

Return to Jerusalem- Rebuilding the Walls

Scripture Reference: [Nehemiah 1-8](#)



Suggested Emphasis: Continue to do what is right even if people try to stop us.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



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Story Overview:

After nearly one hundred years back in Jerusalem, the city walls were still in ruins. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. He asked the king for help and went to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. The neighbouring countries complained and threatened Nehemiah, trying to distract him, but he kept to his purpose and finished the job.

Background Study:

In 445 B.C. when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, Jewish exiles from Babylonia had been there for nearly one hundred years. Some improvements in the city had been made. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a new temple had been built. Under the leadership of the scribe, Ezra, the Law of Moses had been brought back into force. But the walls and gates of the city were much as the Babylonians had left them after sacking the city in 586 B.C.

Nehemiah's moonlight inspection around the city's south end confirmed what he had been told earlier by his brother Hanani: no one yet had assumed the leadership in repairing Jerusalem's defences. Taking advantage of his position as an official in the Persian court, Nehemiah had asked King Artaxerxes I for permission to return to his homeland and for help in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. Artaxerxes granted these requests.

The Jews in Jerusalem readily agreed to cooperate with Nehemiah's plan. But some others were not so pleased by it. The leader of the opposition was Sanballat, governor of Samaria (north of Judah). Sanballat's main allies were Tobiah, governor of Ammon (east of Judah), and Geshem, leader of a league of Arab tribes that had occupied Moab and Edom (southeast of Judah).

Virtually surrounding Judah, these enemies did not ridicule Judah to be humorous. Their mocking was meant to threaten. They knew that rebuilt walls around Jerusalem might signal a rise in Judah's military might – and a danger to themselves.

Nehemiah's purpose for rebuilding the walls was not primarily to end the city's vulnerability. He wanted to end the disgrace to God caused by the holy city's being partly in disrepair. Even though opposition to the rebuilding intensified, the Jews persevered. And in a remarkably short period, by early October 445 B.C., they made the defences whole again. Their success brought honour to God in the eyes of the very people who had been their opponents.

After the walls were completed Nehemiah encouraged the people to settle in the city. Finally, all of the people assembled and Ezra read the word of the Lord as they stood and listened. Many people wept at this sacred occasion but Nehemiah told them to celebrate and enjoy. "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).



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Way to Introduce the Story:

Play a version of "red light/green light. Tell the children that you will call out the name of a good activity (something that makes God happy). When you hold up the green light (a circle of green paper) they are to act out the good thing. When you hold up the red light (a circle of red paper) they are to "freeze" and stop doing the good thing until you hold the green light up again. "Good things" might include things like sweeping the floor to help mom, washing the dishes, picking flowers for someone, writing a note of encouragement on the computer, etc. After a few rounds talk about the fact that God likes us to do good things but sometimes people try to stop us. It's like they are the red light.

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The Story:

Nehemiah was a Jew but he did not live in Jerusalem. He lived in Persia where he worked in the palace. Nehemiah had a very important job. He was the cupbearer for the king. Sometimes bad people put poison in the king's drinking cup. Nehemiah's job was to always taste the drink first to make sure there was no poison.

Even though Nehemiah had never been to Jerusalem he really wanted to go. His brother had been to Jerusalem and had told Nehemiah all about it. Nehemiah's brother said that even though the temple had been built in Jerusalem there was something very important still missing. The big wall that used to surround Jerusalem still needed to be fixed. It was falling down and crumbled.

Nehemiah went to the king and told him that he would like to go to Jerusalem and repair the city walls. The king liked Nehemiah so he gave him permission to go. The king gave Nehemiah a letter to show all of the Jews and all of the neighbours around Jerusalem. The letter said that Nehemiah was in charge of the walls. The king also sent some marching soldiers and some soldiers on horses along with Nehemiah.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he made a special trip around the city to have a look at the walls. He wanted to see things himself without anyone else around, so he went alone at night. He rode a horse all around the walls and saw everything that needed to be fixed.

Soon Nehemiah organised everyone to work on the wall. The Jews wanted to have a wall around their city so lots of people volunteered to help. At first everyone worked very hard but soon their work was interrupted. Neighbours from other cities came and started bothering the workers. They made fun of them and said that they did not know how to build walls. But the workers did not stop. Nehemiah kept praying that God would help them keep on doing the right thing even if people made fun of them.

Next the neighbours decided to attack the workers to make them stop. When Nehemiah heard about that plan he started making sure that there were always guards (all day and all night) to protect the workers when they were busy at the walls.

Even some of the Jews made the workers want to stop rebuilding the walls. Some of the rich Jews started cheating some of the poor Jews. The workers wanted to stop and help the poor people. But Nehemiah called all of the cheaters together and told them that they had to give back the money. Soon everyone got back to work.

When the neighbours saw that the wall was getting taller every day, they decided to try to hurt Nehemiah. They sent him messages telling him to meet them alone, outside of the town. Nehemiah told them that he would not stop working on the walls.

No matter what people did to try to stop Nehemiah, he just kept on working. He knew it was the right thing to do. Finally, the wall was finished. Nehemiah had never stopped doing the right thing - even when people tried to stop him.

All of the Jews had a special day of celebration. Ezra, the priest, stood on a high wooden platform and read from the Book of the Law of God. As soon as he began reading, the people all stood up to show respect for the word of God. Ezra read from the law from sunrise until noon. Everyone was thankful to God and what he had done for them.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion. [Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

Nehemiah rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem is told as one story in today's lesson but the Free Bible images above break it down into 2 different slideshows. Click on the links below to download these illustrations and/or slideshows:

[Nehemiah: Starting to Rebuild the Walls in Jerusalem](#)

[Nehemiah: Overcoming Opposition to Rebuilding the Walls](#)

Consider carefully which illustrations you will use when you teach. Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations

can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Who was the cupbearer to the king? Nehemiah
2. What part of Jerusalem did Nehemiah rebuild? The city walls
3. Why did the neighbours make fun of the workers? To try to get them to stop working on the city walls.
What did Ezra stand on a platform and do from sunrise until noon? He read out loud from the Law of God

Song Suggestions:

- [Oh Be Careful Song](#)
- [I'm in the Lord's Army Song](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Bring wooden blocks to class to build/rebuild the walls surrounding Jerusalem. Older children could use a deck of cards to build their walls.
- Write situations on cards (or tell non-readers) and let the children draw cards and act out the situations using their own ending. They could try both good and bad endings and let the others guess which it is. Example situation: "the new girl in class drops all of her books in front of everyone. You begin to help her pick them up and then everyone laughs at you and tells you to stop being friends with a 'loser'. The child that draws that card can call on others to help him/her act it out.
- Use bible encyclopaedias and commentaries to learn about city walls.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Return to Jerusalem-Rebuilding Walls" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)
[Click here for "Return to Jerusalem-Rebuilding Walls" \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets-Nehemiah's Prayer and Reviewing of the Wall \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets-rebuilding and completion of the wall \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets-Ezra reads the law \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Chart: Chronology of Judah's Return at http://www.biblecharts.org/](http://www.biblecharts.org/)

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