Preschool–Grade 6

# Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

**Main point:** God's work starts on our knees and is finished with our hands. Nehemiah prayed first, worked hard with others, and kept going when he was mocked, threatened and called away, and God finished the work through His people.
**Bible passage:** Nehemiah 1–6. Students read Nehemiah 1:4–11, 4:1–9 and 6:1–3, 15–16 out loud themselves; the teacher tells the rest.
**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)* and "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." *Galatians 6:9 (KJV)*
**You need:** a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, three sheets of paper labeled MOCKING, FEAR and DISTRACTION, and one take-home sheet for each student.
**Before class:** read Nehemiah 1–6 and Galatians 6:9. Write both memory verses on the board. Tape the three labels in three corners of the room.

## 1. Opening game: Which One Is It? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students walk to the corner that names what is trying to stop the person: 1) A friend laughs when you say you want to read your Bible every day. 2) You're afraid that if you tell the truth, you'll lose a friend. 3) You meant to finish your homework, but your phone keeps buzzing. 4) Someone says, "Why bother? You'll never be good at that." 5) Every time you start praying, you think of something else to do. Ask: *Which of the three is hardest for you?* Say: "Nehemiah faced all three, and we'll see how he answered each one."

## 2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

**Tell Nehemiah 1:1–3:** Nehemiah, in Shushan the palace, hears that Jerusalem's wall is broken down and its gates burned with fire.
**Read out loud: Nehemiah 1:4–11.** Old words in this passage:

- **mourned certain days** (1:4): was sad for some days; **fasted**: went without food to pray
- **I beseech thee** (1:5): I beg you; **terrible** (1:5): awesome, to be feared
- **attentive** (1:6): listening closely; **dealt very corruptly** (1:7): done very wrong
- **transgress** (1:8): break God's law; **scatter you abroad among the nations**: send you away to other lands
- **prosper** (1:11): make it go well; **cupbearer**: the servant who served the king his wine


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**Tell Nehemiah 2–3:** Months later the king sees Nehemiah's sad face (2:1–2). "So I prayed to the God of heaven" (2:4), and Nehemiah asks to be sent to build. The king gives letters and timber, "according to the good hand of my God upon me" (2:8). Nehemiah views the walls by night (2:12–15) and calls the people: "Let us rise up and build" (2:18). Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem laugh (2:19), but "The God of heaven, he will prosper us" (2:20). In chapter 3, priests, families, goldsmiths, merchants, and Shallum with his daughters all build side by side (3:1–32).

**Read out loud: Nehemiah 4:1–9.** Old words in this passage:

- **wroth** (4:1): very angry; **indignation**: anger at something you think is wrong
- **feeble** (4:2): weak; **fortify**: make strong; **revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish**: use the burned stones from the rubble piles again
- **despised** (4:4): looked down on; **reproach**: shame, insults
- **joined together unto the half thereof** (4:6): the wall was built all the way around, half as high
- **breaches** (4:7): holes and gaps in the wall; **conspired** (4:8): made a secret plan together; **hinder**: stop
- **set a watch** (4:9): put guards on duty

**Tell Nehemiah 4:10–5:19:** The workers are tired and the rubble is huge (4:10). Nehemiah says, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord" (4:14). God brings the enemies' plan to nothing (4:15). From then on "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon" (4:17), and the trumpet would call them together: "our God shall fight for us" (4:20). In chapter 5 Nehemiah stops the rich from charging the poor **usury** (extra money on loans) and has them give back fields and houses (5:1–13). He doesn't take the governor's food allowance, "because of the fear of God" (5:14–15).

**Read out loud: Nehemiah 6:1–3 and 6:15–16.** Old words: **mischief** (6:2): harm; **cease** (6:3): stop; **whilst**: while; **wrought** (6:16): done, made. Between these verses, the enemies send the same invitation four times (6:4), an open letter of lies (6:5–8) and a hired prophet to scare Nehemiah into hiding in the temple (6:10–13). Nehemiah prays, "O God, strengthen my hands" (6:9) and says, "Should such a man as I flee?" (6:11).


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## 3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Months passed between the news (Chisleu, 1:1) and the talk with the king (Nisan, 2:1), and Nehemiah prayed "day and night" (1:6). Then he prayed again in one quick breath (2:4). What do long prayers and quick prayers each do for us?
2. In his prayer Nehemiah said, "both I and my father's house have sinned" (1:6). Why do you think he included himself?
3. Mocking (4:1–3), fear (4:8–14) and distraction (6:2–4): how did Nehemiah answer each one? Which answer do you need most right now?
4. They "made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch" (4:9). What does it look like to trust God *and* do your part?
5. In chapter 5 Nehemiah took time to make things right for poor families, while the work on the wall went on (5:16). How is that different from the "come down" invitation in 6:2–3?
6. The wall was finished in fifty and two days, and the enemies "perceived that this work was wrought of our God" (6:15–16). What "great work" has God given you that you need to keep doing?

## 4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Galatians 6:9: **weary in well doing** means tired of doing what is right; **in due season** means at the right time; **reap** means gather a harvest; **faint not** means don't give up. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Nehemiah 6:3 this week; keep working on Galatians 6:9 next week too.


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## 5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Nehemiah began with confession: 'We have dealt very corruptly against thee' (Nehemiah 1:7, KJV). We need God's mercy too. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
*Pray with the students, 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.*

## 6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What is one "great work" God has given me right now (at home, at school, at church)?
2. What is trying to stop me: mocking, fear or distraction? What would Nehemiah 6:3 sound like in my own words?
3. Write a short prayer like Nehemiah's: "O God, strengthen my hands" (6:9).
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

**This week:** pray one quick prayer before a hard moment, like Nehemiah did before the king (2:4), and finish one thing you've been putting off.

## 7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You hear our prayers, long and short. Give us a mind to work, courage when we're mocked or afraid, and focus when we're pulled away. Strengthen our hands to finish what You give us. Thank You for Jesus, who saves us. In Jesus' name, amen."

**Teacher note:** Nehemiah 4 and 6 include plans to kill the builders and Nehemiah (4:11, 6:10). Tell them plainly and calmly: God brought the plans to nothing (4:15), and there was no battle. Nehemiah's prayer for judgment on his enemies (4:4–5) is read but not discussed at length; if students ask, say Nehemiah left his enemies in God's hands and kept building.


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