

The Walls Go Up

Nehemiah and Ezra

Nehemiah 1-4; 6:15-16; 8:1-3; 10:28-29; 12:27

Character Trait: Purpose

(Estimated Lesson Time: 90 minutes)

Objectives:

- Children will recall that before Nehemiah helped the Israelites, Nehemiah asked God for help.
- Children will discuss what being a child of God means.
- Children will identify what their God-given purpose may be, including specific steps they can take towards completing it.

Supplies:

- *The Walls Go Up* loaded onto a tablet or phone in the *Bible App for Kids*
- Paper plates *(one for each child)*
- Coloring supplies
- Stickers, sequins, small pompoms, or buttons
- Glue

Welcome Activity:

(5 minutes)

Welcome the children. Say a few words to encourage them as a group *(or individually, if possible)*. This may include sharing that you have noticed how well they have been paying attention during the lessons and/or thanking them for their thoughtful participation in the discussions.

SAY: In today's lesson, we will learn about a special man named Nehemiah whom God used for a unique purpose: to encourage the Israelites during a time of great struggle. Encouragement is support and help. God sent Nehemiah to His people to encourage and support them many years ago, and He still encourages us in many ways today.

Review:

(5 minutes)

Guide the children in a brief review of the previous lesson by asking the following:

- **What was Queen Esther's secret?** *(She was Jewish.)*
- **What did Haman tell King Xerxes about the Jews?** *(He said that the Jews were dangerous and should die.)*
- **Why was it dangerous for Esther to go see the king?** *(People who went to the king without an invitation could be killed.)*
- **What did Mordecai say to Queen Esther to encourage her?** *("Perhaps you were made queen just for this moment.")*
- **What happened when King Xerxes found out about Haman's evil plan?** *(The king ordered that Haman be killed on the gallows he had made to hang Mordecai on.)*

Today's Bible Story:

(10-15 minutes)

Show *The Walls Go Up* from the *Bible App for Kids* or share the story aloud:

- Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia.
- Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem was in ruins and that his friends there were in trouble.
- He asked God to help them.
- God gave Nehemiah the courage to speak to King Artaxerxes.
- Nehemiah asked if he could go to Jerusalem and help them fix their walls.
- Artaxerxes agreed.
- Nehemiah left for Jerusalem.
- Nehemiah walked around Jerusalem.
- Things were even worse than he'd heard.
- "This will be a big job," he told the people, "but, with God's help, we can rebuild these walls."
- Everyone worked in families and groups fixing the gates first.
- They fixed the Sheep Gate, the Fish Gate, the Dung Gate, and the other gates.
- Then they started rebuilding the walls.
- First, their enemies laughed.
- But as the walls grew higher, those enemies prepared to attack.
- So God's people worked with a tool in one hand and a sword in the other.
- After just 52 days, the wall was finished!
- Ezra, the priest, read God's law to the people. They promised to obey God's law and praised Him for protecting them.

Discussion:

(15 minutes)

Encourage the children to think more about the story by asking the following:

What was the first thing Nehemiah did after he heard that Jerusalem was in ruins and his friends were trouble? *(He asked God to help them.)*

What did Nehemiah do next? *(He asked the king if he could go to help his friends fix their walls.)*

What did Nehemiah say to encourage his friends? *("With God's help, we can rebuild these walls.")*

What did the enemies do when they saw the Israelites rebuilding the walls? *(First, they laughed. Then, they prepared to attack.)*

What did the Israelites keep in their hands as they worked? *(A tool in one hand and a sword in the other)*

What did Ezra, the priest, do after the wall was finished? *(He read God's law to the people. They promised to obey God's law and praised God for protecting them.)*

SAY: God provides us with many things, including the strength and encouragement we need. When the walls around Jerusalem were destroyed, God provided strength and encouragement to the Israelites through Nehemiah.

God's Bigger Story:

(5 minutes)

SAY: Nehemiah knew it would take a lot of work to rebuild the walls. But he also knew that God would help them. We can also know that God will help us when we ask Him.

Memory Verse:

(10 minutes)

"...The God of heaven *(point both hands up)*
will help *(link index fingers together)* **us succeed.**
We, his servants *(place one hand on chest and bow slightly)*,
will start rebuilding this wall *(pound fists together)*."

Nehemiah 2:20a (NLT)

Activity:

(15 minutes)

Have the children stand in a circle holding hands. Then, have them spread out so that there are large spaces between them. These empty spaces are the "windows" and "doors." Select one child to begin running, weaving in and out between the children. The children in the circle randomly drop their arms down to try to touch or trap the child. If they succeed, then the child is "out." This child then chooses the next child to try to weave in and out of the windows and doors. *(This game also works well when played in smaller groups.)*

SAY: It might have been scary trying to weave in and out of the windows and doors during the game. You were probably afraid of getting trapped! The Israelites were likely scared, too. Without the protection of the city's walls around them, they were all at risk of being hurt by their enemies.

Response Activity:

(10 minutes)

All of us will face challenges and difficulties. The good news is that we are never alone. God provides strength, encouragement, and a purpose for each of us to fulfill.

Provide each child with a paper plate and coloring supplies. In the middle of the plate, tell the children to draw a picture of something they do now that represents one of the roles God has placed them in. Then, have the children create a border or "wall" around the edge of the plate using stickers, sequins, small pompoms, or buttons.

Encourage the children to take their project home as a reminder that God has placed them where they are for a special purpose and that He will protect and encourage them, too—just like He did for His people so long ago.

For younger children...
Make the project simpler for younger children by asking them to draw a simple picture of themselves in the middle of the plate instead.

For older children...

Encourage older children to write **"The God of heaven will help..."** Nehemiah 2:20 on the front of their project as a reminder of God's protection for His people.

Character Trait: Purpose

(10 minutes)

SAY: Purpose is a God-given role, job, or vision. Everyone has a purpose, and our purpose is from God, the One who created each of us. God's purpose for Nehemiah was to encourage the Israelites when they had a lot of hard work to do rebuilding the walls. God has a unique purpose for each of us, too.

Encourage the children to think more about purpose by asking the following:

- **What are the roles that you fulfill right now?** *(Answers will vary but may include son or daughter, student, and friend.)*
- **What kind of purpose do you think God may have planned for you? Why?** *(Answers will vary.)*
- **Your most important role is to be a child of God. What does that mean?** *(Answers will vary but may include knowing, loving, and learning about God and sharing the love of God with others.)*

Connect with Others:

(5 minutes)

SAY: Nehemiah's God-given purpose was to encourage the Israelites during a time of hardship. Close your eyes and silently think about what your God-given purpose may be. *(Provide a few moments for the children to think silently to themselves.)*

SAY: With your eyes still closed, think of some specific things you can do to work towards this purpose? *(Tell the children to open their eyes. Then, call on a few volunteers to share aloud. Answers will vary. Then, provide an opportunity for the children who did not share aloud to do so with a partner. If children struggle to identify what their God-given purpose may be, encourage them to think about their own talents and abilities. Explain that God gives us strengths so that we can complete what He has planned for our lives.)*

Closing:

(2 minutes)

SAY: We do not have to rebuild city walls like the Israelites did, but we face challenges and obstacles daily, too. God encouraged His people by sending Nehemiah. We can count on God to strengthen and encourage us today also. When God encourages us, He provides us with the strength we need to encourage those around us.

Prayer:

(2 minutes)

SAY:

Dear God,
Thank You for providing the strength and encouragement we need daily. Guide and help us as we strive to encourage others and to fulfill Your purpose for our lives.
Amen.

Notes