



Dear Youth Leader,

In this series, we are working in-step with our teaching team as we dive into the first half of the book of Nehemiah. Building the walls of Jerusalem is a patient, painful, yet worthy work for God's people. We'll learn our own lessons of navigating challenges as we build things up in our own lives. Please share your own stories and struggles that relate to the texts each week.. Encourage questions. Try to put yourself in your students shoes (or ask them about it), because many youth feel that this season of their life is uncertain, and they want to build a life that is good and right. Challenge your kids, and be an example to them!

I am praying for you as you prep your time with your youth group, and can't wait to hear how it went. Please reach out if you have any questions, ideas, or stories. I'm here to support you!

Mark Ricalde

Youth Pastor, Crosswalk Redlands

Belonging | 25 - 30 min
Breakfast / Welcome
Sharing Activity

Experience | 25 - 30 min
Worship
Message / Discussion

Momentum | 5 - 10 min
Challenge / Application
Announcements / Visioning

CRSWLK
THE WALK

Nehemiah 1

PREPARATION

Read

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

think of a story where you decided to make something a prayer focus of your life

Opening Questions

- What is something you probably shouldn't care about, that you care about a lot?
- What world problem do you worry about and want to change the most?

Introduction

- Put the above questions up. Have the kids talk in pairs or groups about each and have them share. Nehemiah cares about Jerusalem in disrepair, even though he has never been.

Message Direction

- verse 1-3: What can we learn from Nehemiah's conversation with Hanani and the men? Nehemiah might have assumed that Jerusalem was in a better place. The first return had been years before, so he was probably expecting a nice response. Have you ever asked someone how they were doing and they dropped awful news?
- verse 4: Nehemiah has never been to Jerusalem. Why is he sad? Do you have empathy like Nehemiah, if not how could we build our compassion?
- verse 5-10: While we only have this one prayer, the period between Nehemiah hearing the bad news and talking to the king is 6-8 months. He prays and continually thinks about the problems in Jerusalem for a while. What can we learn from this?
- verse 5-10: What can we learn from the contents and subject matter of the prayer?
- verse 11: Do you hope for success because you have prayed, or because of your own work and effort? What is more important? If you could only prepare or pray, which would you pick?

CHALLENGE

Choose something in the world that you deeply care about. What would it look like for you to pray about that for the next month or more?

Nehemiah 2:1-10

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Reflect on your Experience

think of a story where you saw someone who looked sad and responded in a helpful way.

Opening Questions

- What's the biggest and boldest request you have ever made?

Try Not To Smile Contest

- Split the whole group in pairs. The goal is to make the other person smile while not smiling yourself. Losers sit. Pair up the winners and repeat this process until there is one winner. Interview them and find their secret.
- Nehemiah is able to hide his sorrow for months. Is that good or bad? Why?

Message Direction

- verse 1-2: It is important to notice the split state of Nehemiah. His heart is breaking, but he has to do his job well. How do we balance being honest with our heart and emotions, and making sure we are faithful in doing a good job with the tasks in front of us?
- verse 3-5: Nehemiah is willing to step out and courage and make a request because he has already built a good relationship with the king. The king's first question is "When will you return?" The king likes and trusts Nehemiah. We do good relationship building today as a foundation for times ahead. This is not to say we should treat relationships transactionally, but that good rapport should be built between friends.
- verse 7-8: It is clear that Nehemiah was planning this whole time what he would need to get the job done. He has taken time to map out what will work and what won't. How can we more intentionally and reflectively approach the challenges we have in our life?
- verse 10: We are introduced to those who will oppose Nehemiah in our story. How is it encouraging or discouraging to know that there will always be people who will oppose you?

CHALLENGE

Nehemiah is able to boldly ask for something because he deeply cares about it and has thought a lot about it. Let's make our requests well thought out and from the heart.

Nehemiah 2:11-20

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think of a story where you started working on something before making the proper plans. how did it go?

Opening Game

- By now in the series, you might realise your kids are not that knowledgeable with Old Testament stuff. Find an online jeopardy game, make teams and have fun!
- Just like Nehemiah studied the walls and did his own research, it is good for us to at least have a base Bible knowledge so we can make connections between faith, our life, and the word.

Message Direction

- verse 11-16: Nehemiah and a few others goes in secret to inspect the current state of the walls of Jerusalem. Why does he do this? What is the benefit for Nehemiah to see the walls with his own eyes before sharing his dream? How does this apply to our situations and relationships (maybe listen and inspect before making statements and plans)
- verse 17-18: Nehemiah is able to go to the city leaders with: 1. his own perspective and witness of seeing the broken walls. 2. a story and testimony about how God had opened doors in our life.
 - How can we take these two principles in our own lives?
 - The nice thing about planning ahead is that when you launch, you can begin the work right away. We don't have to get bogged down. The order is: God given vision, prayer, research, planning, sharing, excitement, work.
- verse 19-20: Clearly Sanballat, Tobiah, and the others are enemies. However, it seems shocking that Nehemiah is so exclusive and closes them off. Did Nehemiah do the right thing, or should he have shown more grace and tried to connect?

