

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. Don't 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? Was it so important that you wanted to share it with everyone? Sometimes we have good ideas, but we don't always do something about them. When talking about problems, it's easy for us to complain and offer our ideas. But what we really need to do is to not only talk about problems, but also do something about them.

Our lesson today tells us of such a person who not only talked about the problem, but also did something about it. Nehemiah was a man of action and commitment to God. He didn't allow obstacles to stop him from completing what seemed impossible to do. He trusted in God to help him and God was faithful to enable him to do it. Nehemiah teaches us that **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He 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."

Even though the Israelites had returned from Babylon and had been in Jerusalem over 90 years, the walls of the city were still unrepaired. This left the people defenseless and vulnerable to enemies. Also the Jews had completed the rebuilding of the temple in 516 BC, yet the city walls remained in shambles.

These walls once represented power, protection and beauty to the city of Jerusalem. They were also there to protect the temple from attack. Everyone saw the problem and talked about the problem, but no one did anything about it. Maybe some complained how they needed a wall for protection and perhaps some even offered solutions on how it could be fixed, yet no one took action to build the wall for 70 years.

Nehemiah was a Jew who had risen to a very important position in the kingdom of Persia. He was serving King Artaxerxes as his personal cupbearer (verse 11). A mighty monarch such as the king of Persia would only select for that position a man who was honest and trustworthy. Nehemiah's position reveals that God had blessed him with the gifts and character to serve the king of Persia.

When Nehemiah heard about the condition of Jerusalem he was concerned because he was an Israelite. He knew that it was where the temple was and was very important because it was the center for the worship of God. The city of Jerusalem represented a lot to the Israelites and it was blessed with God's special presence in the temple. Though Nehemiah was a captive in a foreign country, his heart yearned for the Promised Land of Israel. His heart didn't belong to the Persians, it belonged to God and His people.

In a similar way, 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; as Christians, our home is in heaven. We are only passing through this world for a short time, like foreigners visiting a foreign land. Don't let your heart get settled into this world, but seek the kingdom of God. **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He asks us to do.**

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.

As you read these verses, it is obvious that Nehemiah was a man of great character. He had a very close relationship with God. He 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, but 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. But he also knew that with God all things were possible (Jeremiah 32:17). The great and awesome God of Israel keeps His promises to those that love and obey Him.

As Nehemiah prayed he confessed the sins of the people of Israel and those of his own life. Nehemiah included himself in Israel's sins and called himself God's servant. Not only was Nehemiah

claiming responsibility for the sins of Israel, but he had a willingness to do something about it. **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He asks us to do.**

In his prayer, Nehemiah asks God to restore the nation of Israel as He had promised. If Israel's people would repent and obey, then those who were exiled would be re-gathered to Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 30:1-5). God had told Moses that if the nation of Israel was unfaithful, He would scatter them from their homeland (Deuteronomy 28:64). God scattered them because of their disobedience; but He would be faithful to gather them together again in their obedience.

God changed the heart of King Artaxerxes who had made a decree years earlier to stop construction work in Jerusalem (Ezra 4:21). The king was the only one who could reverse that order since all the known lands were in his control. Nehemiah prays that God would allow him to have favor in the eyes of the king. He prayed that a door of opportunity would open to help his people in Jerusalem.

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 was in a very special position to be able to speak to the king. He was the trusted cupbearer who ensured the safety and quality of the king's food and drink. As Nehemiah prayed, he looked for the right opportunity to tell the king about God's people. He was ready and willing to allow God to use him to make a difference for His people. **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He asks us to do.** Nehemiah couldn't force the king to do anything yet he waited for God to open the door.

Four months went by when the king noticed the countenance of Nehemiah's face. 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.

The king confronted Nehemiah. He wanted to know why he looked so sad. All of a sudden fear gripped Nehemiah's heart, yet he didn't 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.

Though unexpected, God had opened the door of opportunity for Nehemiah to express his concerns. Nehemiah trusted that God would answer his prayers, which in return would give him an opportunity to serve. **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He asks us to do.**

The king responded well to Nehemiah's concern, and surprisingly wants to know what should be done. Wow! What an opportunity! What an answer to prayer! With little time to think, Nehemiah quickly prayed to God. He knew that God was in charge and ready to listen to and answer every prayer request.

After his prayer, Nehemiah asked the king for permission to go to Judah. As soon as the king said yes, he began asking for additional help to rebuild the walls. God had worked in response to Nehemiah's prayers. 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.

Over the years, Nehemiah had built up his relationship with the king. Nehemiah was a man of integrity, and the king valued him. What a beautiful testimony of someone who serves others as unto the Lord. The king knew that Nehemiah would be true to his word and return within the time frame requested.

The Heart Guy

Nehemiah loved the Lord and his people greatly. To remind the children about love 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 didn't want to see the walls rebuilt. This had been going on for 90 years by those who settled in the area when the Jews were taken captive. Instead of entering the land with cheers and applause, Nehemiah is greeted with problems and people working against him.

We can expect opposition from those who don't have godly interests. When you attempt to do God's work, some will work against you, and some will even hope that you fail. Be ready for this when God is using you, but remember that God is behind you to help and guide you as you serve Him.

Nehemiah arrived quietly in Jerusalem and spent several days carefully observing the damage to the wall. He kept his mission a secret. 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.

Nehemiah showed godly wisdom when facing difficult problems. He got firsthand information and carefully considered what the problem was. Then he presented a good solution to the people.

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."

For three days Nehemiah had prayed and planned to rebuild the walls, now it was time to encourage the people to take action and do it. Nehemiah was committed to join with the people to accomplish an awesome task. God had given Nehemiah a vision to rebuild the walls and trusted in God to complete it.

He first challenged the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Then, he told them how God's gracious hand had granted him favor before King Artaxerxes. The people had settled for the walls being destroyed, but now they were excited about the work at hand. **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He asks us to do.**

It did not take long for the word about the wall being repaired to spread to the surrounding area. The people were excited to be a part of God's plan. As soon as their enemies heard the news they began to work harder to cause problems for God's people.

Sanballat and Tobiah began to say that the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls was against the King's wishes and that Nehemiah was rebelling against the King. These same enemies also laughed at Nehemiah, saying the walls would never be rebuilt because the damage was so extensive.

Nehemiah handled the confrontation the right way, with godly character and wisdom. He did not tell them he already had permission from the king to rebuild. Instead he simply said he had God's approval and that was enough. The God of heaven would help them rebuild the wall. That's all Sanballat and his friends needed to know. Nehemiah assured them that they would have no part in this project.

It is easy to see how Nehemiah was a man of action, committed to God. He was deeply concerned for God's people and His will for them. Would you have responded as Nehemiah did if you had seen such a need around you? **God wants us to be willing to do whatever He asks us to do.** Pray and ask God to use you for His purposes. Be willing and ready to respond when He does stir up within your heart, 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 ask the Lord to show them what He would have them to do. To be strong and courageous to do what they are asked to do. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

