

# A series of Bible experiences for busy households on life's journey

## Nehemiah – reading the journal of a man whose heart was focused on God

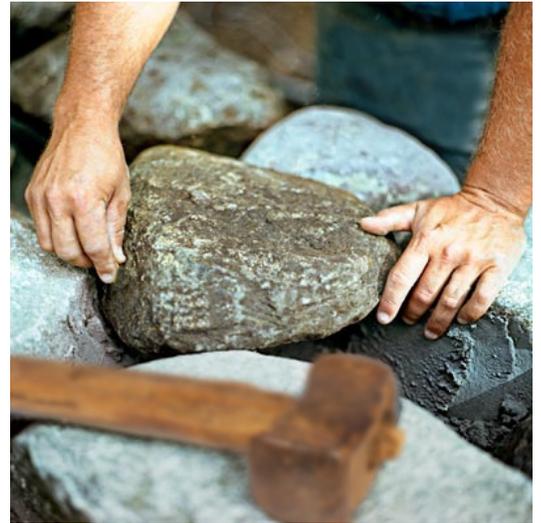
### Background

Nehemiah is given permission to go back to the country and city of his ancestors and to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. A Walled-city was a special place long ago because people could live inside it and be safer than living all on their own. The gates of the city would close at night and a guard would make sure that no one opened them, so people could sleep restfully.

It would have taken Nehemiah at least a month to travel from the city of Susa to the city of Jerusalem, especially because he brought a small army and a lot of stuff with him. It may have been even a little longer because he collected a lot of wood, which at that time meant he had to have trees cut down. After the trees would be chopped down, then they would be cut into pieces so that they could be carry and used more easily.

Nehemiah gets to the city and keeps the reason he came a secret for a few days. That gives him the chance to see how everything is for himself. Then he invites the people to join him in the work.

More people join those who don't want Nehemiah to rebuild the walls. They make fun of him, but he keeps going.



### Words and Ideas to Know

**Jerusalem** – capital of the country of Israel, established by King David

**Inspection** – examining something closely so you can understand it well

**Arab** – the people who first lived and roamed throughout the Arabian Desert

**City gates** – in ancient times, the gates of a city were very large and were opened during the day and closed at night for safety

**Disgrace** – loss of appreciation or respect from others

**Wise** – doing things that are smart or helpful or show you understand

### Scripture

**Nehemiah 2:11-20** (The Message)

And so I arrived in Jerusalem. After I had been there three days, I got up in the middle of the night, I and a few men who were with me. I hadn't told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal with us was the one I was riding.

Under cover of night I went past the Valley Gate toward the Dragon's Fountain to the Dung Gate looking

over the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken through and whose gates had been burned up. I then crossed to the Fountain Gate and headed for the King's Pool but there wasn't enough room for the donkey I was riding to get through. So, I went up the valley in the dark continuing my inspection of the wall. I came back in through the Valley Gate. The local officials had no idea where I'd gone or what I was doing—I hadn't breathed a word to the Jews, priests, nobles, local officials, or anyone else who would be working on the job.

Then I gave them my report: "Face it: we're in a bad way here. Jerusalem is a wreck; its gates are burned up. Come—let's build the wall of Jerusalem and not live with this disgrace any longer." I told them how God was supporting me and how the king was backing me up.

They said, "We're with you. Let's get started." They rolled up their sleeves, ready for the good work.

When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they laughed at us, mocking, "Ha! What do you think you're doing? Do you think you can cross the king?"

I shot back, "The God-of-Heaven will make sure we succeed. We're his servants and we're going to work, rebuilding. You can keep your nose out of it. You get no say in this—Jerusalem's none of your business!"

## Imagine

I wonder about keeping a secret and what it's like not to tell anyone.

I wonder what it would be like to cut down a tree.

I wonder what it would be like to travel for a whole month, walking, with a whole lot of other people.

I wonder what it would be like to get a whole group of people to help do a special project.



## Play

Places – Find maps and see if you can locate the city of Jerusalem. Can you find out how far away 1000 miles is from Jerusalem? Make up a story about traveling 1000 miles with other people.

I Spy (in my head) – make out a list of things you might see if you had to walk 1000 miles. Taking turns, then "spy" an item on your list and give a small hint... "I spy something green" and see if people can guess what is on your list. If you have a small group of people swap lists, making sure no one knows who got whose, so that people have "spy" an item they didn't think of but now have to imagine.

Hide the Sweet – make a dessert that includes a hidden prize. Work together, but then have one person hide the treat or prize in the dessert. See who gets it.

## Pray

*Lord, you tell us that we can ask you for wisdom and that you give it to us. Help us to be wise, Lord. Help us to remember that you want us to live life in ways that are wise with other people. Amen.*