

Nehemiah 1

“A Man of Prayer”

Scripture: Nehemiah 1

Memory Verse: Psalm 62:8 *“Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”*

Lesson Focus: We will introduce the book of Nehemiah by teaching the kids about prayer and looking at how Nehemiah “pours out his heart” before God as our memory verse says. Afterwards we will follow Nehemiah’s example and lead the kids in specific prayer for our city, state, and nation.

Activities and Crafts: Nehemiah Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st & 2nd: Praying Hands

Starter Activity: Bible Jokes

Consider starting off with some silly Sunday School Bible jokes and finish with the one introducing our new book of the Bible. Here are a few that I think are funny:

Q: Where is the first tennis match in the Bible?

A: When Joseph “served in Pharaoh’s court”.

Q: Why didn’t Noah and his family play cards on the Ark?

A: Because Noah was “standing on the deck”.

Q: What animal on the ark did Noah not trust?

A: The “cheetah”.

Q: If Noah got his milk from the cows, what did he get from the ducks on the ark?

A: “Quackers”

Q: What kind of man was Boaz before he got married?

A: “Ruthless”

Q: Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible?

A: David, because he “rocked” Goliath to sleep.

Q: Who is the shortest man in the Bible?

A: Bildad the Shuhite (“shoe-height”).

Q: If Bildad the Shuhite is the shortest man in the Bible, who is the second shortest?

A: Knee-high-miah (Nehemiah)

While I’m sure Nehemiah was not actually “knee-high”, we are going to learn a lot of real facts about this man of God the next few weeks as we spend time studying this book of the Bible that is named after him. And today we are going to see how he was a man of prayer! Let’s take a look!

Background:

Important questions to establish context and background of any book of the Bible.

- 1) **What?:** Nehemiah is an Old Testament book detailing Israel's return from exile and their rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- 2) **When?:** The events took place about 400-450 years before Jesus was born.
- 3) **Why?:** This book continues the story of God's faithfulness to His people as God raises up Nehemiah to lead Israel in repentance and restoration of their city.

Bible Study:

Nehemiah 1:1-2: As we begin our study, we need to understand God's overall story of the Bible so that we can better comprehend what Nehemiah is experiencing.

Q: What is history? A: Things that happened in the past. But since God created all things, including time, you could also say that history is "HIS-story". Nehemiah is part of that story! **Teachers:** Consider writing the word "history" on the board and then changing it to "HIS-story" to help bring the point home.

You could say that the main plotline of the whole Bible is about the one and only holy and awesome God making a way to have real relationship with an unholy and broken people. * From the garden of Eden in Genesis, to the Promised Land of Joshua (of which Jerusalem would become God's HQ), to the arrival of Jesus, God has made a way for broken people like us to be His people despite our sin and rebellion. And this isn't just the story of the Bible, but the true story of our world, whether you believe in it or not!

Now Nehemiah is a Jewish man living in a city far away from this promised land and he receives a report concerning his Jewish countrymen who had "survived the captivity".

Q: What does it mean to be captive? A: A prisoner! **Teachers:** Consider bringing in some rope and tying it around another leader to demonstrate this point. We can identify with Nehemiah as we have been "captive" to COVID this last year: exiled to our homes!

The Jewish people were God's people and the entire Old Testament is about them and how they went back and forth between loving God and defying God. God was patient toward them, but also warned them that if they continued in sin they would be punished.

One of the prophets, Jeremiah, warned them that God would punish them by making them captive to a foreign country for 70 years. **Read Jeremiah 25:11.** Guess what? This is exactly what happened! WOW! * After 70 years, the Jewish people were free to go back to their land to rebuild and that is what is going on right now with Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 1:3: The people are greatly troubled for their city was in ruins!

Q: How do you think Nehemiah felt when he got this news? How would you feel? *

Nehemiah 1:4: He is very sad. He cried for many days. * But he didn't just cry feeling sorry for himself. His crying brought him to the Lord in fasting and prayer.

Q: Anyone know what fasting is? * A: It is a way to "turbo-charge" your prayers as you choose not to eat to focus more on the Lord. * It is not something you do to change God, but that God would change you.

And this sharpened focus on God is what prayer is really all about. Our memory verse (**Psalm 62:8**) for this week captures this. **Teachers:** Consider having this verse on the white board and spending a few minutes talking about it now. Maybe even bring a pitcher of water in to demonstrate "pouring our hearts out" before God is giving God our all: our worries, our fears, our disappointments, everything that is inside of us.

Let's look at how Nehemiah poured his heart out before God. **Teachers:** Consider reading **Nehemiah 1:5-11** straight through and then come back and teach thru it. *

Nehemiah 1:5: Read this verse again slowly and listen to how Nehemiah describes God.
A: Great, awesome, a keeper of promises! Nehemiah is pouring out adoration to God! This is a great way to begin any prayer!

