

Nehemiah 4:1-20

“Prepare for Battle!”

Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1-20

Memory Verse: Ephesians 6:10 “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

Lesson Focus: As we watch Nehemiah rally the people to prepare for battle against the “bad guys”, we will emphasize how Nehemiah always points the people back to the Lord and HIS power and might. After we look at how God delivers Nehemiah and His people, we will challenge the kids to be prepared for their daily battle with sin and the devil.

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

Starter Activity: Bad Guy Game

Consider using this game to introduce our lesson today. Good stories typically have good guys and bad guys, we’re going to play a game where we reveal the bad guy, and you will need to guess what the story is and who the good guy is. **Teachers:** We will print off a few pictures for you to use or bring your own. Consider talking about the story a little bit, why the character is a “bad guy”, and how the conflict resolves in the story.

- 1) **Bowser** (always kidnapping the princess) *
 - Story: Mario Video Games
 - Good guys: Mario and Luigi
- 2) **Mother Gothel** (imprisons Rapunzel for her magical hair)
 - Story: *Tangled* Movie
 - Good guy: Rapunzel
- 3) **White Witch** (evil ruler of Narnia)
 - Story: Narnia (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*)
 - Good guys: Aslan and the Pevensie kids

We can probably think of many others from other stories, but in God’s story, the story of the real world we actually live in, there are also many “bad guys”.

Q: Can you think of any bad guys from the Bible?

A: Pharaoh, Goliath, Nebuchadnezzar, the Pharisees, Satan

Q: And who were the good guys they were opposing? A: Moses, David, Daniel, Jesus

Whenever you are doing God’s work or just simply obeying God and walking in His ways, it shouldn’t surprise you if “bad guys” come your way. We need to be prepared for battle! Let’s see how Nehemiah and the Jewish people were prepared for battle.

Bible Study:

Q: If you were here last week, what did we all work on together?

A: Building various parts of the wall of the city. In chapter 3, God's people worked together on the wall as a team and we pretended to join in with them. But now here come the bad guys!

Nehemiah 4:1: You might remember this guy from a couple of weeks ago. He has already made fun of Nehemiah's idea to rebuild the city but now that he hears it is actually happening he gets angry. (**Teachers:** Consider drawing a mad face on the whiteboard and labeling it "Sanballat" or "bad guy". Throughout our text he is going to get madder and madder and re-draw the face at each point of the story for some fun)

Q: Can you think of any examples of "bad guys" in stories that merely toy with the good guys at first but then get REALLY angry once they realize the good guys actually mean business? (i.e. Ursula from *Little Mermaid* turns into big monster at end of movie) *

Nehemiah 4:2-3: Other times the "bad guys" realize they need backup so they rally their minions. Now Sanballat rallies an army to join him!

Q: But whose side is God on? A: He's on Nehemiah's and the Jewish people's side. God promised that they would rebuild this city (**Jeremiahs 29:10-14**) and God keeps His promises! That makes all of the difference! And look at how Nehemiah responds:

Nehemiah 4:4-5: With prayer! Nehemiah is in constant contact with God about everything. He "*pours out his heart to God*" (**Psalms 62:8**) as we have seen him do many times before already. (**Teachers:** I recommend emphasizing the fact THAT Nehemiah prays to God here and NOT the imprecatory content of his prayer. Jesus changed the game for Christians who are commanded to pray for, not against, their enemies)

Nehemiah 4:6: God's people were not discouraged by the nasty comments and threats and now they are about halfway done with the work! *

Nehemiah 4:7-8: The "bad guys" see that they are losing. Instead of realizing that they cannot win (because they are ultimately fighting God), they just get more and more mad!
* Now they were planning to actually physically attack God's people to stop the work.

Q: What do you think Nehemiah and the people are going to do now? Give up? NOPE!

Nehemiah 4:9-12: They keep praying and trusting in God. But their troubles were only increasing! The people are exhausted from the work (v. 10) and the "bad guys" were preparing a secret attack to come and kill them (v. 11-12).

Notice that while Nehemiah and the people pray and trust in God, their praying also leads them to ACTION! *

Nehemiah 4:13: Nehemiah positions the people with weapons ready to face the attack of the “bad guys” and DEFEND * each other and the city.

Q: What does it mean to “defend” something? A: It means to protect or guard someone or something special to you.

Q: What are some things that you might defend? A: Little siblings, your home, etc.

Teachers: At this point, consider playing a little game we will call “Defend the City” to sort of simulate what God’s people were prepared for. Have one kid stand in the middle of the room representing the city. Then have a leader be the “defender” of the kid representing the city. The rest of the group will form a circle around the “city” and the “defender”. They will be given a ball to try and hit the “city”. The “defender” will do all he/she can to absorb the blows. If the city gets hit, then have the leader then become the city and someone else become the “defender”. If the game goes well, rotate other kids in so they experience being the defender.

Nehemiah 4:14: So back to our story, look at how Nehemiah rallies the people.

