

NEHEMIAH

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NEHEMIAH

NEHEMIAH - THE KING'S CUPBEARER

Nehemiah 1:11

There was a man in the Bible named Nehemiah. Nehemiah wrote a book in the Bible. It is in the Old Testament. Nehemiah was a Jew; he was one of God's chosen people. Many years before Nehemiah was born, God's people had been taken away from the country they were living in to be captives in another country. Nehemiah was in Persia (this is the old name of a part of the Middle East) and he was a servant to the king.

Today there are not many kings or queens on the earth. Most countries have presidents or other kinds of leaders, like the Prime Minister. And these leaders need other people than them to help do so many things. One thing these top leaders need is someone around to guard or protect them. Today a top leader has bodyguards with them wherever they go. The top leader trusts these bodyguards to keep them safe from harm.

In Nehemiah's time, kings were afraid that their enemies would try to poison them, so they had a special servant, one that they could trust, be their cupbearer. The cupbearer had to make sure that the king's drink was safe to drink. Sometimes the cupbearer even had to take a drink first, so that the king could be sure that it was safe to drink. The king of Persia chose Nehemiah to do this important job.

Nehemiah's eyes watched the king's drink. It demanded a lot of attention. The king trusted Nehemiah to protect him. Nehemiah was a trustworthy person.

Storyteller, insert a personal example of when you were trusted to look after someone or something special.

One day, a friend asked me to look after her baby. The baby was only a few months old but could crawl around and liked to put things in her mouth. It was my job to make sure she did not hurt herself and eat things she shouldn't. I was really happy that she trusted me to take good care of her daughter. Do you think my friend would have given that job to anybody? No, she needed someone she could trust.



When your mother gives you money for your school lunch, she trusts that you will not lose it on the way to school. She trusts you to use it for lunch at school and not on candies.

If you can be trusted while you are young, then when you grow up you also will be trusted to take care of even more things, and more important things. So we need to start being trustworthy now. Then others will see and know that you are a trustworthy person.

Nehemiah was really trusted by the king of Persia. Nehemiah did a great job being the king's cupbearer and, what's more, he even did his job happily.

Now, what kind of thing might we do next week to show others that we can be trusted? *Write down the ideas from the kids. (Here are some ideas in case they get stuck: feeding pets; looking after house keys; passing on messages to their teacher or parents.)* When we see each other next week, we can share how we were trustworthy.

Verse to memorize: Now I was the cupbearer to the king. Nehemiah 1:11

Point to emphasize: Being trustworthy to do your job/responsibilities

[For the storyteller's nourishment: The basic requirement of a steward is that he be found faithful. See 1 Cor. 4:2. This is the Lord's requirement of all those who serve Him (Matt. 24:45-47 and 25:14-30).]

NEHEMIAH

NEHEMIAH'S CONCERN FOR JERUSALEM

Nehemiah 1:1-9

Storyteller, start this week by giving an example of being trusted by someone to do something. See if any of the kids have something that happened this week on the same point.

Last week we introduced to you a man named Nehemiah. He was a trustworthy person, so the king of Persia chose Nehemiah to be his cupbearer.



One day Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, came to visit him. Hanani had come from Judah, the land of their fathers. Nehemiah cared very much about God's people and about Jerusalem, so he asked how the Jews were doing. Have you ever cared about someone else? When we care for others we ask them how they are doing.

Nehemiah was concerned about Jerusalem because it was the city where God wanted His people to worship Him. In this city was the holy temple where the Jews worshipped God. Hanani told Nehemiah some sad news. The strong, tall city wall (*this might be a good place to draw a city wall, comparing it with a small stick figure beside it*) that was meant to protect the temple from all the enemies had been torn down and the gates of Jerusalem had been burned with fire! Enemies of the Jews had come and torn down this wall and destroyed the gates on the city. There were heaps of stones and burned wood. It was a horrible mess. The outsiders could get through the gaps in

the broken-down wall and get to the temple. What had once been a strong city was now a heap of ruins.

Demonstration - Unprotected Wall Start with two older children or adults standing next to one another linking arms. Storyteller, show the kids how it is hard to get through "the wall" when it is connected. Then create a gap between the people. Storyteller, walk right through the gap and tell the kids that this was the state that the wall was in; anyone could walk in easily because there were gaps in the wall.

The Bible tells us that others were looking down on the Jews. They were laughing at God's people, and there was no king to care for them or rule over them. The neighbors mocked and made jokes about them. They made fun of God's chosen people.

To be laughed at feels horrible. Has anyone at school ever laughed at you when you tripped and fell down? They might have said, "Ha-ha, you fell down." When that happens it is very painful. It hurts when others laugh at you and it makes you sad. It's much better when someone comes over and says to us, "Are you ok? Can I help you up? Do you need a bandage? Here's a chair to sit down on."

