

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.

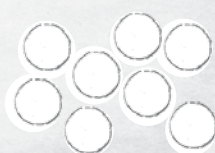
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

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.)

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The BIBLE STORY

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
ADVENTURE!**

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. As kids arrive, ask them about something they have built, such as model planes, block towers, or other building toy sets. Discuss what made the project difficult and if anyone helped them finish it.

SAY • We learned last week about a man named Nehemiah, who wanted to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. It was a big task! Today we will learn how things went for Nehemiah and God's people.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Brick by Brick” activity page. Challenge them to match each block with the hole in the wall it can fill.

SAY • Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. Walls were important to protect God's people from their enemies. Do you think they were able to rebuild them?

- “Brick by Brick” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Two-handed activities

Provide each child with a sheet of paper, a pencil, and a few blocks. Invite each kid to build a small structure while writing her name (or drawing a smiley face, for kids who cannot write) with her non-dominant hand. Then ask kids to switch hands and do the same thing again. Ask them which hand they are better at controlling.

- paper
- pencils
- blocks

SAY • In our Bible story today, God’s people started rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. They had enemies who wanted to stop them, so some of them worked with one hand and held a sword with their other to guard against attacks! We will hear how things turned out.

OPTION 2: Human knot

Direct kids to stand in a circle. Invite each kid to clasp hands with other kids across the circle, with a different kid’s hand in each of his own. Help the kids work together to “untangle” themselves, stepping over or under their arms without letting go of hands. The game ends when the kids are all standing in a circle, holding hands.

SAY • In this game, we worked together and cooperated to untangle our arms. God’s people had a big task that required cooperation too. Nehemiah wanted to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls. In addition to all the people working together, Nehemiah needed God’s help! Soon we will learn if the people finished the wall!



Note: Some kids may end up facing inward and some outward.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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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
• sweatbands
• swimming goggles
• bike helmet

[Large Group Leader enters wearing appropriate active wear, sweatbands, a pair of swimming goggles around his or her neck, and a bike helmet on his or her head. Leader begins to stretch and run in place.]

LEADER • Welcome back to the gym, everyone! I am super happy to see each of you here. Do you remember what kind of race I've been training for? [*Take responses.*] That's right, a triathlon. There are three different parts to a triathlon. Can anyone tell me what they are? [*Take responses.*] Perfect! Swimming, biking, and running. I heard a story about a guy training for a triathlon who had some bullies taunting him, saying that he couldn't finish. I cannot even imagine how awful that would feel! None of you would do that. You all would cheer for me to do my best, wouldn't you? You would encourage me to finish strong.

Even easy tasks could be hard if you get discouraging words thrown at you, and a triathlon is hard enough as it is! That reminds me of our Bible story today. We will hear the next part of Nehemiah's story.

Nehemiah and God's people had a big task in front of them, and they even had some enemies trying to keep them from finishing. But God was on their side!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Remember that after hearing sad news about Jerusalem, **Nehemiah prayed that God would help His people rebuild Jerusalem's walls.** He got the king of Persia's blessing and traveled to Jerusalem to see what was going on. This week we will learn how God's people succeeded in rebuilding the walls! Our story is called "Jerusalem's Walls Were Rebuilt."

• Giant Timeline

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • For the past few weeks we have been asking, *does God keep His promises?* And the answer is, *yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.* Listen to the story to hear the ways God showed His faithfulness to the Jewish people.

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 • God had a plan for the city of Jerusalem to be restored, and no one could stop Him from accomplishing it! Nehemiah trusted God to protect

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

His people, and he encouraged them to trust God too. Instead of living in fear, they prayed and asked God to take care of them. God answered their prayers when **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.**

If you are like me, you get discouraged and scared too, sometimes. When we feel afraid or hopeless, we need friends like Nehemiah. They can remind us of God's faithfulness. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful even when we are not.***

In a similar way the Jews needed walls for protection, we need protection too! Under Nehemiah's leadership, the Jews rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem for protection. But our enemy is sin, and physical walls can't keep sin away. That's why Jesus came—to protect us from our enemy. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue people from sin and death.

Sin is inside our hearts, so we must rely on Jesus to protect our hearts from sin and to change us from the inside out! Sin no longer has control over us because Jesus has died to rescue us from sin. When we trust in Jesus, He will forgive our 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. Allow volunteers to attempt saying the verses from memory. Encourage anyone who attempts the passage. Then sing “Your Faithfulness” together.

- Key Passage Poster
- “Your Faithfulness” song

LEADER • Remember, *mercy* is when you do not receive the punishment you deserve. We are all sinners and deserve death. God shows us mercy instead! God showed mercy to His people in our story when He protected them from their enemies as they worked to rebuild the city walls. The people prayed for God to protect them, and God did.

How does God show us mercy? He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve for our sin. As a result, we can be forgiven and live with Him forever! God shows us grace too; He gives us other good gifts every day—food, clothing, beautiful nature, friends and family, and so much more.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Can you think of a time you worked really hard on something? What about a time you rushed to get something done as fast as possible?

