Preschool–Grade 6

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Nehemiah prayed first, and then he worked hard with God's people. God helped them finish the wall, even when enemies made fun of them.
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, 20 or more paper cups or building blocks, 7 paper rectangles cut like stones, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 7 paper stones (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Nehemiah 1:4 and Nehemiah 6:3.

1. Opening game: Build It Together (5 minutes)

Give each child two or three cups or blocks. One at a time, kids come up and add their cups to one long wall on the floor or a table. Keep going until all the cups are used. Then ask: *Could one person build this wall alone as fast? What happened when everyone helped?* Say: "Today we will hear a true story about a man who prayed, and then led God's people to build a whole city wall together."

2. Bible story: Let Us Rise Up and Build (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Nehemiah 1, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

A man named **Nehemiah** lived far away from Jerusalem, in a palace called Shushan (Nehemiah 1:1). He had an important job. He was the king's **cupbearer**. That means he served the king his wine (1:11; 2:1).

One day some men came from Judah, and Nehemiah asked them about Jerusalem. They had sad news. "The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (1:3). God's city had no wall to keep the people safe.

What did Nehemiah do? He sat down and cried. For some days he was sad, he **fasted**, which means he went without food, and he prayed to the God of heaven (1:4). He told God, "We have sinned against thee" (1:6). And he asked God to help him when he talked to the king (1:11).

Some time later, Nehemiah brought the king his wine. Nehemiah had never been sad in front of the king before (2:1). The king asked, "Why is thy countenance sad?" That means, "Why does your face look so sad?" Nehemiah was very afraid (2:2). He told the king that the city of his fathers was broken down and its gates were burned (2:3).

The king asked, "For what dost thou make request?" That means, "What do you want?" Before he answered, Nehemiah did something important. "So I prayed to the God of heaven" (2:4). Then he asked the king to send him to Jerusalem to build it (2:5).

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The story continues: The king said yes! He gave Nehemiah letters, so he could travel safely and get wood to make beams for the gates and the wall (2:6–8). Nehemiah said the king gave it "according to the good hand of my God upon me" (2:8). God was helping him.

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem. One night he rode around and looked at the broken walls (2:12–15). Then he told the people, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem" (2:17). He told them how God had helped him. And the people said, "**Let us rise up and build**" (2:18)!

Everyone worked. The priests built a gate called the sheep gate (3:1). Other groups built the next part, and the next (3:2). Goldsmiths and merchants built (3:32). One leader, Shallum, built with his daughters (3:12). Piece by piece, side by side, they built the wall together.

But some men did not like it. Their names were **Sanballat** and **Tobiah**. They made fun of the builders (2:19; 4:1). Tobiah said, "If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall" (4:3). He meant, "Their wall is so weak, even a little fox could knock it down!" Did the people stop? No! They kept building, "for the people had a mind to work." That means they wanted to work hard (4:6).

Then the enemies made a plan to come and stop the work (4:8). What did God's people do? "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night" (4:9). They prayed, and they had people keep watch. Nehemiah said, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord" (4:14). God stopped the enemies' plan, and everyone went back to work (4:15). From then on, each builder worked with one hand and kept a weapon in the other hand to protect their families (4:17). Nehemiah said, "Our God shall fight for us" (4:20).

The enemies tried one more trick. They asked Nehemiah to come down and meet them, but they wanted to hurt him (6:2). Nehemiah answered with our memory verse: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (6:3). They asked him four times, and every time he said no (6:4). Nehemiah prayed, "O God, strengthen my hands" (6:9).

And the wall was finished, in **fifty and two days**. That is 52 days (6:15)! When the enemies saw it, they knew "this work was wrought of our God." That means God did it (6:16).

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3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. What sad news did Nehemiah hear about Jerusalem? *(The wall was broken down and the gates were burned with fire, Nehemiah 1:3)*
2. What did Nehemiah do first? *(He prayed to the God of heaven, 1:4; and again before he answered the king, 2:4)*
3. What did the people say when Nehemiah told them about the wall? *("Let us rise up and build," 2:18)*
4. What did Tobiah say a fox could do? *(Break down their stone wall, 4:3)*
5. How many days did it take to finish the wall? *(Fifty and two days, 52 days, 6:15)*

4. Memory verse: Stone Wall Verse (5 minutes)

Write one part on each paper stone: *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.* Explain the old words: **messengers** are people sent to carry a message; **cease** means stop; **whilst** means while. Tape the stones up in a row like a wall and read the verse together. Then take one stone away and read it again. Keep taking stones away, one each time, until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves. Then build the wall back up, one stone at a time!

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Nehemiah prayed, and he told God, 'We have sinned' (Nehemiah 1:6). God loves you very much, and He hears you when you pray. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."

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: before you start a big job, pray first like Nehemiah. Then keep working until it's done, even if someone makes fun of you.

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6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Nehemiah word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/nehemiah-word-search), the crossword, maze or worksheet, the Nehemiah coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/nehemiah), or **I Cannot Come Down:** kids build a cup or block wall together. Stand across the room and call out silly things to stop them: "Come down and play!" "Stop working!" "Come down and meet me!" Each time, the kids answer together, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down!" and keep building. When the wall is done, count the cups together and say, "God helped us finish!"

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for hearing us when we pray, like You heard Nehemiah. Help us work hard together and not give up, even when it's hard. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: Nehemiah 4 and 6 tell of enemies who planned to fight the builders and to hurt Nehemiah (4:8, 4:11, 6:2, 6:10). The lesson tells this gently: the enemies wanted to stop the work, the builders kept a weapon close to protect their families (4:17), and God stopped the enemies' plan (4:15). There was no battle. If a child is worried, say: "God's people prayed, and God took care of them."

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