Q: Who were they to remember? A: GOD, who is great and awesome and on their side!

Nehemiah 4:15: As they got prepared for battle notice what happened to the “bad guys”: They chickened out! Notice that Nehemiah gives all of the glory to God! Can you imagine how mad Sanballat was now? *

Nehemiah 4:16-17: So now they get back to work, but notice they are still ready to defend if necessary. * They take turns standing guard and working and everyone is armed and ready for an attack!

Nehemiah 4:18-20: Finally, someone is also appointed and ready to sound the alarm in case of an attack. Their defense was complete and they remained prepared for battle!

Q: Who did Nehemiah say would fight for them? GOD! Let’s fast forward now to today.

Q: Do we, as Christians, have a battle that we need to be prepared for?

A: YES! We have a daily **spiritual** battle against sin and self. Every day, we choose whether we will live God’s way or our way! The devil is the “bad guy” who will do all he can to get us to ignore God and do things our way. But we don’t have to be afraid!

Key Point: Like Nehemiah, the apostle Paul rallied Christians to be “*strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*”. (**Ephesians 6:10**) Jesus fights for Christians too! But just like Nehemiah and the Jewish people took steps to be prepared, we must do the same.

Paul continues in **Ephesians 6:11** that we are to “put on” the whole armor of God so that we can withstand the devil’s attacks. Put on that armor this week and you will be invincible to the devil’s attacks! He will chicken out just like Sanballat did against Nehemiah, for you will be armed with God’s power!

Small Group Time Afterwards: Refer back to the “Defend the City” game that we played. In that game, the “bad guys” were throwing balls at the city while someone was trying to defend it. In our daily battle with sin and self, the devil is the one throwing the balls at us!

Ask the kids what are some “balls” that the devil might throw at us to tempt us to sin. Write them on the whiteboard. Some possible answers:

- TV/movies with bad ideas or bad words
- Addictions to things like video games
- Selfishness, Greed, Pride, Hatred, Anger, Envy, Doubt, Lies

If we aren’t prepared for battle, we will get beaten down by these “balls”. Consider letting the kids hit you with the balls undefended to demonstrate what it is like if we live our lives unprepared for battle.

Read **Ephesians 6:10**, our memory verse.

Q: Whose power are we to rely upon for this battle? God’s power! Jesus is the one that will defend us from those “balls” that the devil throws at us.

But we also must act and apply God’s help. Read **Ephesians 6:11**. We are to put on the whole armor of God. This is how we can be prepared and God then comes to our side just like He did for Nehemiah and the people.

Point out some of the armor’s components below or break the kids up into groups and have them talk about each component found in **Ephesians 6:14-18**:

Belt of Truth: We treasure truth and flee from falsehood, lies, and deceit.

Helmet of Salvation: The helmet protects the head, or the mind. We remember with our minds that Jesus paid for all of our sins when He died on the cross. He saved us!

The Word of God: We are to read, hear, and believe the Bible. Just like the people did their work with a sword in one hand, we are to constantly wield the sword of the spirit with our hands.

Prayer: Just like Nehemiah, we are to pray and stay in contact with God.

Q: Where can you take action this week to be better prepared for your daily battle?

Consider playing the “Defend the City” game again having the kids take turns defending one another and point out that we are to defend one another in the church and fight together!

Bring It Home

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

Lesson Theme: “Prepare for Battle!”

Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1-20

Memory Verse: Ephesians 6:10 *“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”*

Teachers/Parents: We got our lesson going by talking about some well-known “bad guys” from movies, stories, and also from the Bible. Who are some “bad guys” that you remember or come to mind and what made them so bad? In good stories, the “bad guys” either get defeated or get justice. Why do you think everyone is glad when the “bad guy” loses and the “good guy” wins?

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Read **Nehemiah 4:1-3**. The “bad guys” in Nehemiah’s day begin opposing Nehemiah and the people by mocking and ridiculing their plans to rebuild the city. Have you ever been mocked or ridiculed for simply doing things God’s way? How did you respond?
- 2) Read **Nehemiah 4:4**. How does Nehemiah respond?
- 3) Did you notice anything strange about Nehemiah’s prayer? Prayers like these are called imprecatory prayers and we see these a few times in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ has changed the game for Christians in prayer though. Read **Matthew 5:43-44**. How are Christians to respond to their enemies?
- 4) Read **Nehemiah 4:13-14**. How did Nehemiah prepare the people for battle? Point out several things that Nehemiah did and said.
- 5) As Christians, we also have a daily spiritual battle that we need to be prepared for. Read **Colossians 3:8-10**. What do we need to battle against every day?
- 6) Read **Ephesians 6:10**, our memory verse. Just as Nehemiah prepared the Jewish people for battle, Paul instructs Christians for our battle. What is our first step according to this verse?
- 7) Read **Ephesians 6:11-18** which describes the whole armor of God that Christians are to “put on”. What aspects of this armor do you think you are lacking and what steps can you take this week to be armed and ready for battle?