

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

Kindergarten

Sunday Morning

Study 49

Nehemiah

Nehemiah

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective The goal of this lesson is to show that while God has been faithful throughout the Old Testament, man constantly fails without Jesus.

Key Verses

Nehemiah 4, 6—Main Teaching Passage

Nehemiah 1-2 (Background)

Nehemiah 13:23-29 (Conclusion)

John 15:5

Memory Verse - Psalm 36:5 (August Memory Verse)

"Your mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens;
Your faithfulness *reaches* to the clouds."

Hook

Ask for a volunteer to draw a red smiley face on the board, but do not make any red markers available. When they ask for a red marker, give them red objects or different colored markers, but not a red marker.

Without a red board marker, it is impossible to draw a red smiley on the board. The same way, without Jesus, it is impossible to live for God.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Briefly review that over the last few months, we have seen Israel go from one kingdom to two, with each kingdom going into exile. In particular, we have focused the last few weeks on the kingdom of Judah. We saw how Nebuchadnezzar came, destroyed Jerusalem, and took the Jews into exile. After 70 years, that exile was over, and some of the Jews returned to the land. One Jew named Nehemiah, one of the king's most trusted servants, was still in the land of Persia when he heard that the walls of Jerusalem remained in ruins. In Nehemiah 2, he asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, and the king agreed.

However, there were some men named Sanballat, Tobias, and Geshem who hated the Jews and tried to stop them from building the walls. They threatened to attack the Jews in chapter 4, so Nehemiah had some of the workers carry weapons to protect the other builders while they worked. Sanballat, Tobias, and Geshem also tried to attack Nehemiah by tricking him into an ambush, but Nehemiah did not fall for it (6:1-14). Finally, after 52 days of work, the wall was finished (6:15-19). However, Nehemiah ends on a surprising, unfortunate note. In Nehemiah 13:23-29, Nehemiah catches some of the Jews marrying wives from other countries who did not follow the one true God. He was furious and rebuked them harshly for falling into the same sin that cost Solomon most of his kingdom.

LOOK

As we have gone throughout the Old Testament this past year, there have been two primary themes that run throughout the storyline. First of all, as we saw last week, there has been the continuous theme of God's faithfulness. In every situation, God took care of His people. He protected Noah from the flood. He gave Abraham a son. He saved Joseph and his family through the famine in Egypt. He brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land. He gave the kingdom to David and promised him an everlasting rule for his family. He protected Daniel, Esther, and all the Jews while they were in captivity in Babylon. Now, at the end of the story of the Old Testament, God has once again proven Himself faithful. He brought the Jews back to the land and He enabled them to rebuild the temple and the walls. Every step of the way, God was faithful.

However, it is the second theme that we will focus on today, and that is man's unfaithfulness to God. To be sure, there were some high points of faith and obedience. However, overwhelmingly humanity responded to God's goodness with disobedience and unbelief. God gave

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

Adam and Eve a paradise in Eden, yet they sinned and disobeyed God. He delivered Israel from Egypt, yet they complained in the wilderness. God brought them into the land, yet they demanded their own king. David received an incredible promise, yet his son Solomon disobeyed God's command. Eventually, the Israelites became so rebellious and idolatrous that God had to send them into captivity in Babylon. Now, we saw that they returned, yet they still went back to their sinful ways.

No matter how faithful God was to His people, there was always something missing. Try as they might, the Israelites did not have what it takes to obey God. In their position, we would have done no better. The Old Testament shows that man cannot obey God on his own. We need something else. What we need, or rather *who* we need, is Jesus. This sets us up for the New Testament. Next month, those moving into first grade will begin studying the New Testament. As John 15:5 says, without Jesus, we can do nothing. We need Him, or else, we too will be unable to obey and follow God

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Take this opportunity to present the Gospel to this group. Explain to them that without Jesus they can do nothing, but that Jesus gives eternal life and allows us to obey God here on earth.

Pray: Pray for these students as they prepare to move to the next grade this fall. Ask for help relying on Jesus. Thank the Father for sending His Son into the world.

Parent Question: Did the Israelites continue to obey God when they returned from captivity?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Nehemiah 4 by David Guzik

ENEMIES TRY TO STOP THE WORK

A. Sanballat and Tobiah ridicule the work of God.

1. ([Nehemiah 4:1-3](#)) The attempt to discourage the workers.

