

NEHEMIAH

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PLEASE NOTE!

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Table of contents

Lesson		Page
Introduction		3
Overview		6
Lesson 1	The cupbearer with a heavy heart	7
Lesson 2	A call to arise and build	13
Lesson 3	Building walls and facing enemies	21
Lesson 4	Facing problems among God's people	29
Lesson 5	A city dedicated to God	37
Stones of the wall (lesson 5)		44
Summary of steps for counselling the child who wants to come to Christ		46

Introduction

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem is a thrilling part of the history of God's people. Those walls had lain in ruins for 140 years. First, after many years of captivity in Babylon, some 50,000 Jews had returned with Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple. Then, after that, Ezra had come back with a second group of volunteers to restore the worship of Jehovah. Finally, around 445 BC, the last group returned with Nehemiah to rebuild the walls and gates of the city.

The name Nehemiah means "God consoles" - God used him to encourage and help His people in a special way. In spite of great opposition, Nehemiah and the people succeeded in building the city wall (4 km/2.5 miles in length) in just fifty-two days. In addition, life in the city was reorganised, so that the true worship of God could continue. What was the secret? God used Nehemiah to fulfil His plan.

The book of Nehemiah is full of instruction about how God's work is to be done in God's way, and for God's glory. These five Bible lessons were written especially to help saved children, but the unsaved can also benefit from them.

Our prayer is that through these lessons boys and girls will enter into God's perfect will for their lives - for salvation, for sanctification and for service.

"Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Teaching Bible truths

We fall short of our responsibility as teachers if we only tell children Bible stories. It is essential that children learn the truths those stories were written down to teach us, and that we then take them a step further to show what that truth means to them in their daily lives. Of course, we cannot in one lesson cover all the teaching any particular story would provide, so in each of these lessons one central truth has been chosen. The teaching of the central truth has been woven throughout the narrative, but to help you in your preparation the teaching sections have been marked "CT". These are also marked out in the lesson plan.

You will notice that the central truths are marked with a "U" or an "S" to show the kind of children the truth is applied to - unsaved or saved. This is also made clear in the text by using phrases such as, "If you have not trusted the Lord Jesus to forgive your sin ..." or, "Christian, you ...".

The application of the truth has been highlighted with a line beside the text. You may feel it necessary to adapt the applications to better suit the children you teach. For example, the application may use a boy's name, yet you have only girls present. It could be that the application given is more applicable to older children, while yours are very young. Make the changes you feel are necessary. The important thing is that the Word of God is applied to their lives.

Make yourself available for counselling

When you present the Gospel message, there will be children who will respond to it independently. They may or may not at a later date tell you that they have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. There will, however, be others who would like some help. They may have questions to ask; they may need help or encouragement in knowing what to say.

As you teach the saved children, there may be times when they would like advice in a difficult situation; they may need clarification on how a particular lesson applies to their daily lives; they may find themselves in a situation where they do not know what the Bible says they should do; they may want to share a difficulty so that you can pray for them, especially if you are the only Christian support they have.

For these reasons it is important that the children know you are available to talk. It is also important that they know when and where to go when they want to talk to you. Finally, it is essential that unsaved children do not confuse coming to the Lord Jesus with coming to you.

In all cases you should not make yourself available at the same time as giving the Gospel invitation, so that the children never get the impression that they cannot come to Christ without coming through you, or that they are saved simply by waiting to speak to you.

An example for use with the unsaved child

“Do you really want to live for the Lord Jesus, but don’t know how to come to Him? I will be glad to explain it from the Bible; come and see me. I’ll be standing by that tree when the meeting is over. Remember, I can’t take away your sin - only the Lord Jesus can do that - but I will be glad to help you understand better how you can come to Him. Just come and sit with me under that tree.”

An example for use with the saved child

“If you have trusted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and you have never told me about it, please let me know. I’ll be standing beside the piano after the meeting is finished. I would like to know if you too have trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, so that I can pray for you and perhaps help you.”

Memory verses

A Scripture verse to teach the children is suggested for each lesson. If you are teaching the lessons as a series over five weeks it would be advisable to choose two or three verses to teach well, which the children will then remember. If you try to teach all five, the children may not really know any of them well.

Practise using the visuals

It is wise to practise using the visuals before teaching the lesson to children. Become thoroughly familiar with the flashcards or PowerPoint slides and know when you need to use them in the lesson.

PowerPoint® visuals

If you are using the PowerPoint version of this lesson, you can choose from two options on the CD.

- 1 The first version contains the flashcard images and lesson cover slides only.
- 2 The second contains the extra features of the central truth, applications and memory verse.

At the bottom right side of each slide you will see a small image (such as a Bible, a cross or a crown) which contains a hyperlink. If you click on this image, it will take you to the central truth for that lesson, thus allowing you to use the central truth at any stage in your teaching. Clicking on the arrow on the central truth slide will take you back to the slide you were previously showing.

Extra visual aids

On a piece of card print out the words of the central truth for each lesson. If you are using a flannelboard, back the card with flannel or pieces of flocked paper. (Use lower case letters, so that even the younger ones can read the words easily.) Put this card on the board at the beginning of the class or when you first teach the central truth in the lesson.

Additional helps

Along the left and right margins additional helps are provided, giving background information and optional ideas on how to add interest to your lesson. You can use these ideas in your club as time allows.

Review questions

For each lesson some review questions are given. These can be used after the lesson or the following week, before teaching the new lesson.

Review time, if conducted in an orderly way, can be an ideal opportunity to reinforce what you have taught, while still being fun for the children. You can use this time ...

- 1 to find out how much the children are understanding and remembering.
- 2 to help you as a teacher to know what you need to emphasise more so that the children will remember better.
- 3 to provide a time of fun in the class. The children like competition and look forward to this part of the programme. But it is more than just a game: it is a time of learning.

In this textbook only questions on the lesson are included. It would be profitable to include questions also on the songs, verse and whatever else you teach. In this way the children realise that every part of the programme is important.

Overview

Lesson	Central truth	Application	Memory verse
The cupbearer with a heavy heart Nehemiah 1:1 - 2:8	Pray to God in His way	Unsaved: Ask Him to save you from your sin Saved: Take time each day to praise Him, confess your sin and ask Him for help	“Call to Me, and I will answer you ...” Jeremiah 33:3
A call to arise and build Nehemiah 2:9-20	The Lord has a work for Christians to do	Saved: Ask God to lead you and use you	“... Lord, what do You want me to do? ...” Acts 9:6
Building walls and facing enemies Nehemiah 3 - 4	Be ready to face difficulties from others	Saved: Ask God to help you - remember how great and powerful He is	“... If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31
Facing problems among God’s people Nehemiah 5 - 6	God helps His children to be wise	Unsaved: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved Saved: Read God’s Word; ask God to help you answer in the right way	“Call to Me, and I will answer you ...” Jeremiah 33:3
A city dedicated to God Nehemiah 7 - 13	Let the Lord have control of your life	Unsaved: Receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour Saved: Obey His Word; ask God’s forgiveness; do His work; rejoice in Him; give yourself to God	“No one can serve two masters ...” Matthew 6:24

Lesson 1

The cupbearer with a heavy heart

Scriptures for teachers

Nehemiah 1:1 - 2:8

Central truth

Pray to God in His way

Application

Unsaved: Ask Him to save you from your sin

Saved: Take time each day to praise Him, confess your sin and ask Him for help

Memory verse

“Call to Me, and I will answer you ...” Jeremiah 33:3

Visual aids

◆ Flashcards: 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4 and 1-5

Or

◆ PowerPoint slides: Map, 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4 and 1-5

And

◆ Map at end of flashcard book

Lesson outline

Introduction

Imagine what it was like to live 2,500 years ago
CT

Progression of events

- 1 Nehemiah, cupbearer of the King of Persia
CTU
- 2 Nehemiah hears that the walls of Jerusalem are in ruins
CTS
- 3 He prays
- Praises God CTS
- Confesses sin CTS
- Asks God for help, counting on His promise CTS
- 4 He keeps on praying CTS
- 5 The King asks why he is sad and what he wants
- 6 Nehemiah requests permission to rebuild the city

Climax

- 7 The King says “Yes”
- 8 He asks for letters to have a safe passage and to get wood

Conclusion

Will you take time each day to pray?
CTS, CTU

Lesson

Can you imagine what it was like for someone who lived 2,500 years ago? There were no planes, no cars, no newspapers, no telephone, no TV and no e-mail. It was very difficult for anyone who was in a foreign land, for they were cut off completely from news from home.

