

## Aim of lesson

To learn from Nehemiah that God should be at the centre of our thinking when we celebrate success.

## Bible background

Nehemiah 8-12.

## Outline of lesson

### The wall is finished

The lesson begins with Nehemiah 6:15-16. The long, hard task of rebuilding the wall had finished. Many different people had helped. Some nobles, goldsmiths, priests, men and women had not complained that they were not skilled as builders, but had worked willingly, see Nehemiah 3:1, 8, 9, 12 and 20 – there were some nobles who did not join in, however.

### The celebration

Ask the class how they think Nehemiah and those in Jerusalem might have felt when the wall was finished. How might they have celebrated? The wall represented not only their security but also the removal of their disgrace before the surrounding peoples. It reminded them of God's presence and help.

### The workbook

The workbook includes six illustrations of ways in which the returned exiles celebrated after finishing the wall. The class could look at the illustrations and references in turn, and summarise the event in the space beside the illustration. This could be done by the class as a whole or in pairs.

The illustrations represent:

- Ezra reading the law.
- A joyful meal shared with the poor.
- Celebrating the feast of Tabernacles in tents (booths).
- Confessing their sins and worshipping.
- Signing an agreement to keep God's law.
- Two large choirs marching round the wall at its dedication.

### Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra and Nehemiah are together in Jerusalem at this time. They had individually and together faced a lot of opposition and difficulties. The next space in the workbook is to encourage the class to consider how they might have felt after the dedication of the wall. What might they have said to each other?

### Our success

The next space in the workbook is for the class to note what they feel they have learned about celebrating success in their own lives. The main lesson is that it is just as important to pray and praise God when things go well as when we have problems. We will learn that our greatest satisfaction comes not from what we achieve for ourselves, but from being part of God's team of workers, doing his will and rejoicing in the success of his purpose.

## Digging deeper

### Who's who?

This is a revision of who is who, the time period and the geography, of the lessons in this workbook.

## Relevance to our lives

Let the class think about the little successes they have had during the week. Can the example of Nehemiah remind them to give thanks for each one?

## Prayer

It might be appropriate for the class to write or say a prayer, giving thanks for all that they have learned from the lives and work of all the prophets and men of God studied during this session.

## Other suggestions for activities

Newspaper articles about the completion of the wall, and the following celebration could be written.

A programme of 'This Is Your Life' could be planned for Nehemiah.

The book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It was written when the Jews were back in their land about 400 years before Jesus came. Read 1:6-14 to see how the people were offering sacrifices. Consider if we could also be guilty of offering second best to God.