Gate, and Old Gate. By rebuilding the city gates, the people strengthened their community.

The walls and gates protected the people from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage the kids to list three ways that they can honor God by helping their friends or family members this week.

SAY • God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls, and God can use you this week by doing something to help or encourage someone else. The Jews may have been discouraged by their enemies, but Nehemiah reminded them of God’s faithfulness. Whom do you know that needs to be reminded of God’s love?

Lead the class in prayer. Praise God for being faithful even when we are not. Thank Him for providing protection through Jesus from our enemies.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “In a Nutshell” on the activity page. Kids should use the provided key words to write about what happened in today’s Bible story.

Encourage kids to share their stories with their friends or family members this week.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “In a Nutshell” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.