Something very sad had happened to the children of Israel, the Jews. They had been taken captive to Babylon.

Show the map at the end of the flashcards.

Why? Because they had disobeyed God's commands. They had turned to other gods and worshipped idols, instead of the true and living God, and God allowed them to be taken captive. However, far away from their native land, the hearts of many were changed and they asked God to forgive them. God answered their prayer. God wants us to pray to Him as well. God answered the prayer of His people long ago. He made it possible for many of them to return to Jerusalem.

The King of Persia gave an order allowing them to go and rebuild the temple, the building where they worshipped God. They were so happy that at last they could go home.

One of the young men who was born in Persia was called Nehemiah. Nehemiah had been given a very important job in Persia. He worked in the palace of the King in Shushan.

Flashcard 1-1

The palace in Shushan was very beautiful. Everywhere you looked was marble, gold and silver. The furniture was made of special wood. The King had many servants and soldiers to protect him. Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. Being a cupbearer may not sound very special to you, but at that time it was a position of great honour. He would taste the King's food and drink, before it was served to him. This was done to protect the King from being poisoned. If the cupbearer did not get sick and die, then the King knew it was safe for him. This means that the King must have trusted Nehemiah a lot. The King talked to him often and Nehemiah knew about the important decisions that were being made for the great Persian empire.

God was preparing Nehemiah for an even more special work. But first he had to do his job well in the palace. God has a special plan for your life. The first thing God wants to do in your life is to save you from your sin. Just like the people long ago, you too have disobeyed God's commands. The Bible says that we should love God with all our hearts (see Matthew 22:37). But often we think more about ourselves and what we want. We are ready to disobey what God says about stealing and lying, if it helps us to get our own way. That is why you need to trust in Jesus Christ. He alone can forgive your sin and make you what you ought to be. He died on the cross for your sin and rose again from the dead. Is your life pleasing to God? If you

PowerPoint map

CT

Show Jerusalem on the map.

Show Shushan on the map.

PowerPoint 1-1

CTU

know it isn't, turn to Him today. The prayer that God wants to hear first from anyone is, "Lord, save me," or as a man in the Bible said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). Ask Him to be your Lord and Saviour. God has promised that whoever comes to Him, He will not turn him away (see John 6:37).

If you have questions about how to come to the Lord, please let me know at the end of the meeting. You can come and sit on one of these chairs in the front row. I will be happy to show you what you must do and what the Lord promises to do to save you. It is very important, so please come and sit here afterwards, if you want me to help you with this decision.

Flashcard 1-2

Nehemiah had a place of great honour in the palace and everything seemed to be going so well for him. However, one winter day he heard some news that made him very sad. His brother, Hanani, and some other Jewish friends came back to Shushan after visiting Jerusalem.

Nehemiah asked them, "How is everyone? What is it like at Jerusalem?"

They said to him, "Those who are back there are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire" (from Nehemiah 1:3).

Nehemiah was sad as he thought, "After all these years the people of Jerusalem still have no protection from their enemies. Robbers can go in and out whenever they want; there are no gates to stop them. No wonder the people are discouraged and have lost heart. The other nations living around them are making fun of them."

Do you know that we who belong to the Lord today can find ourselves in a similar situation? We may not be talking to God, and living for Him as we should. Are you feeling discouraged in your Christian life? The people of Jerusalem were very discouraged, because their city was in ruins.

Flashcard 1-3

What was the reaction of Nehemiah to the news about Jerusalem? The Bible says that he "sat down and wept" (Nehemiah 1:4). Nehemiah was sad and he began to pray. He even did without food, because he felt so bad about what was happening in Jerusalem. The prayer of Nehemiah is written for us in the Bible (Nehemiah 1:5-11). It is indeed a wonderful prayer. God has put this prayer in His Word, so that we can pray the way He wants - like Nehemiah did. How did Nehemiah pray?

First he spoke about how great God is. He said, "Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God ..." (Nehemiah 1:5). The Lord is

PowerPoint 1-2a

PowerPoint 1-2b

CTS

PowerPoint 1-3

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS

all-powerful; He is King over all. Nehemiah also said at the beginning of his prayer how God is faithful to keep His promises to those who love Him and obey His commands. We should worship God, like Nehemiah did, and praise Him that He is so great and faithful. We can trust Him to answer our prayers.

After praising God, Nehemiah spoke about his sins and the sins of the people. He said, "I confess our sins against You. We have done many wrong things and have not kept the commandments You gave" (from Nehemiah 1:6-7).

CTS

Nehemiah said that he too had disobeyed God. Are we willing, like Nehemiah, to tell God that we have disobeyed Him? All of us do wrong things in the Christian life and the Bible says we need to ask God to forgive us (see Luke 11:4 and 1 John 1:8-9). He promises to forgive our sins and make us clean.

CTS

Only after Nehemiah had praised and worshipped God, and confessed his sin, did he ask God for help. In his prayer he used a promise which God had given many years before through Moses. God had said that if they sinned, He would scatter them among the nations; but if they turned back to God to obey Him, then He would gather them again from far-off places and bring them back to the city of Jerusalem (see Deuteronomy 30:1-5). It is good, when we pray, to think about what God has said. Then we know we are asking according to His will. We too can remind God of His promises.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS

Nehemiah did not pray simply in a general way; he asked for one thing particularly. "Let your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man [the king]" (Nehemiah 1:11). He asked God to make the King be in agreement, when he would talk to him. God was showing Nehemiah that He could help His people, and Nehemiah was willing to go. Let God know your need today and be willing to do whatever He shows you.

Flashcard 1-4

CTS

What a wonderful prayer that was. Nehemiah continued to pray like that for four months. It must have seemed a long time. God wants us to keep on praying, when we know it is in His will. Sometimes we have to wait a long time for God's answer. I think of a man called George Møller, who prayed every day for seventy years for a friend to be saved. Yet there seemed to be no answer. Finally the friend trusted Christ. He was saved at George Møller's funeral. Are you praying for a friend or for someone in your family to be saved? Do not give up, even though you have been praying for months or maybe even years.

PowerPoint 1-4

Week after week, Nehemiah prayed. Then one day in the month of April, he was preparing to serve wine to the King. Before, he had always been happy in the King's presence, but now for the first time his sadness showed.

King Artaxerxes noticed it immediately and said, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?” (from Nehemiah 2:2). The King wondered what was making him unhappy.

Nehemiah was very frightened. He knew that he was not allowed to be sad when he was with the King. He also knew that King Artaxerxes had already given a command to stop any work on the wall of Jerusalem (see Ezra 4:21).

Nehemiah simply answered the King by saying, “Why should I not be sad, when my home town is in ruins, and its gates have been burned down?” (from Nehemiah 2:3).

Nehemiah waited to hear what the King would say. Would the King send him away?

God was answering prayer and the King answered, “What is it you want?”

Nehemiah realised how much depended on what would happen next and so, before he spoke to the King, he quickly whispered a prayer to God.

Then he said, “If it pleases the King, let him send me to my home town, so that I can rebuild it” (from Nehemiah 2:5).

What was the King going to say? Would he be angry with him? Would he turn down his request?

The King said to Nehemiah, “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” (Nehemiah 2:6).

The King had given his permission. How amazing! Nehemiah knew it was God who had made this possible. There is nothing too hard for God. With Him all things are possible (see Matthew 19:26).

Flashcard 1-5

Nehemiah knew that he would need the King’s help to get to Jerusalem and to rebuild the walls. He had been thinking already about what needed to be done. He was able to tell the King how long the journey would take.

He also said, “May I have letters for the governors of the provinces I pass through, and a letter for the man in charge of the King’s forest near Jerusalem?” (from Nehemiah 2:7-8).

The governors could stop Nehemiah from getting to Jerusalem and so he needed letters (of safe passage) from the King. He also needed wood for rebuilding the gates and the other parts of the city. Again the King said, “Yes”. The Lord had worked in the King’s heart, so that he was willing to agree. Nehemiah could say, “The King granted my requests, because the good hand of my God was upon me” (from Nehemiah 2:8). He got permission from the King to rebuild Jerusalem. He got the letters he needed for a safe passage and to get wood from

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

PowerPoint 1-5

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS the King's forest. God had answered prayer. God wants you to bring everything to Him in prayer. He says, "Call to Me, and I will answer you" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Christian boy or girl, will you pray to the Lord as He tells us in His Word? Will you take time each week to praise the Lord for who He is, to tell Him the wrong things you have done and to ask Him to help you and others? Nehemiah called upon God and He answered him in a wonderful way. The Lord says to you and me today, "Call to Me, and I will answer you" (Jeremiah 33:3).

