



K-1st Lesson

Introduction

- Today we'll be learning about the man who led the people in Jerusalem as the governor. Can you think of other people who are leaders? *Allow answers. King, queen, president, coach, team captain, boss at work, military general, teacher, principal, pastor, parents, police, etc.*

We're going to start our lesson with a leadership game. It's "Follow the Leader—Quick Switch." Have students line up behind you and explain that you will be the leader first and that they should follow where you lead them and do what you do. After about 30 seconds, say "Quick switch!" and move to the back of the line, leaving the next in line to lead. Continue to follow each leader, giving the signal to switch after 30 seconds until you are the first in line again.

- What made it hard or easy to be a leader? *Allow answers.*
- What made it hard or easy to be a follower? *Allow answers.*
- What do you think God wants a leader to be like? *Allow discussion.*

Leaders do not have to be famous or popular or even big and strong. God looks for people who want to serve and obey him because of their love for the Lord.

Refer to Lesson 116 Flip Chart. Let's go back to Nehemiah. He led the third group of Jews home to Judah.

- What job did they have to do in the city of Jerusalem? *Rebuild the walls.*

Nehemiah helped the people rebuild the walls. But there were enemies who didn't want the walls to be finished. They caused trouble and planned to attack the Jews while they were working. Nehemiah and the Jews prayed for God's protection but also kept weapons nearby as they worked to be ready for an enemy attack.

Enemies Oppose Nehemiah

Show the Lesson Flip Chart. Nehemiah cared about the Jews living in Jerusalem and wanted to help them as their leader. But remember the three bad guys from the last lesson? Well, they were still up to no good. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem were worried when they saw the walls being built. So, they started doing tricky things to try to keep Nehemiah from finishing his work.

- First, Sanballat and Geshem sent messages to Nehemiah. Who would like to go and get the first message with a #1 on it? *Choose a student to find the card on the wall and bring it to you to read out loud.*

- Do you think Nehemiah should meet with these guys? *Allow discussion.*

Nehemiah knew it was a trap! His enemies only wanted to hurt him.

- Who will find the message Nehemiah sent back to Sanballat and Geshem, #2? *Choose a student to find the card and bring it to you to read out loud.*

- What would happen to the work on the walls if Nehemiah left? *It would stop.*

Nehemiah knew finishing the wall was very important, and he would not pay attention to his enemies. But Sanballat and Geshem kept trying. They sent the same message asking Nehemiah to meet with them four times! And each time, Nehemiah said no.

- So Sanballat decided to try something else. He sent another letter. Who would like to find card #3? *Choose a student to find the card and bring it to you to read out loud.*

- Sanballat said he would tell the king that the Jews were rebelling. That means they were not going to obey the king and would fight against him. He also said that Nehemiah wanted to take over as king of Judah.

- Was any of this true? *No!*

- Sanballat hoped this would scare Nehemiah. Let's see how Nehemiah answered him. Who would like to find card #4? *Choose a student to find the card and bring it to you to read out loud.*

Nehemiah knew that this was a made-up lie. The king had given him special permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, so he wasn't afraid. Nehemiah had work to do for God and his people, and he was not going to allow the enemy to keep him from it. These enemies wouldn't quit bothering him, though.

- What do you think Nehemiah did? What should we do when we have problems? *Pray. Ask God for help.*

Yes. When worries and troubles bother us, it can get tiring. Sometimes, we feel like giving up. Nehemiah prayed and asked God to strengthen his hands so he could keep doing the work God gave him to do.

Well, the enemies of the Jews were getting frustrated. They couldn't get Nehemiah to meet with them—no matter what they did or said. So, they set up a sneaky trap. This time, they hired a Jew named Shemaiah who was a false prophet.

Nehemiah 6:10–11

Let's find out if Nehemiah fell for this trick in Nehemiah chapter 6. Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note. Read verse 10.

- Where did Shemaiah want Nehemiah to meet him? *In the house of God; in the temple.*

- Why did Shemaiah say Nehemiah should go to the temple and close the doors? *Someone was coming to kill him.*

Nehemiah's enemies knew that if he hid in the temple, it would make him look like he was afraid and didn't trust in God or respect God's house.

Uh oh! What would Nehemiah do? Listen to the next verse. *Read verse 11.*

- Did Nehemiah go hide in the temple? *No.*

Nehemiah knew that only the priests were allowed into the Holy Place inside the temple. But he was not a priest, so it would be wrong for him to go there. Besides, Nehemiah knew Shemaiah was working for his enemies.

Nehemiah Governs in Jerusalem

God was faithful to help Nehemiah and the Jews complete the rebuilding of the walls while protecting them from their enemies. Nehemiah stayed in Jerusalem for 12 years leading the people as their governor. He didn't just help them build walls and gates but also helped with another problem that had caused great trouble for many.

We talked about how the Jews in Jerusalem were bothered by their enemies. But they were also being mistreated by the rich Jewish officials.

Refer to the Flip Chart. Things seemed hopeless for many of the Jews in Jerusalem. Since they were busy working on the wall, they couldn't work in the fields, vineyards, and olive orchards to grow food. They were forced to sell their houses and

land to get money for food and to pay their taxes. When they had nothing left, they had to sell their own children as slaves!

If someone borrowed money from the officials, they charged extra money when the person tried to pay them back. The people had no way to pay back the money they owed or to free their children. Plus, the officials took part of everything the people were growing from the land—their grain, oil, and wine.

When he heard what was happening, Nehemiah was furious. He called together all those who were causing these problems. Nehemiah told them this wasn't right and it needed to stop. The rich men listened and agreed to do as Nehemiah said. They returned the things they had taken from their own people.

Nehemiah wanted to please the Lord as a good leader. He knew it was hard for his people to start over in Judah after they had been gone so long, and he cared about their needs for things like food and homes. But he also cared about their spiritual needs. This group of Jews had not been taught about God's laws. So, Nehemiah gathered all the people together and asked Ezra to read the Book of the Law to them. Remember Ezra? He was the priest who came back to Judah with the second group of Jews. He wanted to teach the people about God's laws, too.

Nehemiah 8:8–10

Let's read what happened in Nehemiah 8:8–10. *Read the verses.*

- What book did Ezra read from? *(Verse 8) The Law of God.*

- Did the people understand what he was reading? *Yes.*

As Ezra read from God's laws, the Levites helped the people understand what it meant.

- What did the people do when they heard God's Word and understood it? *(Verse 9) They wept.*

When the people heard God's laws, they understood that they were sinners and that God was holy. They felt bad for disobeying God.

- What did Nehemiah tell the people to do instead of weeping? *(Verse 10) To eat and drink and give to others. Not to mourn or weep but to be joyful.*

Now that they knew what God commanded and were sorry for their sin, they could celebrate and worship God together with joy.

Nehemiah cared about his people.



Sanballat, Tobiah,
and Geshem



Rich officials
treated the Jews
BADLY