But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish; stones that are burned?” Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* beside him, and he said, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up *on it*, he will break down their stone wall.”

a. **But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant:** Sanballat and Tobiah were first *deeply disturbed* when they heard a man wanted to help the people of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 2:10](#)). Then they used scorn and intimidation to prevent the work from starting ([Nehemiah 2:19](#)). Now that the work had begun, they were **furious and very indignant**.

b. **And mocked the Jews:** The nature of their discouraging attack is evident. They used a mocking, sarcastic tone and **mocked the Jews... these feeble Jews... will they... will they... will they... even if a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall**.

i. **Will they offer sacrifices** has the idea of, “Will they seek God through sacrifice and expect Him to miraculously build the walls? Will they pray the walls up?” **Will they complete it in a day** has the idea of “Do they have any idea what they are taking on? This isn’t an easy project.”

ii. Like most attacks of discouragement, there is a trace of truth in the words of the enemy. As builders, the Jews were **feeble**. They would not **complete it in a day**. They didn’t have the best materials to work with. A lying, discouraging attack will often have *some* truth in it, but it will neglect the great truth: *God was with them and has promised to see them through*.

iii. Sanballat and Tobiah sought to bring the discouragement through criticism. Charles Swindoll points out that there were many of them together doing the sarcastic, mocking criticism — and observes “critics run with critics.” One measure of a leader is to be able to measure criticism; to not allow one to be run down by the critical, while still be sensitive to God’s voice even in the midst of criticism.

iv. Discouragement is such a powerful weapon because it is somewhat the opposite of faith. Where faith believes God and His love and promises, discouragement looks for and believes the worst — and tends to pretty much forget about who God is and what He has promised to do.

c. **He will break down their stone wall:** Tobiah made a huge mistake. He called the wall **their stone wall**; it wasn’t **their** wall at all, but God’s — he was criticizing God’s wall, God’s work.

i. Critics who bring nothing but discouragement often miss what God is doing; because they don’t like the wall, they can’t believe it is God’s work. In the same way, the church is God’s church; Jesus loves His bride. One should always be careful about the way you talk about Jesus’ bride.

d. **Furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews:** Because Nehemiah and the workers did in fact have legal protection from the king (proven by the *letters* mentioned in [Nehemiah 2:7](#)), Sanballat and Tobiah had

no authority to actually stop the work. All they could do was to discourage the Jews into stopping.

i. The exact same attack comes into the life of the believer who is legally set free by his King. Yet they can be discouraged into drawing back from what God has set before them.

ii. We work differently under faith or under discouragement. We pray differently under faith or under discouragement. We read and hear the word differently under faith or under discouragement. It is no wonder that Satan works so hard to keep us from faith and keep us in discouragement.

iii. *Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.* ([Hebrews 10:38-39](#))

2. ([Nehemiah 4:4-5](#)) Nehemiah comes against the discouraging attack with prayer.

Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.

a. **Hear, O our God:** Nehemiah's response was a great example. He didn't debate, he didn't form a committee, he didn't even deal with the two enemies directly. Instead, he took it to God in prayer.

i. For Nehemiah, prayer was a first resource, not a last resort. When times of opposition come, God wants us to rely on Him — and the purest way of expressing our reliance on God is through prayer.

b. **Hear, O our God, for we are despised:** In his prayer, Nehemiah first asked for God's attention and mercy. God did care about Nehemiah and the work of rebuilding, but Nehemiah needed God to *display* it and he also needed to *sense* God's presence and care.

c. **Turn their reproach on their own heads... give them as plunder... do not cover their iniquity:** Nehemiah then asked God to battle their enemies for them. He depended on God to fight the battle. God gave him a work to do, and he would not be distracted from it.

i. This prayer seems pretty tough, but prayers in the Psalms are even tougher: *Break their teeth in their mouth, O God!* ([Psalm 58:6](#)) *Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents* ([Psalm 69:25](#)). It is proper for a child of God to pray such a prayer because they are giving their violent inclinations over to God and letting *Him* deal with them.

ii. If we are angry with someone or have a real enemy, then we can go at them in prayer. Never in the sense of praying evil upon them, but in turning them over to a good and just God because He knows exactly what to do with them.

d. **They have provoked You to anger:** Finally, Nehemiah's prayer gave God a reason to show mercy and to come against his enemies. Nehemiah recognized that this was *God's* cause, not his own.