CTU And you, who do not have the Lord Jesus Christ living in your life, will you ask Him to be your Lord and Saviour today? He alone can forgive your sin and make you what He wants you to be. Do not put off any longer coming to Christ. This is the prayer He wants you to pray, "Lord save me". He has promised that whoever comes to Him, He will not turn him away (John 6:37). Put your trust in Jesus Christ and you will find Him to be a wonderful Saviour and Lord.

Review questions

- 1 Why did God allow the children of Israel to be taken captive to Babylon? (They had disobeyed God's commands and worshipped idols instead of the true and living God.)
- 2 What was the job of a cupbearer? (To taste the King's food and drink to protect the King from being poisoned.)
- 3 What news did Nehemiah's brother bring, that made Nehemiah very sad? (The people are in trouble and the walls of Jerusalem are broken down.)
- 4 What were the particular problems of a city with broken-down walls? (No protection from their enemies; robbers could go out and in.)
- 5 In what way did Nehemiah start off his prayer to God? (He praised and worshipped God, and then confessed his sin.)
- 6 How long did Nehemiah pray before he approached the King? (Four months.)
- 7 What should we do if God doesn't answer our prayers immediately? (Don't give up, keep on praying.)
- 8 What did Nehemiah do one more time before he asked the King for this favour? (He prayed.)
- 9 Nehemiah asked the King for letters. How would these letters help Nehemiah? (Safe travel through different provinces; obtain wood from the king's forest.)
- 10 What has God promised to those who come to Him? (He will not turn anyone away.)

Lesson 2

A call to arise and build

Scriptures for teachers

Nehemiah 2:9-20

Central truth

The Lord has a work for Christians to do

Application

Saved: Ask God to lead you and use you

Memory verse

“... Lord, what do You want me to do? ...”

Acts 9:6

Visual aids

- ◆ Flashcards: 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-4 and 2-5

Or

- ◆ PowerPoint slides: 2-1, map, 2-2, 2-3, 2-4 and 2-5

And

- ◆ Map at end of flashcard book

Lesson outline

Introduction

What a great day it must have been when Nehemiah set out

Progression of events

- 1 The journey to Jerusalem
- 2 Nehemiah finds out about situation CTS
- 3 Sanballat and Tobiah are angry
CTS, CTU
- 4 Nehemiah examines the wall by night
CTS
- 5 “Let us build up the wall of Jerusalem”
CTS
- 6 The people agree
- 7 The enemies make fun

Climax

“The God of Heaven will help us to succeed.
We His servants will arise and build”

Conclusion

Let the Lord lead and use you - He will give you
strength and courage CTS

Teaching the memory verse

As you teach the memory verse, explain how Saul was on his way to Damascus to capture the Christians.

Suddenly he saw a light from Heaven and he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me [hurting Me]?" (Acts 9:4).

When Saul realised it was Jesus Christ speaking to Him, He said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

He called Jesus "Lord" and allowed Him to take control of his life. At that moment Saul was saved - his sins were forgiven and his life was changed. The Lord wants to save you and to change your life. You simply need to trust Him and allow Him to take control.

If you want to trust Christ today, and you are not sure what to do, I am willing to talk to you about it. So, if you want to know more about how to be saved, just stay seated in the place where you are after the meeting. If I see you sitting there afterwards, I will come and talk to you more about trusting Christ.

Lesson

Flashcard 2-1

What a great day it must have been, when Nehemiah set out with the other Jews to go to Jerusalem. For months he had prayed for this day. The King had given permission to rebuild the city walls. Now the time had finally come for them to begin the journey to Jerusalem. You can imagine how excited Nehemiah must have been. All this had happened because, as he said, “The good hand of my God [was] upon me” (Nehemiah 2:8).

The Bible says that the King even sent some of the soldiers and army officers with them on horseback, to protect them along the way (Nehemiah 2:9).

It was going to be a long journey - over 1,100 kilometres (700 miles). The people of Shushan must have watched them as they set out and wondered if they would ever arrive at Jerusalem.

Show the map at the end of the flashcard book and point out Shushan, Jerusalem and the rivers.

First they had to cross over the River Tigris and then the River Euphrates.

The King had given letters to Nehemiah to show to the governors of the provinces, through which he was going to pass. The King’s command had to be obeyed, and so they were allowed to continue. On and on they travelled. Each day brought them closer to Jerusalem.

Flashcard 2-2

Finally, after travelling for nearly three months, they reached the land of Judah. There in the distance they could see the city of Jerusalem, at least what was left of it. How thankful they must have been that God had brought them safely on their long journey. This was the city from which their great grand-parents had been taken away captive.

When Nehemiah talked to the people of Jerusalem, he found out how discouraged they were. Nehemiah did not tell them right away why he had come (Nehemiah 2:16). He wanted to see for himself how things were.

God had brought Nehemiah to Jerusalem to do a special work for Him. God has a special work for you to do, if you have put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. God can use you to bring others to trust in the Lord Jesus. He can use you to help other Christians to grow in the Christian life. He has a perfect plan for each day, so that whether we are home, or at school, or at play, He can lead us to others in need. If you are a Christian, do you ask God to lead you each day in His perfect will? There is a little chorus which you can use as a prayer:

PowerPoint 2-1

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

PowerPoint map**PowerPoint 2-2**

CTS

You may want to sing the chorus together. Alternatively you could use "There are children all around the world" (published by CEF Press®).

"Lord, use me; here am I use me.
I want to be greatly used of Thee
Across the street, or across the sea.
Lord, here am I, use me."

Nehemiah was allowing the Lord to lead him and to use him.

Flashcard 2-3

However, two men were very angry that Nehemiah had come - Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and Tobiah, the governor of Ammon. They hated the Jews and they realised that Nehemiah had come to help the people. They did not want Judah to become strong again. For them, it was only their provinces of Samaria and Ammon, which should be powerful. So they were very unhappy.

CTS

When we, as Christians, do God's will, there will always be people who do not like it. It annoys them to see that we are different from them, because we love the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes they will do things to damage our school books or our bicycle. Sometimes they will say wrong things about us to others. We should expect this to happen. If there were people who hated the Lord Jesus when He was here on Earth, then we know there are people who hate us today, because we follow Him. Should that stop us from telling others about our Saviour? Should that stop us from going to help those in need?

Allow the children to answer.

No! Nehemiah did not let Sanballat and Tobiah stop him from doing God's work at Jerusalem. Let's ask God to help us to keep on working for Him each day. When Mary Slessor started to teach children in Dundee about the Lord Jesus, a gang of boys tried to frighten her and hurt her. But she kept on teaching about Jesus. Later she even went as a missionary to Africa.

CTU

Sanballat and Tobiah were against Nehemiah. Maybe you are one of those who have been jealous and spiteful sometimes with Christians. You and I are sinners. There is only One Who can take away the punishment we deserve for our sin and make us live differently. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He took the punishment for our sin on the cross. The Bible says, "Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Oh how wonderful! You can come to Him, the risen Saviour, now. Trust in Him with all your heart and He will forgive you. He will change your life.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Flashcard 2-4

Nehemiah had been at Jerusalem three days already. He still had not said anything to others about his plans. He wanted to see things for himself. How could he examine the walls, without anyone knowing what he was doing? Well, he waited until the people were in bed at night. Then, with a few friends, he went outside the city to see the

PowerPoint 2-3

PowerPoint 2-4

gates and the wall. He looked very carefully at the ruins and at what was left standing. It was a sad sight. There were pieces where the animal he was riding on could not even get through, because there were so many piles of stones and rubbish. But Nehemiah just got off and walked. The little group of men started off at the Valley Gate. Slowly they made their way around the wall. Nehemiah needed to know exactly what he was going to have to do.

The Lord Jesus talked about the importance of thinking carefully about what we are going to face as Christians. He said that if someone wants to build a tower, he first counts the cost; he wants to be certain he can finish the job (Luke 14:28-30). Have you realised what it costs to do what the Lord wants? It means putting the Lord first, before our personal wants and wishes.

Maybe you, as a Christian, would like to spend the evening playing at home, and the Lord shows you that there is someone down the street, who needs your help. What should you do? Should you say, "It doesn't matter too much about that other person," or should you say, "Lord, I want to do Your will, no matter what it costs"?

