

Bible background

Nehemiah 4:1-22; 6:1-4

Aim of lesson

To learn what God wants us to do when people are nasty.

Preparation required

You will need colouring materials, tape and scissors. Note that the walls are built from three activity sheets and will take two weeks.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Remind the class of last week's lesson about Nehemiah wanting to build the wall of Jerusalem, by singing through the song.
2. Tell the children that building walls is hard work and not easy. When Nehemiah was building, a nasty man called Sanballat, with his friends, tried to stop the work. First he laughed at them - 'You'll never be able to build the walls!' That did not stop Nehemiah and his friends. They did not answer or shout back. Nehemiah prayed and told God all about the situation and they carried on building. Teach that God was pleased with Nehemiah. Use this opportunity to get the children to see that it is nasty to laugh at someone in this ridiculing way.

Second when Sanballat and his friends saw that laughing had not stopped the building work, they said 'While you are building, you will not see us coming, and we will attack you'. The people were afraid, but Nehemiah told them not to be afraid because God was with them. So the building continued but everyone had a sword or a spear or bow in one hand or in their belt while they built; they did not stop.

Third, Sanballat said he would tell lies to the king about Nehemiah saying that Nehemiah was plotting against the king. But Nehemiah just said 'That's not true', and carried on working. He prayed again to God asking that Sanballat's lies would not make the king stop the building. God heard his prayer - Sanballat and his gang could not stop them because God was with them.

3. Teach the song 'Be Bold, Be Strong' as a song to encourage Nehemiah and his friends. If you prefer, you could teach this at the beginning of the lesson and sing it to encourage Nehemiah and his friends after each threat from Sanballat.
4. Start making the large circular wall from the activity book. Ask the children to colour, cut and tape together everyone's section to form a large model wall. You will finish the wall next week with the other two activity sheets.

If you have a large class the wall will need to be reinforced by pasting thin card on each sheet.

Alternative activities

1. Make a picture, either individually or as a class, of one of Nehemiah's builders with a spear in one hand and his building tools in the other. You could use painting/printing or collage. Choose a scale to suit your space; A4 individual pictures or a 'life size' figure on wallpaper. (Draw around one of the children to get the outline.)
2. Make a scene using a wall made of Plasticine, blocks or Lego with Plasticine or play figures. Have some on the walls building and others outside shouting insults. A sand tray makes a useful base for this type of activity but the floor or a tabletop will do just as well.
3. If you have space and are able to make a noise, have some walls made of large cardboard boxes or tables on their sides. Let the children take turns to pretend to be builders working away and Sanballat and his friends laughing at them. Remind them of the different ways Sanballat tried to discourage the builders and how they responded.
4. Give each child a row of paper dolls and help them to colour them, add faces etc and then stick on spears and tools cut from card or art straws. The children can either take the figures home as they are or, if you wish, you could stick them on top of, or behind, a cardboard wall which the children could make by printing with sponge or sticking on pieces of paper.

Relevance to the children's lives

Ask the children if they have known anyone nasty who has laughed at them. Ask if they remember what Nehemiah did when he was laughed at. He prayed, telling God all about it, and ignored them. He did not shout or laugh back or start a fight. Similarly, ask the children what they should do when someone threatens to hit them or tells lies about them. What would God be pleased to see them do?

Prayer

Ask who would like to say a prayer about not hitting back or shouting back.

Verse

'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great.' Nehemiah 4:14.

Song

Be Bold, Be Strong

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is composed of quarter and eighth notes. Chords are indicated by letters above the staff: C, F, and G. The second staff continues the melody with chords C, F, G, F, and G. The third staff features a more complex rhythmic pattern with chords Am, F, G, Am, F, G, and Am. The fourth staff continues with chords F, G, Am, F, and G. The fifth staff concludes the piece with chords G7 and C.

Be bold, be strong for the Lord your God is with you (twice)
Do not be afraid, do not be afraid
For we're building up the walls of Jerusalem
Come on and build up the walls of Jerusalem
For the Lord your God is with you.

Music and original words: cop con.