3. ([Nehemiah 4:6](#)) The result after the attack and Nehemiah's defense in prayer: the work continues on with greater and greater strength.

So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

a. **So we built the wall:** God answered the prayer by giving them all **a mind to work**. A **mind to work** is a gift from God, and no significant job will ever be accomplished until people come together with **a mind to work**.

i. This is exactly what Satan wants to destroy with his attacks — the **mind to work**. He wants to make us feel defeated, or passive, or self-focused, or discouraged.

ii. "Critics demoralize. Leaders encourage. When the critics spoke, the workmen heard them and were demoralized. But when the capable leader stepped up and said, 'Let's look at it God's way, stay at the job,' the crew members were back in there." (Swindoll)

b. **For the people had a mind to work:** The immediate answer to the prayer made no difference in the enemies. The prayer was answered in the people of God doing the work. Nehemiah's prayer asked God to take care of his enemies, and God answered by taking care of His people.

i. We often miss God's answer of our prayers because we pray for Him to do a work in the lives of others we are in conflict with — and He answers by moving in our lives, but we resist that moving. It is as if He tried to give us **a mind to work** in a situation, but we resisted it.

c. **The entire wall was joined together up to half its height:** The work was half finished. It was an exciting, but dangerous time; much had been done, but much was left to do. Fatigue and discouragement were ready to set in, if given an opportunity.

B. Sanballat and Tobiah plan to lead a violent attack against the work.

1. ([Nehemiah 4:7-8](#)) The conspiracy to attack the work.

Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come *and* attack Jerusalem and create confusion.

a. **The gaps were beginning to be closed:** The wall was only half as high as it should be, but it was almost continuous now. Therefore, the enemies of the work **became very angry**.

i. It must be that the work of God often makes the enemy of our soul angry. He must often rage against the progress being made by God's people in touching a lost world for Jesus Christ. It's not bad to make the devil angry.

b. **All of them conspired together to come and attack:** As the work progressed the enemies became more serious. Now they didn't simply complain or mock, they threatened and planned for violence.

i. On the one hand, this was serious: the wall was built to protect against the attacks of violence, and now it seemed that the very building of the wall may prompt an attack to come. It would have been easy for the people to fear and to think perhaps all their work would be made useless.

ii. On the other hand, this wasn't serious at all. We notice that they *didn't attack* — they just talked about it. Sanballat and Tobiah were hoping that the *threat* of attack would be enough. Satan uses the same strategy of fear against us, and if we are paralyzed by a threat the threat has worked — even when nothing actually happens against us.

c. **And create confusion:** This is an important strategy of Satan — to create confusion among the people of God. A confused people will never move forward and fulfill God's work. They are usually confused because they are distracted by the tricks of their enemies instead of focusing on God and His promises.

2. ([Nehemiah 4:9](#)) The attack defended by prayer and watching.

Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.

a. **Nevertheless we made our prayer to God:** Nothing would make them stop depending on God through prayer. They might have given up, believing the continued attack was a failure on God's part to answer prayer before — but they had more trust in God than that.

i. God allowed the attack to go on, even though He could have instantly swept it away. Yet He allowed it to continue because He was delighted that His people drew closer to Him with a deeper trust than ever before. God did His perfect work *both* in building the walls and His people.

b. **We set a watch:** They also knew that prayer didn't mean they were to do *nothing*. They used sanctified common sense to do what they should have, protecting against attack, using willing servants of God to *be* the

wall until the wall was built.

i. It isn't hard to imagine some super-spiritual among them saying, "Now Nehemiah, we don't need to **set a watch**. We have prayed, and God will protect us." Nehemiah would likely respond, "Yes, God will protect us, and He will as He finds us doing our duty before Him. Set the guard."

ii. When we see an area of our Christian life that needs particular attention, it isn't enough to pray. You need to set a watch as well — give special attention and accountability to that area of your life until you are walking in consistent victory.