Following Christ and doing His will means not only that He comes first in the way we spend our time, but also in the way we spend our money. We don't simply buy whatever we like, but we allow the Lord to guide us. We ask Him to help us to give part of our money so that others may hear the Gospel. Some Christians think that it is only big things that count for God like becoming a missionary or preaching a sermon. Most of the time, doing God's work means being faithful in the little things - like helping a friend or giving to missionary work. It is not always easy, but God will be with His children today, just like He was with Nehemiah long ago.

Nehemiah inspected the wall and the gates. He saw what needed to be done. It was a big job. The next day he would tell the people about his plan.

Flashcard 2-5

The next day Nehemiah called together the rulers of the people. He told them, "You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem is lying in ruins and the gates are burnt with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace" (from Nehemiah 2:17).

(Those living around Jerusalem were making fun of the people in the city, because of the broken down walls.)

Nehemiah wanted them to realise how great the need was and to do something about it. He did not try to do the work on his own. He said, "Let us do something about it, you and I together." God wants us to work together with others who love the Lord.

CTS

PowerPoint 2-5

CTS

So Nehemiah challenged them, “Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem.”

To encourage them, he told them how the Lord had helped already, “King Artaxerxes gave me what I asked for, because the good hand of my God was upon me” (from Nehemiah 2:18). He told them how the King had given permission to rebuild the wall, how he had given letters to show to the governors on the way and to get wood from the King’s forest. God had already done so much for them and surely He would help them to rebuild the wall.

Nehemiah waited to hear what the people would say. Would they want to work together with him, or would they leave things as they were?

The people answered with one voice. Let’s read what they said.

“Let us rise up and build” (Nehemiah 2:18).

They were going to begin the work. You can imagine how happy Nehemiah must have been. The people were willing to work together.

The news travelled fast. The enemies of the Jews heard that they were going to rebuild the wall.

When the news reached Sanballat, Tobiah and their friend Geshem, they laughed and made fun of the Jews. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you going to rebel against the King of Persia?” (from Nehemiah 2:19).

It was not going to be easy for the Jews to do this work. However, Nehemiah answered these enemies, “The God of Heaven will help us to succeed. We His servants will arise and build. But as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim to it” (from Nehemiah 2:20). Nehemiah was determined to do the work God had called him to do, and no-one or nothing would stop him.

CTS

If you are a Christian, you can pray, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” The Lord has a work for you to do. Each day God can use you to be a witness to others at home, at school, at play. Let the Lord lead you and use you, like He did for Nehemiah. Sometimes it will be very difficult. Remember how the enemies laughed and made fun of the Jews. You can look to the Lord to give you the strength and courage to be a witness and to work for Him. He will help you to live for Him and guide you for the right words to say.

Review questions

- 1 What extra protection did the King send with Nehemiah on the journey? (Soldiers and army officers on horseback.)
- 2 How long would the journey be? (Over 1100 kilometres/700 miles.)

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

- 3 Why did Nehemiah not tell the people of Jerusalem right away why he had come? (He wanted to see for himself how things were.)
- 4 In what ways can God use believers? (To lead others to Him, to help people in need.)
- 5 Why were Sanballat and Tobiah not happy that Nehemiah had come? (They did not want Judah to become powerful again.)
- 6 How did Nehemiah examine the walls so no-one would see him? (He went out by night.)
- 7 How did Nehemiah encourage the rulers that the job could be done? (He told them about what God had done already - permission from the King, letters to obtain safe travel and wood supplies.)
- 8 What is the verse we read together in Nehemiah 2:18, which shows that the people wanted to work with him on rebuilding the walls? (“Let us rise up and build”.)
- 9 What did Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem do when they heard the news? (Made fun of the people.)
- 10 Even if people are against us because we love the Lord Jesus, should we stop telling people about Him? (No, He can help us to be a witness for Him.)

Lesson 3

Building walls and facing enemies

Scriptures for teachers

Nehemiah 3 - 4

Central truth

Be ready to face difficulties from others

Application

Saved: Ask God to help you - remember how great and powerful He is

Memory verse

“... If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Romans 8:31

Visual aids

◆ Flashcards: 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 and 3-5

Or

◆ PowerPoint slides: 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 and 3-5

Lesson outline

Introduction

A boy in the mountains - “The bumps are what we climb on” CTS

Progression of events

1 Nehemiah plans the work and encourages the workers CTS

2 Sanballat and Tobiah make fun of the Jews CTS

3 The enemies plan an attack

4 The people pray and guard the city CTS

5 The people are discouraged; threats of attack

6 People are stationed at least protected places

7 “Remember the Lord; He is great and powerful” CTS

8 One group stands guard, the other carries weapons and works

9 “Our God shall fight for us”

Climax

The people continue the work

Conclusion

What will you do when you face difficulties from others? CTS

Brief lesson for unsaved children

Because the main lesson is for saved children, please share the following brief lesson in an earlier part of the programme. You may show Flashcard 2-5 as you give it.

Today in our lesson we are going to learn about the rebuilding of the gates and walls of Jerusalem. It is interesting that the first gate mentioned in the list is the Sheep Gate (Nehemiah 3:1). It was near the temple in the north-east part of Jerusalem. The sheep used for the sacrifices in the temple were brought in through this gate.

The “Sheep Gate” reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross to pay for our sin. He rose again from the dead; He is a living Saviour. That is why the Lord Jesus said, “I am the door [the gate]. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). There is only one way to be saved from your sin. It is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the door of salvation for you and me.

If I were to ask each one of you on which side of the door of salvation you are today, what would your answer be? Are you still on the outside? Or have you come through the door and do you know that you are saved? If you have not yet entered through the gate of salvation, you can ask Christ today to be your Saviour and Lord.

Do you see that you are a sinner, doing things you shouldn't do? Do you see that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour, the only One Who can forgive your sin and make you what He wants you to be? Will you go through this door of salvation into the kingdom of God today? You need to receive Him as your Saviour and Lord. You can say to Him just now, “Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You died on the cross and rose again for me. I now receive You as my Saviour and Lord. I trust You to forgive my sins and to save my soul.” You can know through His promise that you are saved. He says, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).

Lesson

Before you begin the lesson, explain that you are available afterwards to talk to anyone who wants to know more about how to be saved or who needs help in the Christian life. Designate a place where the concerned child can come for counselling after the meeting.

A little boy had gone walking in the mountains with his father. The slope they were climbing was very steep and there were many rocks sticking out.

The little boy turned to his father and asked, “Why did God make mountains with so many bumps?”

His father thought for a moment and told his son, “The bumps are what we climb on.”

He meant, of course, that the rocks were needed to help them to climb higher. It is like that in the Christian life. All of us face difficulties and people even try to hurt us. We may wonder why God allows such things to happen. But it is during these hard times that we learn important lessons for the Christian life; we learn to trust God more and to do what He wants. God helps us when we face difficulties and when others are against us. God uses difficulties to make us more like He wants us to be. Remember, “The bumps are what we climb on.”

Nehemiah faced many difficulties as he did God’s will. We already learned how the enemies of the Jews made fun of them, because they wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah told the people, “The God of heaven Himself will prosper us [help us to succeed]; therefore we His servants will arise and build” (Nehemiah 2:20). And that is exactly what they did.

Flashcard 3-1

There was much work to do. The ruins and burnt-out gate-posts had to be cleared away; the stones had to be washed before they could be reused in the wall; the walls had to be repaired; the doors with their bolts and bars had to be made and put in place. It was not simply a question of everybody doing what he liked. Nehemiah had to make a plan so that each person could be working in the right place doing the job he or she had been given to do. God guided Nehemiah to ask the people to work in groups on that part of the wall which was nearest to their homes. Working close to their families would be a help. The men whose homes were outside Jerusalem were asked to work on the part of the wall where there were few homes. Altogether there were 42 groups of workers - some were temple priests, others were goldsmiths, others were perfume-makers, others were temple servants, others merchants. Everyone was involved. Nehemiah chose certain men to look after the work in their part of the wall to make sure everything was done right. He knew who was working where and he constantly encouraged them. He mentioned, for example, one man called Baruch, who worked especially hard (Nehemiah 3:20).

CTS

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

PowerPoint 3-1

He also mentioned how the people of Tekoa, a village about 15 kilometres (10 miles) from Jerusalem, repaired two whole sections of the wall even though their leaders didn't want to do anything at all (Nehemiah 3:5,27).

CTS

Do you remember what we learned last time?

Allow the children to answer.