Storyteller, insert an example of when you knew someone was being laughed at. Here is a personal example: In my school, there was a girl who came from a poor family. The other children laughed at her. They also made fun of her because her belongings and her clothes were not as nice as theirs. I was upset when I heard this. Laughing or making fun of others shows that we do not care for them.

When Nehemiah heard that God's people were being made fun of, he was shocked. Nehemiah was upset to hear that God's people were being laughed at and that no one was caring for the children of Israel. He cared so much about the terrible situation that God's people were in. Nehemiah sat down and cried for several days and prayed to God desperately.

Storyteller, show how you cared for the person who was being laughed at. Do you remember the girl at my school who came from a poor family? I did not like that she was being made fun of, because I cared for her. Instead of laughing at her, I became her friend and even helped her tidy up her things. She was so happy that someone was caring for her. She even said that one day she would like to care for others too.

When we hear news that others are not doing well, we can show them that we care for them. Like Nehemiah we can pray for them and also look for opportunities to go and cheer them up. Maybe this week we can all look for ways to show our care for others.

Verse to memorize: "...that the members would have the same care for one another."

1 Cor. 12:25

Point to emphasize: caring for others and being concerned for them

[For the storyteller's nourishment: The lack of care for one another in the Body may produce the worst result: division. To show our care for one another honors the Head and protects the Body (1 Cor. 12:14-27).]

NEHEMIAH

NEHEMIAH OFFERED HIMSELF TO HELP

Nehemiah 2:1-8

Storyteller, start by giving an example of caring for someone. See if any of the kids have something that happened this week on the same point.)

Last week we heard that Nehemiah found out that the Jews who lived in Jerusalem were being laughed at by others because the gates had been burned and the wall was broken down. No one in Jerusalem had repaired the city wall and there was no king to care for them or lead them.

After getting the report on the situation in Jerusalem, Nehemiah became sad. He was still serving the king of Persia, but he was sad. Never before had Nehemiah been sad in the presence of the king! That's impressive, wow! Before this he had always been happy. So when the king saw that Nehemiah was sad, he knew that something was really wrong with him. The king asked Nehemiah, "Why is your face sad, since you are not ill? This is nothing other than sadness of heart."

Nehemiah told the king that the city of Jerusalem - the city where his family was from - had been destroyed. He told him that Jerusalem lay in waste and its gates were consumed with fire. The king asked Nehemiah, "What do you want?" First Nehemiah prayed silently to the God of heaven and then he said to the king, "Send me to Judah to the city...that I may rebuild it."

Nehemiah volunteered to do this hard work! No one else had done anything about the broken down wall, but Nehemiah asked the king if HE could do something about it. Nehemiah was willing to go and rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah saw a need and volunteered to do it without being asked.

Sometimes a person *asks* for volunteers to help with something. We raise our hand if we are willing to do it. It is good to volunteer in this way, but it is better to volunteer without being asked. When your mother or father comes home with the shopping bags, do you say, "What did you buy for me?" Or do you say, "Can I help you put away the groceries?" We can volunteer to help our parents carry the bags inside and put the groceries away. We can ask to help our parents before they ask us. This makes our parents really happy.

(Storyteller, insert a personal example of when you volunteered to do something without being asked.) One day, my dad was cooking dinner in the kitchen. I noticed that there were no knives, forks, or plates on the table yet, so I asked my dad, "Can I set the table for you?" He was really happy I volunteered to help him.

Do you volunteer to do anything at home or at school? *(Ask the children. Here are some examples in case they get stuck: pick up rubbish, take out the trash cans, set/clear the dinner table, tidy up the toys when you know others are coming over...)* I'm sure that your parents and teachers are really happy when you volunteer to help without being asked.

Nehemiah volunteered to go to Jerusalem and repair the city wall because he did not want others to laugh at God's people any longer. No one asked him to do it but he wanted to go. The king granted Nehemiah

permission to go to Jerusalem and gave him wood to use for the gates of the city. Nehemiah knew that God had helped him get everything he needed.

This week let's look for ways to volunteer to help others. We may ask them, "May I help you?"

Memory verse: For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable... 2 Cor. 8:12 Point to emphasize: we should volunteer to help others

[For the storyteller's nourishment: The eagerness of the churches in Macedonia to help the poor churches in Judea is a good pattern to us all (2 Cor. 8:1-12).]

NEHEMIAH

EVERYONE WORKED TOGETHER

Nehemiah 2:9-18; 3:1-31; 5:16-17

(Storyteller, start by giving an example of volunteering to help. See if any of the kids have something that happened this week on the same point.)

Nehemiah volunteered to go to Jerusalem so that he could rebuild the city wall. Nehemiah knew that if a strong city wall was rebuilt, others would no longer laugh at God's people. Nehemiah also knew that if a strong city wall was rebuilt, the holy temple would be safe. The king of Persia allowed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, and Nehemiah gave him the exact date he would return.

Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem with the soldiers that the king had sent with him. Nehemiah waited until it was night time to go out and inspect the walls and the gates, because he knew that not everyone would be happy to know that he had come there to rebuild the wall of the city. He took a few men with him and went out to inspect the gates and the walls of Jerusalem. He wanted to see the damage with his own eyes. As he went around the city, he found that the walls really were broken down and that the gates really had been burned with fire, just as his brother had told him.



When Nehemiah returned, he gathered the people together and said, "You see the bad state we are in, that Jerusalem lies in waste and its gates are consumed with fire. Come let us build up the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach (a shame)." Because the city was in such a waste, it was a shame and disgrace to the Jews. Nehemiah knew that God wanted to rebuild this city, but he could not do it alone. The people responded very

positively to Nehemiah. They would help. Finally, here was somebody who cared about them and the city and who would lead them. He had come a long way and had even brought the wood for the gates. The people said, "Let us rise up and build" and they prepared themselves to work.

Storyteller, insert a personal experience of working together with others. Here is a personal example: When I was younger it was my responsibility to clean the whole house every Saturday. One day, my three younger brothers built a tree house in the forest nearby and wanted to show it to me. They were so excited. I wanted to go so I told them that if we would all clean the house together we could see the tree house sooner. They all volunteered to help me. We worked together until our house was very clean, and we all got to go to the tree house and play.

Can you think of anything that you do together with other people? *(Ask the children for their ideas. Here are some examples in case they get stuck: cooking; playing sports e.g. football; group school projects; etc.*

The people were ready to work and Nehemiah worked with them. He was an excellent leader. He led the people in his words and in his actions. He did not merely tell them what to do. He did the hard work together with all the others. They laid stone upon stone to repair the gaps in the wall while some worked on the gates to lay the beams and set up its doors, bolts, and bars. All the people who were willing, worked together to make their city safe. They all worked side by side to build a good, strong wall for their city.

There were all sorts of people that came to repair the walls and gates. Entire families built together. They were each given parts of the wall to take care of.

People with different jobs all stopped what they were doing to help build the wall. The perfumers who created smells with oils stopped to help build. The goldsmiths who shaped metal with fire also stopped and helped. And even rulers, who usually sat and made laws and didn't get their hands dirty, stopped and helped. And the merchants who travelled around selling things stopped travelling and helped. Many people stopped what they were doing and worked together in teams to rebuild Jerusalem's wall. They all wanted to work together to make their city with its temple safe. It didn't matter if they knew how to build or not, they all worked together.

(Storyteller, insert a personal experience of being willing to stop what you are doing to work with others.) Do you remember the story about my brothers? Well, my brothers stopped what they were doing to help me. They stopped playing and we all worked together to do the housework so that we could all go to see the tree house.

The children of Israel worked night and day to build the walls. Each section had to work with another section to join the parts together. (Draw this on the board or use Legos to show how a wall joins together.) This was a complete team effort.

Let's see what things we might do this week to work together with our families. It would be great if we all worked together to complete something.

Verse to memorize: "...You also helping together by prayer for us..."

2 Cor. 1:11

Point to emphasize: we should work together to benefit others

[For the storyteller's nourishment: The Apostle Paul very much needed the saint's help to carry out his commission from the Lord, both in prayer (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19-20; Phil. 1:19) as well as in service (Phil. 2:19 - 30).]

NEHEMIAH

THEY PERSISTED AND THEY FINISHED

Nehemiah 2:9-18; 3:1-31; 5:16-17

Storyteller, start this week by giving an example of working together with others. See if any of the kids have something that happened this week on the same point.

Nehemiah and the Jews were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem and making a lot of repairs. But while they were working diligently, some of their enemies, Sanballat and Tobiah, tried to make them stop their work.

Sanballat and Tobiah spoke against the Jews who were working on the wall. They said that the Jews were feeble and did not have the strength to do such hard physical work. They said that it would take far too long to repair the wall and the gates. They even said that the work they were doing was so poorly done, that a little animal like a fox could break down the wall they were building.

Eventually, Nehemiah heard what Sanballat and Tobiah had said. What mean words! But Nehemiah did not let the words of the enemies affect the work. Nehemiah was a great leader and he did not let the Jews get discouraged. Nehemiah prayed to God and each man returned to his work, for they all had a heart to work for God. Even though the enemy tried to frustrate them, the children of Israel kept on building. They persisted and did not give up.

(Storyteller, insert a personal example of how you did not give up.) When I was young I used to play basketball. Our coach would make us run to get warmed up. Everyone was always faster than me and I would see the others finishing before I did. Many times I wanted to give up, but I persisted. I kept on running until I got to the finish line.

