



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Nehemiah 4:1-23

Ephesians 2:19-22

Session Theme:

Responsibility

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Nay = No!

Write the word “naysayer” on the board. Ask kids to explain what they think the word means. Explain that “nay” is another word for “no.” So a “naysayer” is someone who “says no” to someone else’s plans. Ask kids if they have ever encountered any naysayers in their own lives. How did they handle that experience?

In today’s story, a man named Nehemiah had a job to do. God wanted him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem! Yet naysayers made fun of him and laughed at his plan. They even threatened him! How did Nehemiah react? Did he give up on his responsibility? Let’s find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Faithful Lord, we want to serve you and complete the tasks that you call us to do. Yet sometimes we feel scared and small. Give us the courage to follow your will, as Nehemiah did so long ago. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- “A Mighty Fortress” (hymn)
- “Give Me Oil in My Lamp” (Bible song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today’s Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Return

God brought King Cyrus of Persia to power over the Babylonians. God’s people were allowed to return home to rebuild their temple and their nation under leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day’s lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss “Reflection for the Week Ahead”

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, Luther’s Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Nehemiah 4:1-23

1. Read the setup to this story in Nehemiah 2:2-8. The king thought Nehemiah looked sad. Why was he sad? What did Nehemiah ask the king to let him do? Was his request granted or not?

To put it simply, Nehemiah was homesick. He was upset by the thought of the city of Jerusalem lying in ruins, its gates having been destroyed by fire. Nehemiah wanted to be sent to Judah by the king in order to begin rebuilding Jerusalem. He also asked the king to send along some letters for safe passage, as well as timber to begin rebuilding the city. The king agreed to it all.

2. Why do you think it was so important to Nehemiah to rebuild the city of Jerusalem? Have you ever felt inspired by God to do a good deed? When?

God put the idea to rebuild the city in Nehemiah's heart. Throughout the Bible and in the history of the Church, God has empowered his servants to be his hands and feet in the world and to do much good in his name. We also have access to that same power. As Jesus said: "Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

3. Sanballat (vv. 4,7) was a Persian government official in Samaria, a neighbor of Judah. Why would he care about what was happening in Jerusalem? What was the Samaritans' evaluation of Nehemiah's efforts?

Giving him the benefit of the doubt, as a Persian official Sanballat would have been cautious about a possible rebellion by a neighboring state if the rebuilding of Jerusalem was not authorized by the Persian King or was happening without his knowledge. More likely, Sanballat simply wanted to be the "big dog" in the neighborhood and didn't want Judah to surpass him in importance.

4. Who were Sanballat's allies? What did they get together and plan to do?

Sanballat was allied with the Ammonites (to the east), Arabs (to the south), and the Ashdodites (to the west). Since Samaria itself was to the north of Judah, this means Jerusalem was surrounded by enemies on all sides! They plotted to lay siege to the city and cause distress among

the citizens so that they would stop rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

5. What practical things did Nehemiah do to respond to this external threat? On what basis did he encourage the people?

The first thing Nehemiah did was pray for God's protection. He called on the help of the people from the Judean countryside to gather inside the city, grouping them together by clans, armed with short- and long-range weapons. Nehemiah stood up and encouraged people by reminding them of God's great power. He appealed to the people's loyalty to their family and homes.

6. How does this story illustrate what it takes to work for the Lord? In what sense does our Christian ministry require not only the willingness to work, but the need to fight for the opportunity to serve?

This story shows that when we prayerfully come together to do the work of God, we actually put those prayers in action. When we work together, God works through us in powerful ways. But sometimes it is not enough to use the opportunities that fall in our lap; rather, we must proactively seek opportunities to serve God. This world (and the devil himself) will seek to prevent us from living out our faith. We must not be discouraged by the obstacles put in front of us, but realize that it will be a battle just to be able to do God's work.

7. Read Ephesians 2:19-22. How does Paul use the metaphor of building to describe what God is doing with the Church? In what way do we share the same promise and hope that Nehemiah had?

Paul describes the Church as a structure built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with the cornerstone being Christ himself. Like the stones of the temple in Jerusalem, each of us build upon one another to build the Church into the living Temple of God. Our identity and strength does not come from us, but like Nehemiah, the power we have comes from God!

8. We can see that Nehemiah faced a lot of opposition. Why is it that God's mission is so often resisted in the world? What can we learn from Nehemiah's example? In what way do we rely on each other for strength and encouragement?

Rather than giving up, Nehemiah kept telling people not to be afraid and to "remember the Lord, who is great and awesome." Reminding ourselves of God's goodness and power can calm us and give us confidence to do what is needed despite any hardship we face.

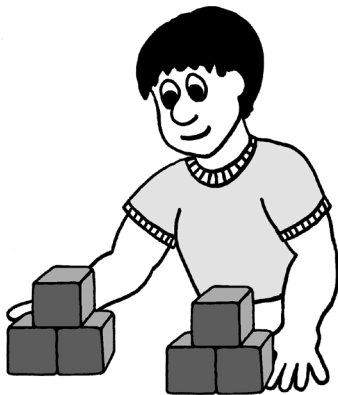
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: “Hurry, Hurry!” Game

Materials Needed:

- Building supplies of any kind — boxes, blocks, Dominoes, plastic containers, cards, etc.
- Two Nerf balls or other small balls
- Timer
- Large area (inside or outside) to play a game



Instructions:

Pile the building supplies in the center of a large open area.

Divide the class into two teams. Explain that one team will be the Builders and the other will be the Naysayers.

The Builders will choose one or two of their players to be Guards. Set a timer for 5 minutes.

The object of this game is for the Builders to build a structure as quickly as possible, using every block or supply in the pile.

Meanwhile, the Naysayers will be rolling balls to knock down the structure. (If someone throws rather than rolls a ball, that person is out of the game.) As they do this, the guards from the Builders team will act as goalies, protecting the building by blocking balls rolled by the Naysayers.

Those Naysayers who don't have a ball can simply call out negative comments about the building, making a general ruckus.

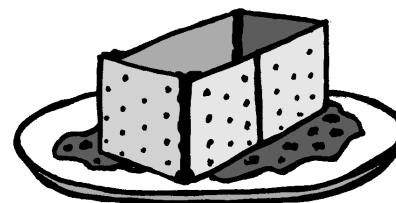
When the timer sounds, if the Builders have succeeded in building and protecting their structure, they win the round. If their structure is unfinished or has been knocked down, the Naysayers win the game. Have teams switch roles and play a second round of the game if desired.

Our game was rather wild and crazy, but Nehemiah actually did need guards as God's people rebuilt the walls of their city. It must have felt extremely stressful, but God was with them and kept them safe.

Activity 2: Bricks and Mortar Project

Materials Needed:

- Chocolate sandwich cookies (any brand will do)
- Graham crackers or club crackers (or square or rectangular-shaped cookies)
- Frosting (any flavor)
- Paper plates and napkins
- Plastic knives
- Plastic baggies



Instructions:

Give each person a paper plate, napkin, plastic knife, two or three chocolate sandwich cookies, a baggie, and a dollop of frosting. Place several graham or club crackers (or square/rectangular-shaped cookies) on each person's napkin.

Invite kids to follow these directions to build a 3-D wall like Nehemiah's workers did.

- Have kids wash and dry their hands.
- Using the plastic knife, spread a thin smear of frosting on the plate. Be sure not to use all of the frosting for this step, since more will be needed as “mortar.”
- Put the chocolate cookies in the baggie (leaving one corner of the baggie slightly open so air can escape). Press down on the cookies to create small crumbs
- Sprinkle cookie crumbs over the frosting on the plate to make a “dirt” ground. Press down so this sticks to the frosting.
- Using graham or club crackers (or cookies) as “walls” (these will need to stand on their edges) and frosting as “mortar,” build a little structure on the “dirt.” Lean crackers or cookies against each other like a gingerbread house with frosting gluing them in place.
- Continue building, trying to make the structure as sturdy as possible. When kids are finished, have them show the class their work and explain their building plan! Kids may eat their creations during snack time.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Word Find Answers:

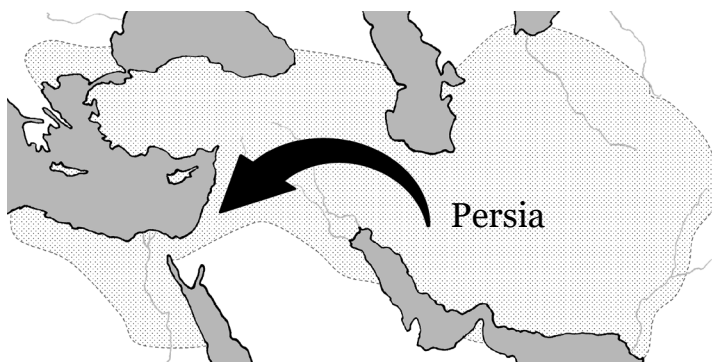
1	R	2	E	3	M	4	E	5	M	6	B	7	E	8	R		
9	T	10	H	11	E	12	L	13	O	14	R	15	D	16	W	17	H
18	O	19	I	20	S	21	G	22	R	23	E	24	A	25	T	26	A
27	N	28	D	29	A	30	W	31	E	32	S	33	O	34	M	35	E
36	!																

R Bricks: #1, #8, #14, #22	T Bricks: #9, #25	
G Brick: #21	W Bricks: #16, #30	
L Brick: #12	B Brick: #6	I Brick: #19
M Bricks: #3, #5, #34	O Bricks: #13, #18, #33	
S Bricks: #20, #32	H Bricks: #10, #17	N Brick: #27
D Bricks: #15, #28	A Bricks: #24, #26, #29	
E Bricks: #2, #4, #7, #11, #23, #31, #35	! Brick: #36	

Remember the Lord who is great and awesome!
(Nehemiah 4:14)

Map of the Persian Empire:

The empire of Persia was so large that the capital shifted from city to city, depending where the king and his court were located. The map below shows the direction Nehemiah and the exiles traveled when they returned to Jerusalem:



Vocabulary Word for the Week:

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary:

Responsibility

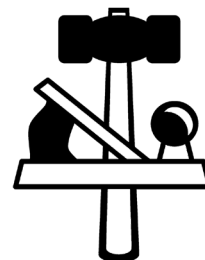
to take your work seriously
and do what needs to be done

It's not always easy to live up to our responsibility and do what God calls us to do. But even when our work is hard, God will give us the strength to complete it.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

When Nehemiah and his friends began rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the wall that went around it, they were met with resistance by enemies of the Jewish people. But God provided protection for the workers so they could complete their task. Nehemiah encouraged everyone to keep their focus on God who would look after them.

Talk together about a time in your life when it seemed like a plan was never going to come to fulfillment. What things happened that discouraged you? How did the Lord assure you that he would help you and protect you to get the job done?



Sometimes in our lives, the enemy, Satan, wants to thwart our efforts to be faithful to God. But as St. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2, we are part of God's holy house and we have his strength on our side.

What are the key elements of your foundation of faith? How do you rely on those to keep you trusting in God?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer thanking God for the strength he gives you in times when it seems like things aren't going your way. Praise him for his power and love and ask him to continue to guide you in his ways.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.