“God has a work for every Christian to do.” He expects us to work together with other Christians. He wants His work to be done in the best way possible. The Bible says, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men ... for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24). In the home with your Christian brother or sister or parent, you can help with the housework and do it as if you are doing it for the Lord. With your Christian friends at school you can help build a strong witness for the Lord Jesus Christ by showing with your life and telling with your lips how wonderful your Saviour is. By your prayers and your gifts you can help missionaries and other Christians to tell the Good News of the Saviour to people in lands across the sea. Every Christian has a part to play in the work of God, just like long ago everybody in Jerusalem had a job to do in the building of the walls.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Flashcard 3-2

However, there were some people who did not want the wall to be rebuilt. One of them, Sanballat, became very angry indeed, when he heard about the work that was going on. Sanballat was the governor of Samaria. He was only interested in holding on to power for himself and for Samaria. Sanballat began to make fun of the Jews to the men who were with him and to the army of Samaria.

He said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Do they think they can rebuild this wall? Are they going to offer sacrifices to God? Can they finish this wall in one day? Can they use these old burnt stones out of the ruins?” (from Nehemiah 4:2).

Tobiah, the governor of Ammon was there too. He also made fun of the Jews, “Let them build, if a fox climbed up on their stone wall, he would break it down” (from Nehemiah 4:3).

CTS

The others laughed. There are always people ready to make fun of us when we do what the Lord wants. They say, “What good is it saying that you belong to Jesus Christ? You'll never get anywhere by praying and telling others about Christ! It's all a waste of time!” They will make fun of you and what God says in the Bible. They can be very cruel. It is because they don't want to believe in the Lord Jesus and allow Him to change their lives.

Have you ever talked to a friend about the Lord and your friend made fun of you? What should you do?

PowerPoint 3-2

Allow the children to answer. You can talk about different possible reactions, such as ...

- (a) Try to hurt them back.
- (b) Cry and say you are never going to talk to anyone again about the Lord Jesus.
- (c) Tell your parents. (That may help.)
- (d) Tell God about it. (The best answer.)

Well, what does the Bible say that Nehemiah did? Let's read and see. Nehemiah did not start to argue with these men. He did not shout back insults at them. Nehemiah just prayed and asked God to take care of this problem.

He prayed, "Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads ... for they have shouted insults in front of the builders" (from Nehemiah 4:4-5).

The first thing a Christian should do when he or she is faced with the problem of others making fun of him is to pray. Tell the Lord what you are going through and ask Him to take care of it. If someone is going against God's will, then he will have to answer to the Lord. Don't waste your time looking for ways to pay them back. Leave it with the Lord. He will do what is right. Maybe someone has been making fun of you because you are a Christian. Then tell the Lord today about your problem and commit it into His hands. Don't let it stop you from doing God's will. Nehemiah and his friends could get on with the work, because they left the problem of their enemies making fun of them with the Lord.

The Bible says the building continued "for the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6). They put all their hearts into what they were doing and nothing was going to stop them. Day after day they worked, putting the stones in place. It was a big job, because the wall around Jerusalem was about 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) long. The people were encouraged now, because they had reached halfway in their work of rebuilding.

Flashcard 3-3

But their enemies were not going to give up easily. They were very angry that the repairs to the walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed. These enemies around Jerusalem got together to plan an attack on the city. There was Sanballat and the Samaritans from the north, Tobiah and the Ammonites from the east, Geshem and the Arabs from the south and the Ashdodites from the west. The city of Jerusalem would be surrounded.

What was the answer to this plot to stir up trouble and to fight against Jerusalem? What do you think they should have done?

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

To help the children to understand the length of the wall, you could name two places in your area which the children know and which are about 4 km (2.5 miles) apart.

PowerPoint 3-3

The Bible says that the people did two things. First they prayed - not just Nehemiah this time, but everyone. They knew that without God the situation was hopeless. They counted on God and asked Him to protect them.

But Nehemiah did something else as well - he chose certain men to guard the city night and day.

CTS

The Lord Jesus knew that we who are Christians would also have to face difficulties from others. People do not come against us with swords and spears. They can say and do things which cause us problems. What would you do if one of your friends said to you ...

Let the children respond and try to help them find the right answer for each problem.

- (a) "You're missing lots of fun because you are a Christian"?
- (b) "I have tried cigarettes and even drugs. Why don't you try it once too?"
- (c) "Everybody is talking about the new video on black magic; do you want to come and see it tonight on our video recorder?"

or

- (d) "It's silly to believe that God made everything in six days. The teacher says it happened over millions of years."

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

The Lord Jesus has told us in His Word, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Matthew 26:41a).

The Jews had prayed and had chosen men to guard the city. However the enemies of the Jewish people were still determined to stop the rebuilding of the wall. They decided not to attack Jerusalem right away.

Then Nehemiah had to face another problem. The people had been working very hard for at least a month. They not only had to work all day on the wall, but some of them now had to stand guard day and night. Everyone was very tired.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

So some of them came to Nehemiah and said, "The strength of the labourers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall" (Nehemiah 4:10).

They were discouraged. They felt like giving up.

There was another problem too. Sanballat and his friends were spreading rumours that they were going to launch a surprise attack on the city. They would come at them from all sides and kill them. The Bible says that ten different times there were threats of these attacks (Nehemiah 4:12). What a difficult time it must have been!

Flashcard 3-4

PowerPoint 3-4

Nehemiah knew he must do something. First he sent some of the people to stand guard behind the wall at the places where the wall

was least protected. They were to stay together as families and carry their weapons - swords, spears and bows. Then, after looking things over, Nehemiah talked to all the people and their leaders.

“Do not be afraid of them,” he said. “Remember the Lord; He is great and powerful” (from Nehemiah 4:14).

God would take care of them. He had already done so much for them. The Bible says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). God helps Christians when they face people who are against them. Perhaps there is someone at school who makes fun of you or who tries to hurt you because you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Two Christian boys went to school by bus. Almost every day for a long time some of the other boys said swear words to them and dared them to repeat the words. It was not easy being made fun of, like this. They remembered that the Lord was with them and they refused to say the swear words. “Remember the Lord. He is great and powerful.”

Nehemiah told the people to do that, and he also encouraged them to be ready to fight to protect their families and Jerusalem. And it worked. The news got back to their enemies that they were ready for them. The enemies gave up the idea of a secret attack and the people went back to working on the walls.

Flashcard 3-5

From that day on, Nehemiah divided the people into two groups. One group worked on the wall while the other group stood guard. Even those who were working carried weapons with them; each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. Because the workers were widely scattered, Nehemiah kept a trumpeter always by his side to warn the others at the first sign of danger. When they heard the sound of the trumpet, they knew that they were to leave their work and all gather in one place with Nehemiah to beat off the attack. Nehemiah knew they could not fight the enemy alone, but he was sure of God’s help. Because he was trusting in the Lord, he was able to say, “Our God will fight for us” (Nehemiah 4:20).

Nehemiah and the people did not give up when the difficulties came. The Bible says that they continued the work from early morning to late at night. No-one even left the city to return home at night. They stayed within the walls of Jerusalem to defend the city together. When Nehemiah and those on guard lay down to rest, they did not remove their clothes. Their weapons were within reach, so that at a moment’s notice they could be ready to defend the city. God was with them to help them.

If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is with you to help you when others are against you. God tells you through this part of His Word what you should do.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS

PowerPoint 3-5a

PowerPoint 3-5b

CTS

- ◆ Ask God to help you.
- ◆ Remember how great and powerful the Lord is.

What will you do when you face difficulties from others this week? Will that stop you from doing what the Lord wants? The Bible says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” So be ready to face difficulties from others and don’t give up doing what the Lord wants you to do - He will help you.

Review questions

- 1 How does God use difficulties in our lives? (To help us to learn to trust God more; to make us more like He wants us to be.)
- 2 What kinds of work did the people need to do to rebuild the walls? (Clear away rubble; wash stones; build walls; make gates. The child does not need to give all of these answers.)
- 3 How many groups of workers were there? (42.)
- 4 What are the names of the two men who made fun of the Jews? (Sanballat and Tobiah.)
- 5 Which animal did they mention? (A fox.)
- 6 What did Nehemiah do instead of shouting back at them? (He prayed and asked God to take care of the problem.)
- 7 What should we do instead of wanting to pay someone back for making fun of us? (Tell God about the problem and leave it with Him.)
- 8 When the enemies planned to attack the city, what did Nehemiah do, apart from praying? (He chose men to guard the city night and day.)
- 9 Later, Nehemiah divided the people into two groups. What did each group do? (One group worked on the wall while the other group stood guard.)
- 10 What was to be the signal at the first sign of danger? (A trumpet sound.)

