#### Lesson 13:

#### Nehemiah

#### SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Book of Nehemiah

#### MEMORY WORK:

Bible skills 1-6 Psalms 119:105

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

I need to remember that one person can make a difference by choosing to do the right thing (what God says is right) every time. With God’s help, I can do things I might have thought were too hard or impossible.

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| **LESSON STARTS HERE** |

INTRODUCTION:

In our lesson last week, what happened when the Jews stopped reading and learning from God’s Word? Who helped them by reminding them what God had to say?

Do you ever need help? What are some things you need help with? (Tying shoes, opening a container, fixing a toy that is broken, etc.) Today, we are going to learn how the Jews were trying to build a wall, but became very discouraged. Then one man came and told them they could do it together with God’s help. Let’s see what happened.

#### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Working in the palace of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, was a Jewish man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a special servant—a cupbearer. His job was to taste everything that the king drank before it was served (to make sure of the wine’s quality and to make sure the wine had not been poisoned). Nehemiah had been born and raised as one of the many thousands of Jews in the Persian Empire, but he had been taught about the land of Palestine (Judea) and about God’s Laws. He knew very well about the Jews who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

**NOTE:** See **Historical Notes** from the previous lesson on Ezra. Some scholars believe that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book. The book of Nehemiah, which is written mostly in first person, contains several of his very personal prayers. Seventeen times the book mentions that Nehemiah and the people prayed to God.

1. Nehemiah’s brother went to Jerusalem, and when he returned to Persia, Nehemiah was anxious to hear what the city and the Temple looked like. He was very sad and disappointed to hear that the city was still in ruins and that the gates and walls of the city still had not been repaired. Nehemiah was so upset that he cried, fasted, and prayed to God. He asked God to forgive the Jews for their failure to rebuild Jerusalem, and he asked God to help him find a way to go there to help.
2. Nehemiah had never been sad in the presence of the king before. But after hearing the bad news, he was sad in the presence of the king. The king noticed that Nehemiah was very sad (which apparently was dangerous—Nehemiah was “dreadfully afraid” that his sadness was noticed, 2:2) and asked him why. Nehemiah immediately prayed that God would help him say the right words to the king. Then he explained why he was so upset and asked for the king’s permission to go to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city. Nehemiah could have stayed in the comfort of the palace, but he wanted to give up his comfortable life to help his people, the Jews, in faraway Jerusalem.

**NOTE:** Comparing Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1, it is evident that four months passed between the time Nehemiah learned of Jerusalem’s condition and the day that his sad face was noticed by the king. [Relevant Jewish month sequence: Chislev, Tebeth, Shebat, Adar, Nisan]

1. King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah how long he would be gone, and Nehemiah told him how long he thought it would take. The king gave him permission to go **if** he would promise to return to the capital city (Shushan) when the work was completed. The king even gave Nehemiah important papers to prove that he was traveling under the king’s orders and protection. These papers would help Nehemiah get through dangerous territories and protect him from harm. The king also wrote a letter ordering that lumber and supplies be provided for Nehemiah to use in Jerusalem, **and** the king sent soldiers and horsemen with him to provide more protection.

**NOTE:** We are not told how long Nehemiah told the king he would be gone. It was likely a relatively small amount of time that had to be extended by permission from time to time, considering that he was governor of Judah for some 12 years (Nehemiah 5:14).

1. When Nehemiah finally arrived in Jerusalem, he and the soldiers with him rested for three days. Then one night he rode his horse around the city to get a good look at the city walls so he could decide exactly what needed to be done. The next day he called all the people together and told them that they could rebuild the walls of Jerusalem if they would work together and believe that God would help them. They agreed to begin work right away.
2. The idol-worshipping people around them did not want the Jews to finish rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Sanballat, governor of Samaria, and some other men, came to make fun of and discourage the Jews as they worked. These men even threatened to stop the work by force. But the Jews paid no attention to them. The men worked in shifts so that the rebuilding could continue night and day. While half of the men worked on the walls, the other half served as guards. They all wore their swords while they worked, and one man had a trumpet to blow in case there were enemy attacks.
3. “The people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6). The people worked so hard together that they were able to completely finish rebuilding the walls in only 52 days (less than two months)! Their enemies were amazed that the work could have been completed so quickly. Nehemiah and the other Jews thanked God for His help in this great work and asked for His continued help against their enemies.

**NOTE:** Notice the number of times the phrase “next to him” is repeated throughout chapter three, indicating that they worked side-by-side, united in purpose for the first time in many years.

1. Sanballat and the other enemies of the Jews accused Nehemiah of trying to make himself king of Judah, and they tried to trick him into coming out of the city walls so that they could kill him. But Nehemiah responded by praying to God, and God protected him.
2. Nehemiah was governor of Jerusalem for 12 years before returning to the king. (Later, the king allowed him to return to Jerusalem to stay.) While he was gone, the Jews turned away from God again. One of the men who served in the Temple even married the daughter of Sanballat, the wicked governor of Samaria who had caused the Jews so much trouble. When Nehemiah returned, he made the man leave the Temple. He wanted the Jews to always remember what God had done for them and to obey His Word, so he made sure that they heard the Law read by Ezra.

**NOTE:** Ezra is not mentioned in the book of Nehemiah until the walls were finished; he probably was not in Jerusalem when Nehemiah arrived. Apparently Nehemiah sent for him to come to Jerusalem and help teach the people.

1. When the people heard the Law read, they again promised to obey God. They celebrated the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Ingathering), and they heard the Law read each day for seven days. There were many other times that Nehemiah (and Ezra) had to teach the people how to live according to God’s Law. They were important teachers and leaders for the Jews.
2. We probably will never have to work on a project as big as the rebuilding of a city, but we have many things happening in our lives every day that we can (and should) talk to God about. We have to make many decisions and choices, just as Nehemiah did. We need to remember that one person—with God’s help—can make a difference!

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL VISUALS (**note disclaimers**):

##### Betty Lukens’ felt pieces

##### Ezra and Nehemiah ABeka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)

##### Free Bible Images on Flash drive to be shown on tv. Suggested script in lesson file.

##### Bible Study Guide for All Ages (BSGFAA) Lessons 413, 414, 415. These visuals will look like a black and white comic strip on one large piece of cardstock. To use these attach it to the magnetic dry erase board. Use dry erase markers to follow the directions. Let students take turns marking on the page.

##### *Nehemiah, Builder for God*, A Bibletime Book

##### Play tools and swords

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS :

### SUNDAY

#### LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Let children “build the walls of Jerusalem” Large blocks or shoe boxes can be used to build a basic wall. For a more authentic wall transfer the wall “blue print” to a poster board and laminate. (There should be a master of this in the classroom cabinet) Use sugar cubes and frosting to build the wall. Make a “mount” for under the temple. Color some of the sugar cubes or use a different material for the gates. Each student should have their own section of the wall to work on, but they are all following the same plan and working together. Talk with students about the importance of cooperation, individual effort, and attitude as they work.
* Use paper plates to make a sad face and a happy face, one on the front of the plate

 and one on the back. Explain how Nehemiah was sad and happy. After the story, give examples from the story of when Nehemiah was sad and happy. As you read each example, ask the children to use the faces on their plates to show if Nehemiah was happy or sad during each situation.

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT

#### POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [Review Questions](http://www.apcurriculum.com/dcirfol/4-24-32RQ.pdf) for example questions.)
2. Talk to the children more about the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Ingathering). This feast was the last of the yearly festivals that were sacred to the Jews. It began five days after the Day of Atonement and lasted for eight days; it marked the end of the harvest. During this Feast, the Jews would live in booths and tents to remind themselves of the long journey of their ancestors through the wilderness, after leaving slavery in Egypt. It was also a time of thanksgiving to God for their harvest. [To harvest the grapes from local vineyards, entire villages would move into the vineyard and live in tents or shelters because the harvest had to be done quickly. They had to work together to have a successful harvest, just as Nehemiah and the other Jews had to work together to successfully complete the walls of Jerusalem.]

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Finish the wall. If the students did not have time to finish the wall on Sunday morning (this is more likely if using the sugar cubes) continue to work on this for Wednesday. This might help to emphasize that this was a large building project – not something that was easily completed in a day (though 52 was impressive).
* Create a booth- Use edible parts such as graham crackers, pretzels, and leafy greens to make an edible booth. It was a three sided structure with a roof. Use frosting to keep it together.



### Review Questions

1. What kind of servant was Nehemiah?
	1. A cup bearer
2. What news did Nehemiah’s brother bring him from Jerusalem?
	1. That the city was in ruins, and that the gates of the city had not been repaired
3. While Nehemiah was feeling sad and disappointed about the condition of Jerusalem, what did he do?
	1. He cried, fasted, and prayed.
4. Who noticed that Nehemiah was upset and asked him what was wrong?
	1. King Artaxerxes
5. What did the king do to help Nehemiah?
	1. He gave him permission to go to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city, gave him important papers to prove that he was traveling under the king’s protection, wrote a letter ordering that lumber and supplies be provided for him to use in Jerusalem, and sent soldiers and horsemen to help him.
6. After they arrived in Jerusalem, how long did Nehemiah and the soldiers rest?
	1. Three days
7. Who came to Jerusalem to make fun of Nehemiah and the other Jews that were working to rebuild the city
	1. Sanballat, the governor of Samaria
8. How long did it take the Jews to rebuild the city of Jerusalem?
	1. 52 days
9. To Whom did Nehemiah and the other Jews give the credit for their ability to finish rebuilding Jerusalem in such a short amount of time?
	1. God
10. How long was Nehemiah governor of Jerusalem before he returned to King Artaxerxes?
	1. 12 years

 

Additional Notes / Activities Performed & Curriculum Feed Back

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