

Nehemiah's Prayer And
viewing of The wall.

Nehemiah 1:1- 2:20

MEMORY VERSE

NEHEMIAH 1:11

“O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name....”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Ten unlined index cards and a marker.

Red construction paper (for large heart), 2” x 10” strips of construction paper (4 per child), a stapler and/or glue sticks, and an “eye, nose, and mouth” template.

Sponges, paper towels, cleanser, and/or vacuum (most things available at the church).

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Flash Card Review

Use this game to review previous lessons and as an introduction to Nehemiah. You will need 10 index cards and a marker. Before class, draw pictures for 10 events which took place in the stories of Ezra or Nehemiah. For example, you can draw:

1. Temple – to represent Ezra rebuilding the temple.
2. Hammers or saws – to represent the rebuilding.
3. A Bible – to represent Ezra reading the word to the people.
4. A man crying – to represent Nehemiah being sad over the condition of Israel.
5. A picture of food with a line through it – to represent fasting.

Review previous lessons for additional ideas.

Divide the class into two teams. Hold up the flash cards one at a time and allow the children to raise their hand if they know it. Do not shout out the answer! Call on the first team to raise their hand. If the answer is wrong, allow the other team to have a chance. If both are wrong, cycle the card back through the stack. Keep score and declare a winning team.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever had an idea or opinion about something, or some problem? Was it so important that you wanted to share it with everyone? Sometimes we have good ideas, but we do not always do something about them. When talking about problems, it's easy for us to complain and offer our ideas. But, what about action—doing something about it?!

Nehemiah was a man of action--one who not only talked about a problem, but one who prayed and committed himself to *do* something about it! He did not allow obstacles to stop him from completing even what seemed impossible to do. He was persuaded that God would enable him to do whatever He called him to do. **Let us be willing to do whatever God asks us to do.**

NEHEMIAH 1:1-3

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel,

that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."

Nehemiah was an Israelite, born in Babylon. He had risen to a very important position in the kingdom of Persia. He was serving King Artaxerxes as his personal cupbearer (Nehemiah 1:11), the one who ensured the safety and quality of the king's food and drink. Such an important position certainly revealed he was a man of honest character, considered trustworthy.

At the time of Nehemiah, the Israelites had returned from Babylon and had been in Jerusalem for over 90 years. Although the Israelites had completed the rebuilding of the temple in 516 BC, the city walls remained in shambles. This left the people defenseless and vulnerable to enemies; the temple, itself, could be destroyed or robbed if enemies attacked.

Though Nehemiah had never seen Jerusalem, as an Israelite, his heart yearned for the Holy City—the place of the House of God, the center for God's worship. The news from Hanani (his brother) greatly troubled Nehemiah. Those walls once represented power, protection, and beauty to the city of Jerusalem.

Perhaps, everyone saw the problem—the city walls were in disrepair. Perhaps, they discussed the problem, but no one did anything about it. Maybe some complained about their need for a wall for protection. Some may have even offered solutions on how it could be fixed, yet no one took action to build the wall. **Let us be willing to do whatever God asks us to do.**

Note: Nehemiah was born in a foreign country, yet his heart yearned for the Promised Land of Israel. His heart did not belong to the Persians; it belonged to God and His people. As Christians, we are foreigners in this world. Our hearts should yearn for God

and those who belong to Him. Like Nehemiah, we should never think this world is our home; our home is in heaven. We are only passing through this world for a short time, like foreigners visiting a foreign land. Do not let your heart get settled into this world. Seek first the kingdom of God.

NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,

"please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

"We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

"Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;

'but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'

"Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.

"O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.

Nehemiah was so sad over the condition of Jerusalem and his people that he broke down and wept, pouring out his heart to God. For several days he would not eat; he spent time in prayer and fasting before God. Nehemiah knew that God would be faithful to hear his prayers.

Nehemiah faced a situation he knew he could not solve by himself. Yet, he knew to whom he prayed--the "great and awesome God" of Israel who keeps His promises to those that love and obey Him. In Matthew 19:26 we read, "With God all things are possible." In Jeremiah 32:17 the prophet declares, "There is nothing too hard for you."

As Nehemiah prayed, he confessed the sins of Israel. With humility, he included himself as guilty along with his people. Nehemiah calls himself "God's servant." He was willing and ready to take whatever action was necessary to change the situation. **Let us be willing to do whatever God asks us to do.**

Nehemiah reminded God of His words and promises to Moses, “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.” If the people were unfaithful, they would be scattered among other nations. If they would repent and remember God’s commandments and do them, He would gather them together again to their homeland. (See Deuteronomy 28:64 and Deuteronomy 30:1-5).

