

After Israel disobeyed God, they had been punished by being carried into captivity and having cities destroyed. Nehemiah was responsible for helping to rebuild Jerusalem. The full story is found in the book of Nehemiah. You can choose verses to read with the children or give them a brief synopsis, but here are the key points:

- Nehemiah had concern for God's family.
- Nehemiah prayed and acted upon his concerns.
- Nehemiah didn't allow others to discourage him. He listened to God.
- Nehemiah asked God to help him.
- Nehemiah repaired the wall like Jesus came to repair our relationship with God.

Explain how the Israelites' cities had been destroyed, and they had been carried far away from their homes to live in another country and serve the people there. Think about how hard it would be to go back and live in a city with unsafe walls and homes. *(ARM connection: we have neighbors living in unsafe homes. How would it feel to live this way? How can we help those living in these conditions?)*

Share how Nehemiah had an important job working for the king as his cupbearer. Explain that a cupbearer had to be trustworthy and loyal because their job was to keep the king safe. Show how Nehemiah could have remained comfortable in the king's palace, but he had concern for God and God's people. Think about some ways people leave their comfort to obey God and care for others. *(ARM connection: we live in warm, safe, dry homes. We have a responsibility to love our neighbors and give of our time, talent, and treasures for His kingdom.)*

Remind the children that all the people worked together to rebuild the wall. Talk about how, when we work together, we can accomplish more.

Activity: Scatter some blocks on the floor (or you can use sticks or pebbles if you are outside). Using a stopwatch, time one child picking the items up by

themselves. Then scatter the items again. This time use the stopwatch to track how long it takes when everyone works together. *(ARM connection: when we work together to rebuild, whether it is homes or broken relationships, we accomplish more. It's more fun, too.)*

Talk about how Nehemiah prayed and asked God to help him. Read Philippians 4:6 together. Talk about how we shouldn't worry, but should pray. Point out that the verse also says to thank God.

Activity: Make a list of some prayer requests you might have and some praises. If the child is too young to read or write, you can create drawings together to represent your prayers and praises. *(ARM connection: we can always pray for others, and God always welcomes and listens to our petitions. Also, when we help people, they thank God for His help through us. That's pretty cool!)*

Explain that Nehemiah did not let others discourage him from doing the right thing. Talk about how sometimes people will be mean or try to get us to do bad things or not do good things, but that we need to follow what God says in the Bible. Tell the children how, in Nehemiah's day, the way they defended their cities was to build big, strong walls around them. Talk about how the other army had destroyed Jerusalem's walls.

Activity: You can create a small walled city out of blocks, Legos, or other stackable objects. Talk about how the wall kept people secure. Knock down the wall and explain that the houses aren't safe anymore, while damaging the houses, too, showing there is no protection around them. Ask the children how safe or comfortable it would be to live with no protection, and how it would affect your life. As you talk about the fear and broken relationships that might be an outcome of broken homes, you can begin to rebuild the wall and buildings that you destroyed. Talk about how Jesus came to repair our relationship with God. *(ARM connection: Not everyone has broken homes, but everyone has a broken relationship with God because of sin. By helping rebuild homes, we are doing work like Jesus.)*

Pray and ask Jesus to repair your relationships with Him. Bring out the list you made of prayer requests and praises and add them to your prayer. Thank God that He has provided a way to rebuild our relationship with God through Jesus and provided ways we can serve others in His name.