Preschool–Grade 6

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Nehemiah prayed before he did anything, and he kept praying while he worked. God's people built together and did not stop when enemies mocked, threatened or tried to distract them. With God's help, the wall was finished in 52 days.
Bible passage: Nehemiah 1–6. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" *Nehemiah 6:3 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), 10 paper cups, a timer, paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Don't Come Down (5–10 minutes)

One volunteer has one minute to stack 10 cups into a pyramid. Everyone else tries to distract the builder with words only, no touching: "Come over here!" "Look at this!" "You'll never finish!" Play two or three rounds with different builders. Ask: *What helped you keep going? Was it harder when people laughed at you or called you away?* Say: "Today we'll meet a man who had all three: people who laughed at him, people who tried to scare him, and people who tried to call him away from his work."

2. Bible story: A Great Work (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Nehemiah 1. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Sad news. Nehemiah lived in Shushan the palace, far from Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1). Hanani, one of his brethren (his relatives), came with men of Judah, and Nehemiah asked about Jerusalem (1:2). **Look up Nehemiah 1:3.** The people there were in great trouble, the wall was broken down, and the gates were burned with fire. **Look up Nehemiah 1:4.** Nehemiah wept, mourned, **fasted** (went without food) and prayed. He praised God, confessed that God's people had sinned (1:5–7), remembered God's promise to gather His people if they turned back to Him (1:8–9), and asked God to give him mercy before the king. "For I was the king's cupbearer" (1:11): he served the king his wine.

A prayer in a second. Months later, in the month Nisan, Nehemiah gave King Artaxerxes his wine, and the king saw his sad face (2:1–2). Nehemiah was "very sore afraid," very scared, because he had never been sad in front of the king (2:1–2). **Look up Nehemiah 2:4.** Between the king's question and his answer, Nehemiah prayed. Then he asked to be sent to build the city (2:5). The king, with the queen sitting by him, agreed (2:6), and gave letters for safe travel and timber for beams (2:7–8), "according to the good hand of my God upon me" (2:8).

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Let us build. In Jerusalem, Nehemiah went out by night and viewed the broken walls (2:12–15). **Look up Nehemiah 2:17–18.** The people said, "Let us rise up and build." When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem laughed at them, Nehemiah said, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us" (2:19–20). **Prosper** means make it go well. In chapter 3 everyone built: priests at the sheep gate (3:1), families next to each other (3:2), goldsmiths and merchants (3:32), and Shallum "he and his daughters" (3:12).

Mocking. Sanballat was angry and mocked: "What do these feeble Jews?" **Feeble** means weak (4:1–2). **Look up Nehemiah 4:3.** Tobiah said even a fox could break down their wall. Nehemiah prayed, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised" (4:4). **Look up Nehemiah 4:6.** The wall was joined together to half its height, "for the people had a mind to work."

Pray and watch. The enemies planned to come and fight and stop the work (4:7–8). **Look up Nehemiah 4:9.** They prayed and set a watch day and night. Nehemiah said, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible" (4:14). **Terrible** here means awesome, mighty. God brought the enemies' plan to nothing, and everyone went back to work (4:15). **Look up Nehemiah 4:17.** From then on the builders worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other. The trumpeter stayed by Nehemiah (4:18), and if they heard the trumpet they would all come together: "our God shall fight for us" (4:20). They worked from sunrise until the stars came out (4:21).

Helping the poor. Some poor families had to borrow money and even lost their fields to feed their children (5:1–5). Nehemiah told the rich leaders to stop charging their brothers **usury** (extra money on a loan) and to give the fields back, and they promised to do it (5:7–12).

Don't come down. The enemies invited Nehemiah to meet them in the plain of Ono, "but they thought to do me mischief," to hurt him (6:2). **Look up Nehemiah 6:3.** They asked four times, and he gave the same answer (6:4). They sent a letter full of lies (6:5–8), and they tried to scare him (6:9–13). Nehemiah prayed, "O God, strengthen my hands" (6:9). **Look up Nehemiah 6:15–16.** The wall was finished on the 25th day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days, and even the enemies knew "this work was wrought of our God."

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3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Nehemiah prayed before he talked to the king, in the middle of a conversation (2:4). When could you pray a quick prayer like that?
2. Why do you think the people "had a mind to work" (4:6) even when they were mocked?
3. Nehemiah prayed *and* set a watch (4:9). Why do both matter?
4. The enemies tried mocking, scaring and distracting. Which one is hardest for you? Which one did Nehemiah answer with Nehemiah 6:3?
5. The enemies said the work was "wrought of our God" (6:16). How can the work we do show people God?

Recall questions

1. What was Nehemiah's job? *(The king's cupbearer, Nehemiah 1:11)*
2. Who said a fox could break down the wall? *(Tobiah the Ammonite, 4:3)*
3. How many days did it take to finish the wall? *(Fifty and two days, 6:15)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **messengers** are people sent with a message; **cease** means stop; **whilst** means while. Nehemiah means: "My work for God is too important to stop just to go and meet you." Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Nehemiah confessed to God, 'We have sinned against thee' (Nehemiah 1:6). God loves you, and He hears prayer. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: pray before every hard job, and finish one job without quitting, even if someone teases you.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Nehemiah 1:1: Where was Nehemiah living? *(Shushan the palace)*
2. Nehemiah 2:1: What was the name of the king? *(Artaxerxes)*
3. Nehemiah 2:6: Who was sitting by the king? *(The queen)*
4. Nehemiah 2:8: What did Nehemiah say was upon him? *(The good hand of my God)*
5. Nehemiah 3:1: Which gate did the priests build? *(The sheep gate)*
6. Nehemiah 4:18: What did every builder have girded by his side? *(His sword)*
7. Nehemiah 4:21: How long did they work each day? *(From the rising of the morning till the stars appeared)*
8. Nehemiah 6:4: How many times did the enemies send the same message? *(Four times)*

   Early finishers can do the Nehemiah word search or crossword (vbshq.com/bible-stories/nehemiah).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for hearing our prayers, even quick ones. Help us work hard together, and help us not to stop when people mock us, scare us or try to pull us away. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: Nehemiah 4 and 6 tell of plans to fight the builders and to hurt Nehemiah (4:8, 4:11, 6:2, 6:10). Keep it calm: God brought the plan to nothing (4:15), and there was no battle. Nehemiah's prayer that God would judge his enemies (4:4–5) is told only in part here. If a child asks about the weapons, say the builders were ready to protect their families (4:14), and they kept building.

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