CHALLENGE

Choose an area of your life to study and observe, make a plan, and execute!



Nehemiah 3-4:9

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Reflect on your Experience

think of a story where someone said you couldn't do something, or when someone put you down.

Activity

- Split the group in teams and give them each 1-2 sleeves of red solo cups. Give them a time limit to build the highest tower.

Questions

- What engineering strategy brought success?
- What team dynamic or teamwork was needed?
- Is this activity better alone or together? What does your answer tell you about the attitudes you have on work?

Message Direction

- Neh 3: We have a long list of all the people who repaired different sections of the wall. The phrase "Next to them" is repeated throughout the text, showing the collaborative, side-by-side work of the God's people. It did not matter whether you were poor a rich, a priest or from a lower house., everyone did their part and completed the work of their area. Getting along and working with people different than us, or people we don't like has always been challenging. It is also difficult to trust someone else to do work that you think you might do better. We have to learn to do better, strive for better, and be open to the ways God brings us all together.
- Who is someone you need to be better at working/living beside?
- Neh 4:1-9: Opposition must be expected when you are doing good work. In fact, if you have no challenges in life, maybe you aren't dreaming big enough. Nehemiah and the people respond to this mocking by praying and worshiping more. They do make plans to deal with it (later on), but right now they pray and bring their frustrations and worries to God.
- Is having a conversation with God your first instinct in difficult moments? Why or why not?

THINK ABOUT THIS

This week is about working with a team, and working against a team. How do we know when to compromise to work with others, or when to cut them out and move ahead?

Nehemiah 4:10-5:19

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Reflect on your Experience

think of a story where you were treated unfairly, and someone stood up for you. What was it like?

Media Context Element

- Find a video that explains building procedures. (look up ancient wall building)
- Play the video and take time talking about what it would feel like to work while keeping an eye out for enemies.

Questions

- Would you rather be someone guarding the wall or someone working on the wall? Why?
- Do you believe multitasking is good or bad? Is it even possible?

Message Direction (I picked the first half. You could also spend time on chapter 5)

- Neh 4:10-23: The basic summary of this section is that the people have to multitask. Half the people take up arms and guard, the other half work on the wall. Even those who work on the wall are split in effort, having one hand on their sword, the other working on the wall. This is echoed in our day in many ways:
 - we have to juggle school, sports, friendships, church, and more.
 - we have people cheering us on, and people trying to tear us down.
- It sounds exhausting doing what Nehemiah and the people are doing. What is their motivation? Do we have a good motivation for the goals we have in our life?
- The trumpet call is a message to everyone to drop what they are doing and defend the area under attack. For us, this is a call to prioritise what is important. It's also a call to sometimes stop our own work to assist others. How do we balance priorities and service in our life?
- Life often finds us spread out and seemingly spread thin on energy and resources. God can still work progress in those seasons. Take encouragement in that reality.

CHALLENGE

Think of someone in your life who is carrying a heavy burden (verse 18).
What can you do to lighten the load?

Nehemiah 6:1-16, 8:5-10

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Reflect on your Experience

think of a story where the work you put in was way less than the outcome. Did you give glory to God?

Opening Situations

- Come up with a few situations that are relevant to your local group. Describe the situation, and ask your youth how they would stop the situation. The more specific the better. Can be good things to stop, bad things, or sticky grey areas. Have fun with it. (examples: stopping uniforms, a friend is about to make a bad decision, teacher adds more homework, parents try to ground you)

Message Direction

- Neh 6:1-16: We hit the max effort of Nehemiah's enemies to stop him. They spread rumours, send false propaganda letters, and try to have secret meetings in areas of the temple where he would not be allowed to go. How did Nehemiah know these were traps?
 - Do you have a way for discerning bad ideas in your life? Share with the group.
 - Do you ever accidentally or intentionally try to make other people look bad? Why?
 - Have you ever tried to play politics and trap someone else? Why do humans (us) have a tendency to hurt others to protect ourselves?
 - Should Nehemiah have tried to meet with Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem and the others? Maybe he could have convinced them to change their ways and follow God?
 - Is there grace in this story? What can we learn from these tricky interpersonal situations. Is Nehemiah in the right or the wrong?
- Neh 8:5-10: The construction ends with worship and a party. It's worth celebrating big moments in our lives, especially if it took a lot of work, effort, and God's guidance.

CHALLENGE

Living with integrity means being someone who is honest and has high morals.
What areas can you be better at taking the high ground?



A Final Note,

Life gets crazy. Sometimes we walk into a room knowing we haven't prepped enough. A high-schooler might walk in with the weight of a hard week on their minds, and the last place they want to be is youth group. The teenage community you are leading will have cliques, crazy couples, and apathetic kids. All this to say that teaching in this scenario will rarely feel like you did a great job. Don't worry, you don't need to. **Jesus shows up.**

If every week you:

eat together,

pray together,

worship together,

and study the word together,

then you have faithfully structured the youth time for God to work.

Thank you for your effort and compassionate heart.

I'm a leader in the church because of influencers like you!

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