Show the “Unit 18, Session 4” discussion starter video. Ask the kids which person in the video would likely be more proud of her work. Discuss situations where it is hard to put in lots of work. Is rushing to avoid hard work a bad thing?

- “Unit 18, Session 4” discussion starter video

LEADER • When we work hard to do our best, we can give God the glory. God says that all the work we do should glorify Him. God loves to see us trust Him and put forth our best effort.

- “He Rescues and Delivers” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Whenever I hear stories from the Bible about God’s faithfulness, it makes me think of all the ways He has shown faithfulness to me. The biggest way God has shown His faithfulness is by sending Jesus, the Messiah He promised to send long ago. Jesus died for our sin and promised to never leave His people who trust Him. Let’s worship our faithful God.

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. Thank You that Nehemiah encouraged Your people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. You are always faithful even when we are not. Help us remember the ways You have been faithful in our lives. Give us hearts that long to worship You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- pens

Write each word of the key passage on a separate index card. Make two sets of key passage cards. Form two teams and give each team a set of key passage cards. Challenge each team to build a house of cards out of the key passage cards. When they finish their house of cards, you will give them permission to de-construct their house and place the cards in order to complete the key passage. The first team to successfully complete both portions of the race wins.

SAY • Our key passage reminds us that God is loving and faithful. **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.** God helped them overcome their enemies. God showed His love and faithfulness to His people, and Judah's enemies knew that God was with them.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- dry erase board or chalkboard
- markers or chalk

Draw a large tic-tac-toe grid where every kid can see it. Form two teams and assign each either *X* or *O*. Alternate between teams asking questions. If a team answers correctly, they place their mark on the grid in a position of their choosing. Incorrect answers result in the opposing team

choosing where the mark is placed but not which mark is placed. For example, a question originally directed at Team X results in an X placed on the grid no matter what. Where the X is placed will be decided either by Team X or Team O depending on whether Team X answers correctly. Three in a row wins.

Questions:

1. What did Nehemiah hope to do in Jerusalem?
(rebuild the walls, Neh. 2:17)
2. Name at least two of the gates that were rebuilt. *(Fish Gate, Sheep Gate, Valley Gate, Old Gate, Horse Gate, Fountain Gate, Water Gate, Dung Gate; Neh. 3:3-32)*
3. Who opposed the rebuilding? *(Sanballat and Tobiah; Neh. 2:19; 4:7)*
4. How did Nehemiah and the builders respond to their enemies? *(They assigned guards, prayed, and continued working; Neh. 4:15-23)*
5. How long did it take the people to finish the wall?
(52 days, Neh. 6:15)
6. Who helped the people rebuild? *(God, Neh. 6:16)*
7. ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God is always faithful, even when we are not.***

SAY • God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. Nehemiah knew that God was with them. He encouraged the builders to keep working, despite their enemies. The walls of Jerusalem would protect the people from enemies.

Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose again to rescue us from the greatest enemy. When we trust in Jesus, He forgives us and helps us to live for Him.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What protects it?

- “What Protects It?” printables, 1 set per team
- scissors

Before class, print the “What Protects It?” cards and cut them apart. For larger groups, you may prepare more than one set. Form teams of three or four kids and provide each team with a set of cards. Invite them to play a matching game to match each item with what protects it. (The city is protected by walls, the head by a helmet, the computer by a password, the house by a lock, and the heart by the cross.)

SAY • We try to protect a lot of things that are valuable to us. Walls were important to keep God’s people safe from their enemies. **God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls.** God wanted His people to be safe, and He showed His faithfulness to them when He helped them rebuild the walls. God showed His faithfulness to us by sending Jesus. Jesus’ death and resurrection protect us from the punishment we deserve.

OPTION 2: Jerusalem’s walls

Form two groups of kids. Guide them to line up facing each other. Kids will touch hands over their heads at an angle in front of them, creating a wall and tunnel. The two kids at one end of the wall will run through the tunnel and reform their section of the wall at the other end. Kids will repeat this process, moving the wall formation until it reaches the other side of the room. Use a stopwatch to see how quickly they can travel across the room. You may sing the following to the tune of “London Bridge” :

“Jerus’lem’s walls have fallen down,
Fallen down, fallen down!
Jerus’lem’s walls have fallen down,



LOW PREP

- stopwatch

Let's rebuild them!"

SAY • God used Nehemiah to lead His people as they rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. When the people finished the wall in just 52 days, even their enemies knew that God had been with His people to finish such a big job. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, He finished a big job too! Jesus made the way for us to be forgiven of sin and made right with God.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture of a person who provides them with help or protection. Ask kids what would happen if they didn't get help or protection from that person. Ask how they know that person will come through.

SAY • Nehemiah prayed to God for help rebuilding the walls, and God provided it. The people finished the wall, and their enemies knew God was with them. God is always faithful. When we trust in Jesus, He rescues us from our sin and protects us from the punishment we deserve!

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for helping Nehemiah build even despite opposition from enemies. Thank Him for sending Jesus to rescue us from sin and protect us from our greatest enemy.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring 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.