Nehemiah was a man of prayer. In every situation, he prayed. Are you in a situation, today, where you need God’s help? Remember that the God of heaven is a great and awesome God who loves and cares for you. Nothing is beyond God’s control or capability. Bring your cares to Him, and you will find rest and peace.

NEHEMIAH 2:1-8

And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.

Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid,

and said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?"

Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah,

"and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

Nehemiah looked for the right opportunity to tell the king about God's people. Four months passed since Nehemiah had received the distressing news concerning the state of Jerusalem. One day, the king noticed the countenance of Nehemiah's face. He wanted to know why he looked so sad. Nehemiah was frightened when the king noticed his sad appearance. It was dangerous to show sorrow before the king, who could execute anyone who displeased him. Yet, he did not allow fear to stop him from doing what God had called him to do. Nehemiah stood before the king explaining the reason for his sorrow. He told of the terrible condition of his people and country.

The king's response to Nehemiah's concern was unexpected. He questioned, "What do you request?" What an opportunity! What an answer to prayer! Nehemiah, a man of prayer, quickly prayed to God; then he responded. He asked the king for permission to go to Judah. When the king agreed, he asked for additional help to rebuild the walls.

God answered the prayers of Nehemiah. He allowed him to serve His people in Jerusalem with all the resources needed to complete the job. What an awesome God! Nehemiah was on his way with the king's blessing.

Ready and willing to do God's will, Nehemiah had been in the right place at the right time. God had opened the door for "His servant."
Let us be willing to do whatever God asks us to do

The Heart Guy

Nehemiah loved the Lord and his people greatly. To remind the children about having a heart filled with God's love for others, allow them to make a "Heart Guy." You will need red construction paper (for large heart), 2" x 10" strips of construction paper (4 per child), a stapler and/or glue sticks, and an "eye, nose, and mouth" template.

Prepare the large hearts before class and pass out to the children. Give them four 2" x 10" strips of paper. Have them fold the strips of paper several times like an accordion. Allow the children to cut out the eyes, nose and mouth of their choice. Glue them onto the heart. Glue the "arms and legs" (strips) onto the heart. Optional - Using a hole-punch, punch a hole at the top of the heart and use yarn or string to hang up the Heart Guy.

NEHEMIAH 2:9-16

Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode.

And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire.

Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass.

So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.

And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

When Nehemiah arrived in Judah, he was greeted with opposition. There were people there who were opposed to anyone who would seek the “well being” of the Jewish people. These men would certainly be against the rebuilding of the walls. Nehemiah kept his mission a secret. After three days, he traveled at night through the city of Jerusalem, carefully observing the damage to the wall. He surveyed the damage and estimated what it would take to complete the job. Only after careful planning would he be ready to go public with his mission from God.

We can expect opposition from those who do not share our godly interests. When you attempt to do God’s work, some will work against you; some will hope that you fail. In Romans 8:31 we read, “...if God is for us, who can be against us?”

NEHEMIAH 2:17-20

Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."

And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah, now, challenged the people to take action: "Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." He was committed to join with the people to accomplish an awesome task. He told them of God's gracious hand that granted him favor before King Artaxerxes. Though the people had settled for the walls being destroyed, they now became excited about the work at hand. **Let us be willing to do whatever God asks us to do.**

It did not take long for the word about the wall being repaired to spread to the surrounding area. As soon as their enemies heard the news, they began to work hard to cause problems for God's people. Sanballat and Tobiah began to accuse the people of desiring to rebel against the king. Later, these men would ridicule the people efforts, saying the walls could never be rebuilt because the damage was too extensive.

Nehemiah handled the confrontation of his enemies the right way, with godly character and wisdom. It was not a foolish undertaking beyond the capacity of him or the people to perform; instead he assured, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us...." He added that Sanballat and his friends would have no part in the project.

Nehemiah was both a man of prayer and a man of action, committed to God. Deeply concerned for God's people and His will for them, he was not content to sit on the sidelines. Would you have responded as Nehemiah did if you had seen such a need around you? **Let us be willing to do whatever God asks us to do.** Let us pray and ask God to use us for His purposes. May we be willing and ready to respond when He stirs up within our hearts a call for action and commitment to serve Him.

Helpers in the Classroom

Bring to class sponges, paper towels, cleanser, vacuum, etc. Explain to the children that it is a privilege to serve the Lord. Everyone worked together to build the temple and then the wall around Jerusalem. It is important that we work together to learn how to take care of God's house today.

Give each child a job. You can have them wipe down the chalkboard, wipe down the chairs, clean smudges off of the walls, vacuum the floors, clean windows (if applicable), etc. If you like, sing a praise song while you work and make it fun. Have small prizes available for all of the children who have worked hard doing the Lord's work.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to be ready and willing to do whatever God asks them to do. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