iii. Our prayers do not replace our actions; they make our actions effective for God's work.

c. **Day and night:** This shows that Nehemiah was determined. He wouldn't let the security of daylight or the sleepiness of night keep him from the work. This sent a powerful message.

i. It sent a message to the people of God saying, "We are committed. This is going to succeed, because God is with us, and will enable us to overcome every obstacle."

ii. It sent a message to the enemies saying, "You will not succeed. God's work is going on and will not be stopped. We will make whatever sacrifices necessary to see it done — weary days, sleepless nights, it doesn't matter."

iii. It sent a message to God: "We trust in You, and our faith is a living faith — a faith of actions, not just words. We love and trust You, LORD."

C. Challenges from the inside and the outside.

1. ([Nehemiah 4:10](#)) The challenge from the inside: discouragement among the people because the work seemed too big.

Then Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall."

a. **Then Judah said:** Judah was supposed to be the strongest, bravest tribe. It was the tribe of great kings and ultimately, the Messiah Himself. It was a special challenge and a discouragement to have this word come from the tribe of Judah.

i. Nehemiah and the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem have been standing strong in the face of attack; but now that the rebuilding work is at the half-way point, and wall is almost continuous, special challenges arise.

b. **The strength of the laborers is failing:** The half-way point (mentioned in [Nehemiah 4:6](#)) is a dangerous place. Much remains to be done, but fatigue sets in because much has already been done.

i. It isn't enough to just begin well. Many a team has had a great first half — only to lose in the final minutes. The rebuilding work has gone very well and many obstacles have been overcome — but the job isn't done yet, the game isn't over yet, there is still time to lose.

c. **There is so much rubbish:** The work of rebuilding the walls was not only construction, but cleaning and hauling away the rubbish. The ruins of the walls, lying in waste for 100 years had become a collecting point for all kinds of rubbish.

i. Clearing away the rubbish was not an option — it had to be done. The destroyed parts of the wall and the accumulated rubbish had to be cleared away so the walls could be rebuilt upon their foundations. If they didn't do this, the walls wouldn't stand at all.

ii. In our Christian life, nothing much can be built for God's glory unless rubbish is swept away as well. Taking out the garbage can be discouraging work — but it must be done.

e. **We are not able to build the wall:** So, the excavation work had to start. Before they could build the walls up, they had to tear down and clear away the rubbish. They had to go down before they could go up.

- i. It was difficult because often, the work of building is a lot easier — or more fun — than clearing away the rubbish.
- ii. It was difficult because as the mound of rubbish was torn down, the city was even more vulnerable than before. We can see some thinking, “Don’t take away the rubbish; our enemies are near, and you merely clear a path for them to come in.”
- iii. It was difficult because there have always been those who will defend any heap of rubbish, no matter how useless it is. “Well, my grandfather had that pile of rubbish, and if it was good enough for him, it is good enough for us!” This is bad thinking; we should clear away the old, so we can build on the true foundation.
- iv. The heart of the people as shown in verse 10 must have been a discouragement for Nehemiah; it’s easy to lead when your followers are full of enthusiasm and have a heart to work. But what do you do when that begins to fade?

2. ([Nehemiah 4:11](#)) The challenge from the outside: the enemies plan a surprise attack.

And our adversaries said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.”

- a. **And our adversaries said:** Verse ten may mark the lowest point in the spirits of those doing the work. Things were already in a bad state, and the discouraged workers felt like giving up. *Now*, the enemy planned its raid on the workers, to crush those rebuilding the walls.
- b. **They will neither know nor see anything:** It is doubtful these enemies knew exactly how discouraged the people of God were. But certainly, the counsels of spiritual darkness in high places knew — and the attack was planned.
 - i. We can almost imagine the spiritual ranks of darkness suggesting to the adversaries of God’s people: “Now! Now is the time to attack! Do not delay, and you will crush them!” They knew Israel’s state of discouragement made an evil victory possible.
 - ii. The attacks we suffer from spiritual forces of darkness are just as strategically timed. Our spiritual enemies know when we are discouraged, tired, angry, or proud in self-confidence.
- c. **They will neither know nor see anything:** Often, attacks from the adversary are successful only if they come as a surprise. When God’s people are on guard, the enemy sees little victory.
- d. **Kill them and cause the work to cease:** The enemies of God’s people paid a back-handed compliment by saying this. They knew by now the only way to get them to stop serving God and doing His work was to **kill them**.

