



Nehemiah



MEETING AIM

To discover that God wants to build us up.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Nehemiah 1-2



BACKGROUND

These events happened 2,500 years ago, after Jerusalem had been destroyed and most of the Jews had been deported. Nehemiah was a faithful Jew in exile in Persia, where he held an important job. He risked everything by asking the king of Persia to let him rebuild Jerusalem. The king agreed, and over the following twelve years, Nehemiah proved himself to be a brave and determined leader, who rebuilt Jerusalem and became governor of Judah.

+ CIRCLE TIME



As the children arrive, sit everyone down in a circle. Share any refreshments you have - you might want to taste a few flavours of squash to help the children think about someone being a cup bearer for someone else. Go on to ask the children if they have done anything this week that they would like to tell the group about. Share something that you have done this week too.

+ WALL BUILDING



You will need: construction toys such as Lego, wooden bricks or cardboard boxes (small ones such as matchboxes, larger ones such as shoeboxes or giant boxes from online orders or household appliances)

Spread out all the construction toys and invite children to build a city surrounded by a protective wall. Make it as big as you can, and make the wall strong and safe. Warn children that this is a city surrounded by enemies, and it might not be safe for ever. Ask the children how they might protect their city - what might they be able to do?

When the construction is finished, ask children to play the part of this city's enemies! Break down the walls together and leave the pieces where they lie.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: a Bible; props for the story, such as a jewelled goblet, a picture of a donkey and road signs to Jerusalem

This is a combination of storytelling and Bible reading. Tell the story as follows, using whatever props you have gathered at the right time in the story.

Nehemiah was an important man. Although he was from Jerusalem, he worked for the king of Persia, as his cupbearer. He had to give the king his drinks, but not before he had tasted it to check it wasn't poisoned! One day, Nehemiah got a visit from his brother, who lived back in Jerusalem. His brother told him that Jerusalem was in ruins and that everyone was in great trouble. Nehemiah was so upset! He stopped eating and prayed to God. *Read Nehemiah 1:5-11.*

Later, Nehemiah came to the king with his drink, but he didn't look very happy. The king noticed and demanded to know what was wrong! Nehemiah was terrified, but he knew his chance had come. He took a deep breath and told the king and queen. *Read Nehemiah 2:3-6.*

The king gave Nehemiah letters to help him on his journey. But as he travelled, there were people who were very angry that the king was helping the people of Jerusalem - they didn't want anyone to help them! *Read Nehemiah 2:11-18.*

God was helping Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem. But there were still people who were angry that Jerusalem was going to be rebuilt! They threatened Nehemiah and the people, but Nehemiah knew he could rely on God!

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- Which bit of this story did you like best?
- If you were mending something that was broken, who would you ask for help?
- What would you like to say to God about this story?
- I wonder why Nehemiah said sorry to God?
- If you were Nehemiah, would you build these broken walls to make them the same as they were before, or different? Why?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: the remains of the city and walls built at the start of the session

Invite the children to rebuild the city and walls they made at the start of the session. As they do so, talk together about whether it's going to look the same or different. Can they remember exactly how they built everything the first time? Does it matter? How does it feel to be rebuilding something that got broken? Wonder together about how Nehemiah and his men managed to rebuild Jerusalem's walls 2,500 years ago, when they didn't have hi-tech cranes or mechanical diggers.

+ PRAYER



You will need: pebbles or smooth stones; felt-tip pens (with washable, non-permanent ink); a bowl of water; a towel

Explain that everyone gets things wrong sometimes, but God wants to forgive us and build us up to be better people. Nehemiah said sorry for all the things his people had done wrong. We are going to say sorry to God today.

Invite children to take a pebble and write or draw on it something they want to say sorry for: it could be something they have said, done or not done.

Then say: "Sorry" to God and place the pebbles in the water to wash off the ink. Dry off the clean pebbles and build a cairn together. End by saying together: "God, may you forgive us all and build us up. Amen."

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