Lesson 4

Facing problems among God's people

Scriptures for teachers

Nehemiah 5 - 6

Central truth

God helps His children to be wise

Application

Unsaved: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved

Saved: Read God's Word; ask God to help you answer in the right way

Memory verse

"Call to Me, and I will answer you ..." Jeremiah 33:3

Visual aids

◆ Flashcards: 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4 and 4-5

Or

◆ PowerPoint slides: 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4 and 4-5

Lesson outline

Introduction

God had helped Nehemiah and the Jews in so many ways already ... however the biggest difficulties were yet to come

Progression of events

- 1 The poor people complain - lack of food, interest on their loans, their children sold as slaves CTU
- 2 Nehemiah speaks out against the sin of the nobles CTS
- 3 Example of Josiah CTS
- 4 Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem send messages to meet with Nehemiah
- 5 He refuses to leave the work and prays CTS
- 6 Shemaiah tries to frighten Nehemiah into hiding in the Holy Place
- 7 Nehemiah refuses CTS

Climax

The wall around Jerusalem is finished - God had done it

Conclusion

God can do great things in your life too CTS

Lesson

God had helped Nehemiah and the Jews in so many ways already. God had answered the prayers of Nehemiah and had given him favour with the King of Persia; God had brought them safely to Jerusalem; God had protected them when their enemies tried to stop them; God had helped them to repair the walls which were now over half-finished.

Flashcard 4-1

However the biggest difficulties were yet to come.

First the poor people and their wives came to tell Nehemiah, “Our families are large and we don’t have enough grain to make bread for them” (from Nehemiah 5:2).

There was another problem as well. They had left their work in the fields in order to build the walls. They said, “We don’t have any money left and we have to borrow from those who are better off, just to be able to buy food. We owe taxes to the King of Persia and we have to borrow money for that too” (from Nehemiah 5:3-4).

Now the rich Jews were asking for more money back than they had lent. This meant that the poor Jews had to try to earn extra money on top of what they had borrowed. For example if someone borrowed 100 euros, he would perhaps repay 120 euros.

They had even worse news to tell Nehemiah, “Even though these rich people are Jews like we are, they are making us sell our children to work as slaves, all because we cannot pay back the money. We will never be able to buy our children back; those rich Jews already own our fields and vineyards” (from Nehemiah 5:5).

Nehemiah was very angry when he heard the people complaining about these things. Why? Not only because the leaders of the people were being greedy, cruel and selfish but, above all, they were disobeying God’s clear commands. God had said it was a sin for His people to ask for more money back than what they had lent to the poor (Exodus 22:25 and Leviticus 25:35-37). Also no Jew was ever to make a slave of another Jew (Leviticus 25:39-42). So these rich people at Jerusalem were sinning against God.

CTU

God has told us the right way to live. But we too have disobeyed God’s commands. The Bible says we are to love God and love others. So often we love things and we love ourselves more than we love God. We are often greedy and selfish. If you are offered some cake, do you want to have the biggest piece for yourself? Have you ever cheated in order to get a better mark than others at school? Did you ever take anything that was not yours by right? Perhaps it was some money or a toy; perhaps it was someone else’s pen or ruler. There is only One Who can forgive our sin and make us different. It is the Lord Jesus Christ Who died on the cross and rose again for us. The

PowerPoint 4-1

Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Put your trust in Him and ask Him to save you. The promise is true. He will save you - He will forgive your sin and make you what He wants you to be. Do you want Him to do that for you? Then ask Him now. The Lord Jesus Christ will save you today, if you put your trust in Him.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Flashcard 4-2

Nehemiah was angry because the people were sinning against God. (Nehemiah’s anger about this was the right kind. More often our anger is not the right kind.)

He thought carefully about what he should do. The Lord gave him wisdom for this difficult problem. How important it is for us who have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to look to Him to give us wisdom for what we should do. It is so easy for us to do the wrong thing, but the Lord wants to guide us day by day. Nehemiah trusted the Lord to give him wisdom. He called the people together so that they would all hear what he was going to do.

CTS

First he told the leaders of the people, “You are asking more money back from the poor people than what you lent. We have worked hard to see our people free from other nations; you are selling them as slaves again.” Then he said, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you do what the Word of God says? What will our enemies say about this?” (From Nehemiah 5:7-9.)

PowerPoint 4-2

King Artaxerxes made Nehemiah governor of Judah. He had 150 people who worked for him.

“Look,” he said, “I and my brothers and my men are actually lending the people money and grain - without asking them to pay back more. Won’t you do the same?” (From Nehemiah 5:10.)

Nehemiah was doing what the Word of God said. He was not asking the leaders to do something he was not ready to do himself.

He went further and said, “Give back to them today their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and houses, as well as the extra money you are charging them” (from Nehemiah 5:11).

The leaders must have been ashamed of what they had done, for they promised, “We will give everything back to the people and we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say” (from Nehemiah 5:12).

Nehemiah had done what the Bible said. That’s where true wisdom comes from.

God’s Word is always right and true. We too can have wisdom by listening to God’s Word, the Bible, and doing what it says. All we need to know about living for the Lord is in His Word. For a Christian the Bible is the guide-book for living. Do you take time to read some

CTS

verses each day in your Bible? Do you try with God's help to put what it says into practice day by day? You will never go wrong if you follow God's Word and do what it says.

See 2 Chronicles 34 - 35 and 2 Kings 22 - 23:30.

Almost 200 years before, a little boy, called Josiah, became king in the place of his father. His father and other kings before him had taught the people to worship statues instead of the true and living God. Josiah was sad and wanted the people to follow the right way. One day a man found a part of the Bible in the temple and brought it to Josiah. He called the people together to listen to God's Word.

He said, "We have disobeyed God's commands and deserve to be punished."

They asked God to forgive them and began to live according to God's Word. It made a wonderful difference in the land when they did that.

CTS

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

God is truly wise and if we follow His Word, we will have true wisdom. There is a verse in the Psalms which says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm 119:99). We can be wiser (with God's wisdom) than all our teachers at school - by following what God has said in His Word.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Nehemiah asked the rulers to do what God's Word said - to promise that they would return everything they had taken. Then he did a strange thing. He shook the long cloak he was wearing and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise" (Nehemiah 5:13).

The people were glad and the rulers did what they promised.

Flashcard 4-3

Now that God had showed Nehemiah the answer to the problem, the people could go back to work on the walls. But the enemies of God's people were not going to give up easily. The work was nearly finished now. The people had rebuilt the walls; only the gates of the city had yet to be put in place.

PowerPoint 4-3

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem sent a message to Nehemiah, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono" (Nehemiah 6:2).

This was a place about 30 kilometres (20 miles) from Jerusalem. It sounded as if they wanted to get together there with Nehemiah to talk about peace. It seemed like a friendly invitation, but God knew what was happening and He gave Nehemiah wisdom to make the right decision.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

"They thought to do me harm," Nehemiah said (Nehemiah 6:2).

They wanted to give a bad picture of Nehemiah to the people or maybe even to kill him. God helped Nehemiah to answer in a very wise way. He sent a message back to Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem.

It said, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and go down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:3). Nehemiah was not going to let anything or anyone stop him from doing what God had showed him to do. These men could come to talk to him in Jerusalem if they wanted to, but he was going to continue with God's work.

How important it is for each one of us who are believers to know what God wants us to do. Often people around us will try to get us to do things which are not what God wants for us. Even our friends may say, "Try this gambling machine - it's fun," or "Take this cigarette - it won't do you any harm" or "Look at this nasty video, just to see what it is like." At times like that we need God's help to say "no", just like Nehemiah refused to turn aside from God's work. Ask God to help you answer in the right way. He helps His children to be wise.

Four times the enemies sent the same message to Nehemiah and each time Nehemiah answered them in the same way. He refused to join them.

When they realised he was not going to leave Jerusalem, they tried something else. This time when the fifth letter came to Nehemiah, it was purposely left open (unsealed). They were hoping in fact that many people would read it. The letter said, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumours, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, 'There is a king in Judah! Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together'" (Nehemiah 6:6-7).

Once again God helped Nehemiah to answer in the right way. He simply sent a message saying, "These things are not true; you have made them up in your own mind" (from Nehemiah 6:8).

Then Nehemiah did what we have seen him do so often - he prayed.

"Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands" (Nehemiah 6:9).

He knew that he needed God's help, as his enemies tried to discourage and frighten him. God heard and answered his prayer.

Flashcard 4-4

Nehemiah's enemies tried to trick him again. A man named Shemaiah, who lived in Jerusalem, pretended to be afraid of the enemies. When Nehemiah went to see him, Shemaiah said that God had given him a message for Nehemiah.

