SU Scotland

One Big Story

32. Rebuilding

BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Nehemiah 1:1-2:20, Nehemiah 4:3-9, Nehemiah 6:15-16

Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem and leads the people in rebuilding the walls

AIMS

To help the children understand that God wants us to take action where we see things that are not as he intends them to be, but that we should also pray, asking for his help, as he is the one who ultimately brings restoration.

Nehemiah was upset that Jerusalem lay in ruins and he wanted to change that. His first response was to pray, but he also worked hard, and, despite some challenges, God helped him to succeed.

PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- What does Nehemiah's story teach us about how to respond to situations that are not right?
- What does it teach us about God?

Take some time to pray for your group.

GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

Teamwork Challenge

You will need: a ball

Get the children to stand in a circle. Choose two children - their challenge is to carry a ball round the circle together, but they can only touch it with the body part you name, e.g. head, arms, elbows, knees... Once the first two children have completed it, choose two others and repeat until everyone has had a go. Some body parts will be harder than others!

You could link this into the story by talking about teamwork and determination, as well as the difference it makes if those who are watching encourage rather than mock.

Wall War

You will need: building blocks/ Jenga bricks/empty plastic bottles, balloons

Divide the children into groups of three or four. Have them sitting fairly close to one another, but with a clearly-defined area for each group. Give each team a supply of building blocks/Jenga bricks, and a few balloons.

Their challenge is for each team to build the highest wall they can from their bricks, but they are also allowed to blow up their balloons and use them to try to knock down the other teams' walls. They must stay within their own building area to do this.

Give a time limit (e.g. two minutes) and then see which

(continued overleaf)

team has managed to build the highest wall.

If you don't have building blocks to use, an alternative is to provide the children with plastic bottles and get them to line them up in a row. At the end of the time the winning team is the one with the longest wall.

Wall Building Challenge

You will need: timer, Lego bricks, building plans (create these in advance based on the Lego bricks you have. Keep it fairly simple as the aim is for the children to complete their building within 52 seconds.)

You can either choose two children to take part in this challenge upfront, or if you have multiple sets of bricks and plans, you can let the children all take part, working in pairs.

Give each pair a set of Lego bricks and a building plan. Explain that the wall has been broken down and their task is to rebuild it so that it matches the plan. The challenge is to do it in 52 seconds. They'll find out why that is the time limit when they hear the story later on.

Emoji Game

You will need: pictures of emojis (from additional document: Emojis)

Lay out the pictures of the emojis and let the children take it in turns to make the face of one of the emojis while the others guess which one they are doing.

Then go round getting them to answer the question: Which emoji are you now?

If you have time you could give them the option of briefly explaining why.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Recap/ Introduction

Remind the children that they have been learning about the people of Judah and how they were taken away to a foreign country to work as slaves.

The last two weeks we were thinking about Daniel - how he stayed faithful to God, and how God protected him when he was thrown into the lions' den.

The people had been away from Jerusalem for a long time but God had promised that they would be able to go back home one day.

Does anyone remember how long it would be before they were allowed to go back to their own land? 70 years.

It happened just as God said, and after 70 years were up the people gradually began to go back home. They were allowed to take back the items that had been taken from the Temple and they were able to rebuild the things that had been destroyed.

Nehemiah's Story

You can use images from freebibleimages.org either by displaying on PowerPoint or by printing out copies. The images suggested below come from two separate sets on Free Bible Images, and some slides have been omitted for brevity.

The first nine slides below (labelled 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15) refer to the corresponding slides at this link: http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/nehemiah-1/

The four slides that follow (labelled 1, 5, 8, 21) refer to the corresponding slides at this link: http://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/nehemiah-2/

1. **Today we're going to think about one of the people of Judah who was called Nehemiah. Nehemiah hadn't gone back home yet. He was living in Persia, and he had a good job working for the king.**

3. **But one day his brother came to visit and brought news of the people who had gone back to Jerusalem. He said it wasn't going well.**

4. **The walls around the city had been torn down, and the gates had been destroyed by fire. The city was in ruins.**

6. (If you used the Emoji Game intro activity, you could refer back to it here. Which emoji do you think Nehemiah was when he heard the news?) **Nehemiah was very sad when he heard this news. He cried, and he didn't eat for several days. Then he prayed. He talked to God and told him about what was happening and how he felt about it. He also said sorry for the things that he and the people of Israel and Judah had done which had made God sad. Then he asked God to help him.**

7. **God didn't answer Nehemiah's prayer at once. But eventually, four months later, when Nehemiah was working, serving wine to the king, God answered his prayer. The king asked Nehemiah why he was looking so sad and what he could do to help. Very quickly and quietly, Nehemiah prayed again, and then he told the king what he wanted.**

Read from the Bible Nehemiah 2:1-6

8. **The king also agreed to give Nehemiah letters to the people whose land he was travelling through so that he would be kept safe, and letters to the manager of the king's forest, asking him to give Nehemiah wood to use to rebuild the**

city.

11. **When Nehemiah got to Jerusalem he checked out the walls by riding around them on a donkey.**

13. **Then he told the city leaders his plan and the people got to work.**

15. **Some people weren't so impressed though. This is what they said:**

Read Nehemiah 2:19,20

1. **Nehemiah and the Jewish people started work on the walls and Sanballat, Tobiah and their friends gave them a hard time – a very hard time indeed.**

5. Read Nehemiah 4:3-9 to the children.
Each time things were tough, what did Nehemiah do? (Take some answers from the children.)

8. **Nehemiah prayed, but he kept working as well, and made sure everyone else did too! He told the people to remember that God was with them and that he would help them. They divided into two groups – those who kept guard and those who kept working. They didn't stop working and they didn't stop praying!**

Ask the children what they think happened. Finish by reading Nehemiah 6:15,16 to them.

21. **It took them 52 days but they completed their task!** (If you used the Wall Building Challenge intro activity, you can tell the children that they didn't have as long as that so, instead of 52 days, the challenge was to do it in 52 seconds.)

REFLECT & RESPOND

Reflection/ Discussion

When Nehemiah saw something that wasn't right, he wanted to do something about it. He prayed a lot, and then he got people together to try to fix it.

Why was it wrong that Jerusalem had been destroyed? It was the place where the people had lived, in the land God had given to them, and the place where they worshipped God. The state of the wall around the city was like the state of the people's friendship with God. Both of them had been broken because of the people's sin, and Nehemiah knew that wasn't how God wanted it to be.

Is there anything that you can see around you that is not right, that makes you sad? It could be seeing someone in your class being bullied by others, or it could be seeing children around the world who have no money for food and the things they need.

Why do these things make us sad?

One reason could be that this is not how God designed them to be.

A good first step is to do what Nehemiah did: pray about it and ask God to help. Maybe there's also something you could do to help, such as standing up for the person who is being bullied or raising some money to help a charity.

Prayer Activity

You will need: building blocks and sticky labels, or rectangles of paper and Blu tack, pens or pencils

You could get the children to build up a wall with their prayers. If you have building blocks available, the children could write their prayers and the actions they think they could take on sticky labels and stick them to the blocks. You could let them work in twos or threes to do this. Then they could build them up into a wall as you lead them in prayer.

If you don't have access to building blocks, you could cut paper into rectangles to represent bricks, get them to write their prayers on these, and build them up by sticking them to the wall with Blu tack.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

God's Story Video

You will need: equipment to play video

This short video tells the story of Nehemiah and also points ahead to Jesus coming to restore the brokenness of the world. You can find it here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdDvqWtVkro