



Mustard Seed Children's Lesson Summary for September 27, 2009
Released on Wednesday, September 23, 2009

"Nehemiah: God's Chosen Leader"

Lesson Text: Nehemiah 2:5, 11-20

Background Scripture: Nehemiah 2

Memory Verse: "Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; . . . And they said, Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18).

Nehemiah 2:5, 11-20

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

.....

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Show the children that they can live for God even when other people make it hard to do.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. Nehemiah wanted to serve God.
2. Nehemiah had courage to inspire people to do good and to face enemies.
3. We should do what God calls us to do, even when it is hard.

PLANNING LESSON AIDS:

For Telling the Lesson, bring a map of the Babylonian or Persian Empire and one of Jerusalem. (In Nehemiah's day the city included only David's city and the temple mount.)

For Helping to Remember, print "Rise Up and Build" across the top of a sheet of construction paper for each child. Cut enough brick-shaped pieces of paper so that the children can glue them on their papers to "build a wall." Bring glue.

For the lesson activity, make a copy of the Crossword Puzzle for each student. This will serve as a review of the keywords from the lesson text.

TEACHER'S NOTES:

Time: 445 B.C.

Places: Shushan; Jerusalem

By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, power in the Middle East had shifted to Persia. When he heard of the deplorable conditions in Jerusalem, Nehemiah was sad, but he began thinking of what could be done.

King Artaxerxes depended on Nehemiah to guard him from being poisoned. He was the king's cupbearer and tasted everything before it was served to the king. One day the king noticed Nehemiah's sorrow and asked what was wrong. When Nehemiah explained that his ancestral city lay in ruins, the king was sympathetic. He granted Nehemiah's request to go to Jerusalem, sending him with royal authority.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah spent three days resting and silently observing. Then late one night, he and a few men with him quietly slipped out of the city. Nehemiah rode a horse or donkey, but the others walked.

They went out the Valley Gate and turned southward. In the moonlight, Nehemiah observed the damage to the walls and gates. He rounded the narrow south end of the city and turned northward. At the Fountain Gate, he came to a place where the old city wall had totally collapsed in a heap.

The rubble was impassable; so Nehemiah dismounted and began to walk up the Kidron Valley. Eventually, he turned back and retraced his steps without being seen.

Nehemiah kept his mission secret until he knew how he would motivate the people to complete the job before their enemies could raise opposition.

Nehemiah gathered the local authorities and citizens and reminded them of the disgrace that they were suffering because the city was defenseless. Then he challenged them to arise and rebuild the walls and gates that were such an embarrassment. Finally, he told the people that he had God's blessing and the king's authority. The people responded with determined enthusiasm.

Fearing loss of power and wealth, the ethnic groups around Jerusalem ridiculed the Jews to discourage them. They accused them of disobeying the king's earlier order to cease building (Ezra 4). Nehemiah courageously replied that the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem under the authority of God. He added that affairs in Jerusalem were none of their business.

Under Nehemiah's leadership, the people rebuilt their city walls in only fifty-two days! He restored the national and spiritual life of God's people.

BEGINNING THE LESSON:

"That was a good game," said Thomas. "I like playing four-square."

Sloane looked around and asked, "How can we help the Carlin family since their house burned?"

"We can't!" Jim answered. "We have no money."

"Well, maybe we can get someone to donate some money," Sloane answered. "Besides, even a little gift would cheer them up."

"Cheer them up? They need money, not cheer," Jim answered.

"I disagree," Sloane insisted. "Do you think the manager of Ganley's Sportswear would put a donation jar on the checkout counter?"

"I have a gallon jar," said Ben with enthusiasm, "and I will go with you to ask Mr. Ganley."

Jim tried to talk the other three boys out of it, but they went and talked to the store owner, who readily agreed. The money they raised provided clothes and much needed encouragement for the Carlin family.

Today's lesson tells of someone who encouraged God's people to recover from a tragedy.

TELLING THE LESSON:

The Babylonian army had destroyed Jerusalem and had taken the people of Israel far away to Babylon. (Show map of empire.) At last some of the Jews came back and rebuilt the temple. Then Ezra went to Jerusalem to teach the people God's laws.

Meanwhile, back in the king's palace, Nehemiah heard about how bad things were in Jerusalem. He was very sad that his people, the Jews, were in trouble.

Nehemiah's job was to protect the king from those who might want to put poison in his food or drink. One day the king said, "Nehemiah, you look sad. What is wrong?"

Nehemiah told him that the city his people had come from was all torn down and burned. The king liked Nehemiah and felt sorry for him; so he asked what he could do to help.