When we have homework, we should do our best until we finish it. Our homework can be very hard and we might want to give up. But all we need to do is to keep trying and maybe ask for some help. Don't let yourself get so discouraged that you stop. We should keep on trying until we finish the work.

All those who had begun to work on the wall carried on with the building work. They did not give up! They persisted and, because of their persistence, the wall got higher and higher. Of course, rebuilding that wall was a big thing. But lots of times we need to be persistent in small everyday things. Sometimes we need to be persistent in cleaning up our room instead of giving up when it is not really done. Sometimes we need to be persistent to eat those vegetables on our plate instead of sitting at the table for 30 minutes picking away at them.



What are some things we can be persistent in this week? (Examples if they get stuck: learning a musical instrument, a foreign language, their times tables; playing a sport, or working on a school project.) Maybe next week we can share with each other how we did not get discouraged and stop, but rather persisted and got the job done.

Verse to memorize: “...I have finished my course...” 2 Timothy 4:7 Point to emphasize: we should finish what we have begun

[For the storyteller’s nourishment: the Apostle Paul’s only concern in this life was to finish his course (Acts 20:24). For this he pursued relentlessly until the end, in spite of so many obstacles (Phil. 3:13-14; Heb. 12:1-2).]

NEHEMIAH

THEY PAID ATTENTION TO THE WARNINGS

Nehemiah 4:1-23; 6:15-16

Storyteller, start by giving an example of being persistent. See if any of the kids have something that happened this week on the same point.)

The Jews were not the only ones who did not give up. Their enemies were also persistent. When the enemies heard that the gaps in the wall were closing up, they became very angry. All the enemies came together to plot and fight against Jerusalem. They were determined to stop the building. They devised a plan on how to go into the midst of the building work without being noticed. Once they were close to the building work they would be able to destroy the builders. That would stop the work.

Some Jews heard about the enemies' plot and were very scared. They came to Jerusalem and warned the builders to look out for the enemies. They warned the builders again and again and again - ten times they went to Jerusalem to tell the builders to be careful.

Have you ever warned anyone about something? You might warn your little brother or sister to not play in the kitchen when there is something cooking on the stove, or to not run with scissors in their hands. When you warn others, you are telling them that they could get hurt if they are not careful.

(Storyteller, insert an example of when you listened to someone warning you to be safe.)

When I was a little girl, I used to love to walk to the park to play. But to get there I had to cross a very busy road with lots of cars racing by. My dad warned me to be careful. I had to stop at the side of the road, look both ways, and cross only when there were no cars coming. I listened to his warning so that I could get to the park safely.

When Nehemiah heard of the enemies' plot he listened to the warning and responded. He prayed and he told the people not be afraid. He set men to guard the places where the wall was still broken down, and made sure all the people had weapons in case the enemy attacked. Now all the builders could return to the wall and get on with their work, knowing that they were prepared just in case the enemies came.

Do you listen when others warn you of something? We should always listen to what others have to say. Can anyone give me an example of what someone has warned you of? *(Some examples if they need help: not opening the door to strangers, not jumping on the chair which might break, making sure to close/lock windows and doors when you leave the house, wearing a helmet when you ride a bike, taking a coat with you when you are playing outside...)* Your parents care for you and they want you to be safe and that is why they warn you.

Nehemiah cared for God's people and he came up with a plan to make sure the people and the city were really safe. Nehemiah had half of the men work on the wall with swords strapped to their sides, while the other half guarded them with spears, swords, shields, and bows. The builders were far away from one another, so he placed a man with a trumpet next to him. If the enemy attacked, the trumpet would be blown as a warning for everyone to hear. When the people heard it they were to stop what they were doing and go to Nehemiah so that they could all fight the invading enemies.

This was like the fire alarm that we have at school. If the enemies started to attack, the trumpet would sound and all the workers would go to fight the enemies. Having this kind of alarm system helped the people work hard. They weren't spending their energy worrying about the enemies. Half of them held spears from the start of dawn until the stars came out. Nehemiah and many of the others with him worked and watched so diligently that they did not even have time to change their clothes! They worked and watched day and night!

Finally after fifty-two days the wall was finished. WOW! How quickly the wall went up! Everyone had worked together with Nehemiah and there was now a strong wall around Jerusalem with gates that would protect the holy temple and God's people. When the enemies surrounding Jerusalem heard that the wall was completed they were very afraid, for they knew that God must have been with the Jews to rebuild the wall so quickly!

This week, let's try listening to others when we are warned. Maybe each of us could come with an example next time!

Verse to memorize: "He who has an ear, let him hear..." Revelation 2:29 Point to emphasize: we should taking the warning of others

[For the storyteller's nourishment: All the history of Israel's failure was recorded for our warning (1 Cor. 10:11) so that we might take heed to His voice and enter into His rest (Heb. 3:7 - 4:12).]

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