- i. This cannot be said of every servant of God today. For many, the devil does not have to kill them because discouragement, compromise, money, relationships, frustration, or trouble get them to stop serving God.

3. ([Nehemiah 4:12](#)) God allows the Jews to be warned about the coming attack.

So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, “From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”

- a. **The Jews who dwelt near them came:** This is a wonderful example of the power and goodness of God. The enemies of God and His people did their best, but God was always in control. The enemies did not know there were faithful Jews listening to their plotting.
- b. **They told us ten times:** It is easy to picture this scene, and see the informants repeating over and over again, “An attack is coming! It’s for real! They will defeat us!” **From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us!**
 - i. These who overheard the plan didn’t have the wisdom to know what to do in response. They were in a panic, and they were probably troubled that Nehemiah didn’t also panic.

4. ([Nehemiah 4:13-14](#)) Nehemiah organizes the defense.

Therefore I positioned *men* behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”

a. **Therefore:** These verses tell us what Nehemiah did, but we can also think of what Nehemiah *could* have done in this situation.

i. He could have done *nothing* — and even been spiritual about it. “Well brother, we’re just trusting in the Lord. We prayed about it and believe the Lord will deliver us somehow.”

ii. He could have *panicked* — and started thinking it was his job alone to defend against the attack.

iii. What he did was to *wisely and calmly trust God* in the midst of the storm, and to do the concrete things God would have him do to obtain the victory.

b. **Their swords, their spears, and their bows:** Nehemiah commanded them to bring out their armor. It was time to get serious, to put on the full armor, and to get ready to fight with every resource they had.

c. **Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome:** Nehemiah put their mind in the right perspective. The challenge was great but there was no reason for fear. He who was *in them* was greater than he who was in the world.

d. **Fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses:** Nehemiah reminded them what they were fighting for. We fight most effectively for the Lord when we keep in mind how much there is to lose.

5. ([Nehemiah 4:15](#)) The enemies shrink back.

And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and *that* God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.

a. **When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing:** Once they saw the defenses of the people of God, the enemies shrunk back. They didn’t want a battle because they knew they would lose. What the enemies wanted was for the people of God to hand them the victory on a silver platter through failing to watch and be ready.

b. **All of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work:** *This* was the victory. Defending against the attack was not the victory; the people of God would not be at peace and security until the wall was rebuilt. Getting on with the work was the victory.

i. When we are under spiritual attack it is easy to feel that just enduring the storm is the victory. It isn’t. The attack often comes to prevent your *progress and work* for the LORD. Victory is enduring the attack *and* continuing the progress and work for the LORD.

6. ([Nehemiah 4:16-18](#)) The sword and the trowel.

So it was, from that time on, *that* half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and *wore* armor; and the leaders *were* behind all the house of Judah. Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet *was* beside me.

a. **So that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon:** Some of the servants did the work of defending and some did the work of building. The workers had a sword at their side and a trowel in their hands to get the work done. The kingdom of God is built with both a sword and a trowel,

a sword to come against every spiritual force of wickedness in high places, and trowel to do the work of building up the people of God.

7. ([Nehemiah 4:19-23](#)) Plans are made to keep a ready defense.

Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, “The work *is* great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” So we labored in the work, and half of *the men* held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. At the same time I also said to the people, “Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day.” So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, *except that everyone took them off for washing.*

a. **The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another:** Nehemiah knew they had to keep in communication if the work was going to be done. The trumpets were a new way of communication there to meet the challenge.

b. **Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there:** They stayed ready to sound the alarm at the slightest notice. They would not be caught off guard.

c. **From daybreak until the stars appeared:** They dedicated themselves to the work all the more, working hard from sunrise to past dark, even spending the night out at the job site to protect against attack.

d. **So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes:** They kept their clothes on all the time because they did not want to be caught unprepared. They were always ready to respond to the blast of a trumpet.

i. Christians need to be armed with the same attitude today. They need to be always ready, always clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, always wearing the armor of God, ready for that final trumpet blast that will gather us together with our LORD.