This was almost too good to be true! Nehemiah prayed silently and then asked the king to send him to Jerusalem to rebuild it. He asked for letters ordering the governors along the way to let him pass and to give him wood from the king's forest. The king gave Nehemiah all he asked for and even sent soldiers on horses to keep him safe.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he rested three days and did not tell anyone why he was there. Then late one night he waited until everyone was asleep. He and a few men quietly slipped out into the street and made their way to a gateway in the city wall. Nehemiah was on a horse or donkey, but the others were on foot; so no one would hear them.

They went out the Valley Gate (show map of Jerusalem) on the west side of the city and turned south. The moon must have been shining, for Nehemiah could see that the walls were badly damaged and the gates were burned.

Nehemiah went around the narrow south end of the city and turned northward along the east side. He had ridden just a little way, to the Fountain Gate, when he came to a place where the old city wall had completely fallen down.

He could not go farther because of the jumble of dirt and big stones that had once been a high wall. Getting off the animal he was riding, he began to walk. He followed a small stream that ran along the city, looking at the damage to the walls and gates.

At some point, he turned around and went back into the city through the same gate he had gone out of. He got back to his room without being seen by anyone.

No one knew that Nehemiah had looked so carefully at the city walls or guessed that he had come to rebuild them. He was keeping it a secret until he had made plans.

When Nehemiah was ready, he called a meeting of the city rulers, the priests, anyone who was important, and probably some ordinary people too.

Nehemiah first reminded them of how ashamed they all were that their city, where King David had ruled, was now ruined. The walls were broken down, and the gates were burned; so any outlaws could get in and rob them. Next, he challenged them to build up the walls and gates so that no one could make fun of them anymore.

Finally, Nehemiah told the people of Jerusalem how good God had been to make the king favor him. He told them that the king had given him authority to build.

The people were very encouraged by all that Nehemiah had said; so they all said, "Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18). Filled with hope and determination, they started building right away.

Just as soon as the people started to build, the rulers of nearby cities and tribes started to laugh at them and say things to discourage them. They accused them of being disobedient to the king.

Nehemiah was not afraid. He answered them, "The God of heaven will help us, and we will build the walls." Finally, he told the enemies that what happened in Jerusalem was none of their business.

With Nehemiah's encouragement, the Jewish people rebuilt their wall in only fifty-two days. They trusted God, and He was faithful to keep His promises to them.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

God's hand is upon His children. That means that when we are disobeying Him or simply doing nothing, He will remind us that we are doing harm to ourselves and wasting our opportunities to do good. It also means that when we are obeying Him, He will show His approval by making us happy and successful in what we do.

Like Nehemiah, we can do great things for God, but first we need to read the Bible to find out what pleases Him. Then we need to obey because God is good and because we know He will keep all His promises. We can live for God even when it seems as if everybody else is telling us to do wrong. Depend on God to help you. It may not be easy, but you can succeed.

HELPING TO REMEMBER:

Have the children glue "bricks" onto their papers to build walls. Remind them that the builders needed someone to encourage them.

EXPLAINING THE MEMORY VERSE:

"Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; . . . And they said, Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18).

Nehemiah had been living in a foreign land where idols were worshiped, but he had been true to God. When he learned about the condition of Jerusalem, he asked God what to do. God gave him the time, the right words to say, the permission to leave, and the leadership ability to challenge the residents of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls.

God had proved Himself faithful. Nehemiah's trust in Him was so strong that the people were encouraged to start building the walls and to stick with the project until it was completed. God will always make us able to obey Him.

CONCLUSION:

Nehemiah helps us understand that when God puts it into our hearts to do something, He will give us the power to get the job done. Read the entire book of Nehemiah to learn how this former king's servant was determined to serve God!

Nehemiah prayed in faith and led the charge to rebuild the walls. He could not do it by himself. He needed the others. The others were faithful because Nehemiah was faithful. May God help us to be faithful today!

PRAYER:

Father God, we thank You for what You have called us to do. Whether it is to lead or to follow, help us to be faithful and to finish the work, in Jesus' name. Amen.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON:

The next lesson is "**Jesus and the Disciples**" and tells how Jesus went about preaching the gospel, healing the sick and casting out demons. Study Mark 1:35-45.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

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The Pulpit Commentary, Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Hrsg.), Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, by Nelson Books

Holman Bible Dictionary, Holman Bible Publishers

CROSSWORD PUZZLE:

“Nehemiah: God’s Chosen Leader” (Nehemiah 2:5, 11-20)

Find the following keywords from the lesson:

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| RULERS | WASTE | SERVANTS | HANDS |
| HEART | PROSPER | GOOD | NIGHT |
| ARISE | DISTRESS | JERUSALEM | WORK |
| LAUGH | NEHEMIAH | SPEECH | GATES |
| WALLS | KING | PRIESTS | REBUILD |

R A I D A N R M D G E M S J R N N A A E I S T
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SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE:

“Nehemiah: God’s Chosen Leader” (Nehemiah 2:5, 11-20)

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