"Let's hide together in the house of God, in the Holy Place. Let's lock the doors," he said. "They are coming to kill you this very night" (from Nehemiah 6:10).

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

PowerPoint 4-4

God helped Nehemiah to see that Shemaiah was telling lies, and so he answered, “Should I suddenly turn and run?” (From Nehemiah 6:11.)

Nehemiah also knew, like the others of God’s people, that only a priest was allowed to enter the Holy Place in the temple. If anyone else went in, God said he would die (Numbers 18:7). Nehemiah was not a priest, so he knew this was another trick.

Tobiah and Sanballat had in fact paid money to Shemaiah to try to frighten Nehemiah in this way. They wanted Nehemiah to go against God’s command and then they would show the people how Nehemiah had done something very wrong. We will know what is the right thing to do, when we ask God to guide and help us and when we read His Word.

CTS

Nehemiah trusted in God when the enemies tried to trick him. God helped him to be wise and to make the right decisions. There are people who criticise us because we are Christians. They say wrong things about us. They may say, for example, that we cheated in a test in school, when we did not. We should ask God to help us answer in the right way. It is wrong for us to want revenge or to spread wrong stories about others. The Lord is able to work things out. We should go on doing what is right. Eventually others will see that the stories being told about us were indeed lies (1 Peter 2:12,15).

Flashcard 4-5

God helped Nehemiah to answer his enemies in the right way.

Finally one day came the exciting news, “The walls are finished!”

Every stone was in place. Every section was joined together, and every gate was hung. It had taken the people only fifty-two days altogether to finish the work. God had helped them to do a big job in a short time.

Of course, it meant a lot that all the people worked at rebuilding the walls; it would not have gone so well, if there had just been a few. It was true also that the work had been well planned and organised. They had all the materials they needed to do it. Most important of all, God had been with them. How happy the people must have been to look at these big walls and gates and to realise the city was now what it should be - well defended against any attack.

The enemies of the people, however, were sad. They had tried everything to stop the work and they had failed. Now they had to admit, “It is God who did this thing. There is no other way to explain it” (from Nehemiah 6:16).

People came from near and far and saw the strong wall around Jerusalem again. The people of Jerusalem could say, “God helped us. God gave us a good leader, Nehemiah. God met all our needs

PowerPoint 4-5

To help the children to understand the length of the wall, you could name two places in your area which the children know and which are about 4 km (2.5 miles) apart.

and gave us the answers to our problems.” Wasn’t it a wonderful witness to the greatness of God?

If you are a Christian, God is guiding you day by day. He helps His children to be wise. Read His Word the Bible, and ask Him to help you to do what is right. He is such a wonderful Lord and Saviour. You will not be disappointed if you trust and obey Him.

CTS

Review questions

- 1 What were the two main problems of the people working on the wall? (They were running out of food and money.)
- 2 How do we receive forgiveness for our sin? (Ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you/save you.)
- 3 Why was Nehemiah angry with the people? (Because they were sinning against God.)
- 4 What did Nehemiah say the leaders should do to make things right? (They should give everything back to the people.)
- 5 Where do we find wisdom to help us to know what to do? (From God’s Word, the Bible.)
- 6 Which other King is mentioned in this lesson, who wanted the people to obey God’s Word? (Josiah.)
- 7 Why did Nehemiah not go to meet Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem? (He wanted to keep on doing God’s work - building the walls.)
- 8 What is the name of the man who tried to trick Nehemiah into coming to meet him in the temple? (Shemaiah.)
- 9 Why was Shemaiah trying to trick Nehemiah? (Tobiah and Sanballat were paying him.)
- 10 How many days did it take to build the walls? (52.)

Lesson 5

A city dedicated to God

Scriptures for teachers

Nehemiah 7 - 13

Central truth

Let the Lord have control of your life

Application

Unsaved: Receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour

Saved: Obey His Word; ask God's forgiveness; do His work; rejoice in Him; give yourself to God

Memory verse

"No one can serve two masters ..." Matthew 6:24

Visual aids

◆ Flashcards: 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4 and 5-5

Or

◆ PowerPoint slides: 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4 and 5-5

And

◆ As you teach this lesson, you can "unveil" one by one the stones of the wall visual - see page 44. (Cover the stones with squares of white paper attached with blue-tac.)

Lesson outline

Introduction

Charles Studd said, "God has got all of Charles Studd that there is to have" CT

Progression of events

- 1 The people listen to God's Word CTS
- 2 They ask God's forgiveness CTS
- 3 People are given certain jobs to do
- 4 The people work in Jerusalem - watchmen, singers, Levites CTS
- 5 They walk around the walls and praise God CTS
- 6 Nehemiah makes sure everything is according to God's will CTS

Climax

"God has got all of me that there is to have"

Conclusion

What did the Lord lead the people to do? CTS

Is it true for you? Have you received Jesus Christ as your Saviour? CTU

Lesson

Charles Studd was a missionary whom God used to bring many people to Christ in Britain, China, India and Africa. One day a Pastor asked Charles what was the secret of his life.

Charles answered, "The secret is, God has got all of Charles Studd that there is to have."

CT

God wants to have control of every part of our lives. Are there parts of your life which you want to keep for yourself? Let the Lord have control of your life so that you too can say, "God has got all of me that there is to have." Today we are going to see how the people of Jerusalem learned to do God's will and allow Him to lead in their lives.

Flashcard 5-1

Just a few days after the wall had been finished all the people came together at Jerusalem. They gathered in a square in front of the Water Gate. They asked a man called Ezra to read to them from the Law of God. He had already been teaching the Word of God to the people. The Bible says, "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). The desire of Ezra's heart was to study God's Word, to obey it, and to teach it to others.

A special platform was built for Ezra so that he could stand above the people and everyone could see him and hear him. As he opened the scroll, the people all stood up to show their respect for God's Word. There were probably almost 50,000 men, women and children in the huge crowd standing listening to God's Law (from Nehemiah 7:66-67). Ezra read God's Word and there were thirteen others who helped him by making it clear and giving the meaning, so that the people could understand what was being said. The people listened carefully to God's Word from early morning until noon. What a wonderful day that must have been!

CTS

If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, then you should listen carefully to what the Bible says.

Show first stone of the wall visual - "Obey God's Word".

Take time each day to read some verses from the Bible. Put into practice that very day what you have learned. God can help you to understand and to do what the Bible says. When someone is reading or explaining the Bible to you in church, in Sunday school or in Good News Club®, it is important to listen carefully. This is not just an ordinary book; it is the Word of God - what God wants you to know and do.

PowerPoint 5-1

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

Flashcard 5-2

The people did not only listen to the Word of God; they obeyed it. They realised that they had not been living according to God's will, and they began to cry because of their sin. They were sorry for not obeying God as they should. God had chosen them to be His own special people, but they wanted to be like the heathen people around them. They were doing things that people without God do. As they listened to God's Word, they saw that what they were doing was wrong. It was disobeying God's commands. The Bible says, "They stood and confessed their sins" (Nehemiah 9:2).

This is what God tells us to do when we disobey His commands. Have you been going around with a group of unsaved friends who get into trouble? Are you joining them to look at wrong pictures or videos? Are you using swear words and saying things that God does not want you to say? Do you find yourself acting and even dressing like your unsaved friends so that you can please them, rather than wanting above all to please God? The Bible says that whoever owns up to his sins, and wants the Lord to change him, will find mercy and forgiveness with the Lord (see Proverbs 28:13). If you want the Lord to have control of your life, then you need to tell Him what you have done wrong.

Show second stone of the wall visual - "Ask God's forgiveness".

He will forgive your sin as He promised (1 John 1:9). He will give you the strength to say "no" to those things in your life which are against God's will (Romans 6:12-14). The Lord Jesus Christ is able to forgive us, and to give us the power to live for Him, because He died and rose again for us. God is able to work in our lives, like He did in the lives of His people in Jerusalem long ago.

Flashcard 5-3

There was still much to do inside the city of Jerusalem. Many of the houses in Jerusalem needed to be repaired and new ones had to be built. The Bible says, "Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt" (Nehemiah 7:4). It was important to have more people living in Jerusalem, instead of just living in the villages or countryside around. If Jerusalem was going to be a special city, where people could come to worship the true and living God, then many more people were needed to make it that kind of place.

First the leaders of the people made their homes in Jerusalem. Then it was decided that one out of every ten families should move to Jerusalem.