Nehemiah 1:6: His prayer now transitions from pouring out adoration to pouring out confession.

Q: What is confession? It is when you admit your sin and that you were wrong, ask for forgiveness, AND then are willing to receive correction!

Nehemiah 1:7: Here Nehemiah says what he and his people have done wrong. They have chosen their own ways instead of God's ways. **Read Zephaniah 3:1-2** for another description of the city and its people.

Nehemiah 1:8: Nehemiah recalls that God said there would be consequences * if the people forgot Him. And God indeed kept His word and scattered them because of their sin.

Nehemiah 1:9: But God promised something else as well. Let's read this again slowly.

Q: If the people "return to Him" in faith and trust, what did God also promise?
A: That God would gather them back to their land and restore them.

This is exactly what the rest of this book is about and we will see how God will use Nehemiah to fulfill this promise the next several weeks!

Nehemiah 1:10-11: Finally, Nehemiah pours out his requests and supplications to God pleading with Him to act. He and others were ready to love God, obey Him, and return to the land. We will talk about him being a cupbearer next week and also see how God begins to answer this prayer!

Key Point: Nehemiah was not a prophet, a priest, or a pastor. He was an ordinary man who loved our extraordinary God and showed it by pouring out his heart before God in prayer.

Boys and Girls: Have you ever poured your hearts to God about something? This is what God wants! He wants relationship with you. Reading His word his how He communicates to us and prayer is how we communicate to Him. Follow Nehemiah's example this week and pour your hearts out to God in prayer!

Teachers: At this point we will end the main teaching but immediately after the lesson spend some focused time with the kids practicing prayer. Nehemiah was concerned for the civil welfare of his people. Our nation and our city is in need of prayer as well. See some Scripture and some ideas below to lead the kids in some group prayer for our city and nation.

1) Philippians 4:4-7 – A lot of people in our nation and city are still very concerned and worried about COVID. Pray for those who are sick, but also pray that people would turn to Jesus and that His peace and His promises would comfort their hearts.

2) 1 Timothy 2:1-4 – God wants us to pray for our government leaders. Pray that they would be saved. Pray that they would govern justly and righteously. Pray that God's word would guide their policies. Pray for them by name with the kids. Consider also showing a picture of them as you pray for them (see links below on each name).

- Our city mayor: [John Suthers](#)
- Our city police chief: [Vince Niski](#)
- Our city fire chief: [Ted Collas](#)
- Our state governor: [Jared Polis](#)
- Our vice president: [Kamala Harris](#)
- Our president: [Joe Biden](#)

3) Proverbs 14:31 – Pray for the homeless and needy of our city. Pray for homeless shelters like Springs Rescue Mission that they would receive the poor and give them the living hope that is found in Jesus Christ.

4) James 5:16 – We are also commanded to pray for another. Ask for prayer requests but consider even asking kids to step up and practice praying for each other out loud.

5) Have a look at our [prayer ideas for elementary kids](#) and consider leading the kids through one or more of them.

Bring It Home

Download at: <https://rncalvary.org/volunteering/childrens-ministry/family-resources/>

Lesson Theme: “A Man of Prayer”

Scripture: Nehemiah 1

Memory Verse: Psalm 62:8 *“Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.”*

Teachers/Parents: We introduced Nehemiah as a man of prayer and saw in this section of Scripture how he “poured out his heart” before God. Can you think of a time when you sincerely and genuinely “poured out your heart” before God? Share the situation and what happened.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) We set the stage for the book of Nehemiah by talking through some of the history of the people of Israel, the captivity in particular. For 70 years they were exiled from their land and city as captives to a foreign nation. We drew some parallels between their situation and how we have been “captive” and “exiled” to our homes because of COVID. In what ways have you felt “captive” during this COVID pandemic?
- 2) **Read Nehemiah 1:3.** Was the report Nehemiah received of his countrymen good or bad?
- 3) **Read Nehemiah 1:4.** How did Nehemiah respond to this news? American culture seems to discourage men from crying. But is that a biblical view of manhood? **Read John 11:35.**
- 4) Nehemiah’s tears led him to the Lord in fasting and prayer. In class we talked about how fasting is a way to “turbo-charge” your prayers as you abstain from food to focus more on the Lord. Have you ever fasted? Consider doing a family fast by skipping a meal together and instead spending time in prayer.
- 5) The ACTS acronym (**A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication) describes four main elements of prayer that we see in the Scriptures. Read through **Nehemiah 1:5-11**. Where do you see these elements in this prayer?
- 6) Nehemiah was concerned about the civil welfare of his people and city. What burdens you about our city right now? Pray together as a family for these things.