God guided Nehemiah to give special jobs to some of the people (Nehemiah 7:1-3). Nehemiah put in charge of the city his own brother, Hanani, along with Hananiah, the ruler of the palace. You remember

PowerPoint 5-2

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

PowerPoint 5-3

Read the verse from your Bible, or have an older child or helper read it.

CTS

that it was Hanani who first brought to Nehemiah in Persia the news about the walls of Jerusalem being broken down. The Bible says about Hananiah, "He was a faithful man and feared God more than many" (Nehemiah 7:2). This was why he could be trusted to do such an important work for God. Oh that God would make us faithful and that He would have first place in our lives!

Nehemiah also made sure that some of the people in Jerusalem were asked to be watchmen to guard the city. Other people were put in charge of opening and closing the gates, so that the enemy could not come in secretly. There was also a special choir of singers to lead the people in praising and thanking the Lord. Then there were the Levites who were to look after the temple, the house of God. Each group had its leader (Nehemiah 11:22-24).

CTS

If you are a Christian, then you too should be working for the Lord.

Show third stone of the wall visual - "Work for God".

That does not mean that every Christian should be a missionary or a pastor. But we can do our school work to the honour of the Lord Jesus. We can help in little ways in the Good News Club or Sunday school class. By our singing we can encourage others to praise the Lord. We can do things at home that will make it easier for our Mum. We can offer to do something for that other person who is too old or too ill to do it for themselves. If you want the Lord to have control of your life every day, then you should ask Him what you can do to help others. Each Christian should be a tool for the Lord to use wherever and whenever He wants. Not all tools are used to do the same thing - the hammer is different from the pliers. We may be very different one from the other, but each one is important and together we can be of service to our Lord.

Flashcard 5-4

The walls had been built. The people had listened to the Word of God and obeyed it. They had asked God's forgiveness for their sins and had put things right in their lives. People were given special jobs to do in Jerusalem. Now it was time to praise the Lord together for all He had done and show publicly that Jerusalem was a city set apart for God. A day was set for the big celebration (Nehemiah 12:27-47).

People came from all over Judah. The singers and musicians came and the Levites who had the job of looking after the temple and the worship of God.

Nehemiah divided the people into two big groups. Each group was to go to the top of the wall and walk around the city. Ezra and one group went to the right; Nehemiah and the other group went to the left. As they went along, they gave thanks and praise to God. They sang their praises and they played their musical instruments. What a wonderful procession it was, all the way around the city.

PowerPoint 5-4

Finally the two groups met close to where the temple was. Then the two choirs went into the house of God and others followed. The Bible says, “The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off” (Nehemiah 12:42-43).

You and I, who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, should remember to praise Him for Who He is and thank Him for what He has done. The Lord loves to hear the praise and thanksgiving of children today, just like at Jerusalem long ago. God is so great and so good. He made us and the beautiful world we live in. He sent His Son to die for us on the cross and He raised Him from the dead three days later. He has blessed us and answered our prayers. We have so many reasons to praise and thank Him.

Show fourth stone of the wall visual - “Praise God”.

The people of Jerusalem did something else as well to show their love to God and that they belonged to Him. They brought gifts to help those who had a special part in the worship and service of God. Our love for the Lord will show itself too in the gifts we bring to help those who serve the Lord today. This is part of our praise offering to the Lord for all His goodness to us.

Is there something of this praise, thanksgiving and joy in our lives? We live in a world where so many people are unhappy, discontented and dissatisfied. As Christians we are different. It should be clear to others that we have the joy and love of the Lord in our hearts. When we come together we should want to praise and thank the Lord and give generously for His work. Some people think that Christians are sad and go around with long faces. No, the Bible says, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

Flashcard 5-5

God had worked in a wonderful way among the people of Jerusalem. They had made a promise to follow the Lord and obey His commands (Nehemiah 9:38). They had said they would not be like the heathen people around them (Nehemiah 9:2). This means they would also not marry them.

Nehemiah continued to lead the people for twelve years (Nehemiah 2:1 and 13:6). Then he had to go back to the palace of King Artaxerxes as he had promised (Nehemiah 2:6).

We don't know how long he stayed in Persia. Some time later he asked permission from the king and came back to Jerusalem.

There he learned about something very wrong which Eliashib, the high priest had done. He had given Tobiah a room in a building which was part of the temple area. You remember Tobiah had been

CTS

PowerPoint 5-5

CTS

one of these who had done everything possible to stop the building of the walls of Jerusalem. Here he was with a room in God's house. Nehemiah did not want this great sin against God's commands to continue. So he threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room. He gave orders to follow God's Word in making the rooms clean and fit to use. Then he put back into the rooms the things for the service of God, which were there before. The temple was only for the service of God. Our lives as Christians should belong completely to the Lord.

CTS

At that time Nehemiah also saw people around Jerusalem doing work on the Sabbath, the day God had told them to rest from their work. They were bringing food into the city and using the Sabbath day to buy and sell. Nehemiah stopped this trading, closed the gate of the city and told the Levites to keep them shut on the Sabbath. If we allow the Lord to have control of our lives, then He will come first in everything we do - we will want to please Him.

CTS

After that Nehemiah had to deal with the problem of men who were marrying women from heathen tribes. That would lead them to worship idols. Their children did not even know how to speak the language of Judah. Again Nehemiah spoke out against their sin and led them to give up these wrong marriages. If we want the Lord to have control of our lives, then we will give up what is not His will for us. The Lord Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters ... you cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Our lives must belong to the Lord completely. Give everything you have and are to Him.

Read the verse from your Bible.

Show fifth stone of the wall visual - "Give yourself to God".

Let the Lord have control of your life day by day, so that you can say, like Charles Studd, "God has got all of me that there is to have."

What did God lead Nehemiah and the people to do and what does God lead us to do, so that our lives as Christians will be according to His will?

- ◆ Listen to God's Word and obey it.
- ◆ Confess your sin and put things right.
- ◆ Work for the Lord.
- ◆ Praise the Lord and rejoice in Him.
- ◆ Give yourself completely to the Lord to do His will.

CTU

Is that true of you? Maybe you have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. If you know that you have sinned and have not been living for the Lord, you can come to Him today. Ask Him to forgive you and save you from your sin. The Bible says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Read the verse from your Bible.

Review questions

- 1 Who read to the people from the Word of God? (Ezra.)
- 2 Why is it important to listen carefully when someone is explaining God's Word to us? (It shows us what God wants us to know and to do.)
- 3 Why did the people begin to cry? (Because they knew they had disobeyed God.)
- 4 Apart from the walls, what else did the people need to repair or build? (Houses to live in.)
- 5 Who did Nehemiah put in charge of the city? (Hanani, his brother.)
- 6 What did the people do on their special day? (Praised God together for all He had done.)
- 7 What wrong thing did Eliashib, the high priest, do? (He gave a room in the temple to Tobiah, who had done all he could to try to stop the walls being built.)
- 8 If you have never received the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, how can you do this? (Ask Him to forgive you and save you from your sin.)
- 9 What is today's memory verse and where is it found in the Bible? ("No one can serve two masters ..." Matthew 6:24a.)
- 10 Can you tell me again the name of the city which Nehemiah and the people were rebuilding? (Jerusalem.)

Stones of the wall

Visual - lesson 5



Copy, cut out and keep in your Bible



Summary of steps for counselling the child who wants to come to Christ

Make sure the child understands about

God

Who is God?
God made us. He speaks to us through the Bible.
God is holy and pure. He loves us.

Sin

What is sin?
Sin is disobeying God's commands. It is against God.
Speak about specific sins.
The child is a sinner by nature and act. (We sin because we are sinners.)
Sin deserves punishment.

The Saviour

Who alone can take away your sin?
God the Son died on the cross for sinners.
The Lord Jesus rose again from the dead.
He is Lord of all.

Explain how to be saved

Explain what the Lord wants us to do, and what He will do.
Use a Bible verse (*John 1:12; 3:16; 6:37; Acts 16:31; Romans 6:23 or 10:13*).
What does the Lord want you to do?
What will the Lord do?
Warn about difficulties.
Ask: "Do you want to trust Christ, or would you rather wait?"
Encourage the child to pray audibly (if ready).

Speak about assurance of salvation

Go back to the Bible verse you used.
Speak about a changed life.
Tell him what the person who is truly trusting in Christ can know.

Give (later) some advice about the Christian life

Read and obey your Bible.
Talk to God, our heavenly Father.
Tell others what the Lord has done for you.
Ask God to forgive you when you sin.
Meet with other Christians.
Remember the Lord promises: "*I will never leave you*" (*Heb 13:5*).