

Children's Lessons for Life Groups

All-In-One lessons for kids ages 4-12

from

All-In-One Sunday School, Volumes 2 & 3

Lesson 18



# Fruit of the Spirit: Patience, Faithfulness

18

## LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ we can trust God to help us.

## OBJECTIVES

### Kids will

- ✓ solve a difficult challenge and be rewarded with a treat,
- ✓ learn how Nehemiah faithfully relied on God to complete the overwhelming task of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem,
- ✓ identify times they need patience and faithfulness,
- ✓ make a pop-up craft depicting the wall of Jerusalem, and
- ✓ commit to trusting God to help them be patient and faithful.

## YOU'LL NEED

- an enticing treat\*
- an adult or teenage helper to be a clownish doubter
- clown makeup and clothing (optional)
- masking tape
- several sheets of paper
- photocopies of the "Jerusalem Wall" handout (p. 118)
- photocopies of the "Jerusalem Pop-Up" (p. 119)
- scissors
- glue sticks
- 5 paper plates labeled 1 to 5

\*Always check for allergies before serving snacks.

## BIBLE BASIS

### Nehemiah 1:1–6:16

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered the city of Jerusalem in 597 B.C., transported 10,000 leaders and craftsmen to Babylon, and

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left a puppet government in place. When the puppet king Zedekiah became rebellious in 588 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar marched against the city again, and this time he ordered complete and systematic destruction that left the crown jewel of Judaism a smoldering wreck. Soldiers torched and looted the city, demolished the Temple, and reduced the great limestone wall to a pile of cracked and blackened rubble. So it lay for well over a century.

Gradually certain Jewish exiles rose to prominence under the Assyrian and Persian kings who bound them to servitude. Nehemiah was such a man. As cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah saw to it that the wine that came to the king's table was safe and free of poison—a responsible post in an empire fraught with intrigue. But while Nehemiah served the Persian king faithfully, his heart longed for the city of David, the home of his faith, his ancestors, and his long-oppressed countrymen. After much prayer, Nehemiah approached the king with a proposal to return to Jerusalem and erase the city's shame by rebuilding its walls. God blessed Nehemiah, and the king granted Nehemiah's request for safe passage back to Judah and for all the materials needed for the job. Way to go, cupbearer!

But Nehemiah's formidable task had just begun. If you've not read the book of Nehemiah in the last 12 months, read it now! Nehemiah's leadership is sheer inspiration from page to page. He sought God's help and blessing at every step. He was patient. He knew when to act and when to wait. He waited for God's perfect timing to present his wild idea to the king. He was faithful. He assigned tasks wisely, defended the city as the walls went up, took care of the poor, tirelessly oversaw the entire operation, and accomplished the rejoining of the wall in 52 days! Wow. You'll be blessed by Nehemiah's story, and so will your kids.

### **Galatians 5:22-23**

Imagine the thrill of working with someone who patiently had waited on God's timing until it was a good day to show a sad face to a king. Then imagine the adrenalin rush of taking on the gargantuan task of rebuilding the wall, faithfully bringing this plan to fruition in the face of powerful and determined enemies. Nehemiah waited... then he worked! And that's what God calls us to do as well. Pray patiently. Don't twitch a muscle until God says, "Go!" Then get into gear and kick up some dust! You've got to love Nehemiah. While he majored in patience and faithfulness, you'll find all the other fruit of the Spirit evidenced in his life as well. I'd work for him—wouldn't you?

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Once, watching a third-grade boy who simply could not contain himself, I realized that there was an alarm going off in his head, saying “Now! Now! Now!” It filled me with sadness to realize that this child could make himself so obnoxious that most adults would cave in and give him what he wanted just for the sake of gaining a few moments of peace. Children with attention deficits and very young children tend to live in the “eternal now.” The present moment fully occupies them—past and future have little significance. Concepts such as patience and faithfulness come slowly, but come they must! A great deal of the process of growing up involves learning to delay gratification.

For kids in your class, patience and faithfulness translate to not touching the television remote control until homework’s done, saving allowance and birthday money for a much-desired new toy, and finishing household jobs before they invite friends over. There are few lessons in maturity more important than learning to wait for God’s timing and working hard over a long period to accomplish an important goal. Nehemiah’s story can help kids understand that when they remain faithful, God can and will help them accomplish great things.

# The Lesson

## ATTENTION GRABBER

### Paper Trail

#### Teacher Tip

*If you have a small room, move to a fairly long hallway for this activity. Set up the activity so that kids must travel at least 15 feet to reach the treat.*



Arrange for an adult or teenage helper to visit your class as a comic character. It's fun (but not absolutely necessary) to have the helper wear clown makeup and one or two outrageous articles of clothing. Tell the helper to stay out of sight until you give the signal for him or her to appear. At that point the helper will pop out and, in gentle good humor, make doubting comments about the kids' ability to accomplish the challenge you've given them.

Bring to class an enticing treat such as warm, fragrant cinnamon rolls, a plate of fresh strawberries, or another treat that you know is a favorite of your kids. Show off the treat as kids arrive, but explain that no one can enjoy the treat until kids have worked together to accomplish a task. Then place the treat at one end of your classroom, and have all the kids gather at the other end. Lay a masking tape line on the floor where kids are gathered, and make it clear that no one can cross that line without permission.

Say: **Here's your challenge. I have a wonderful treat for you and I'm very eager to share it. But you're going to have to get to it. You're *all* going to have to get from here to the treat before anyone can enjoy it. Here's the first catch: No one's feet can touch the floor.** Hold up two sheets of paper. **The only things your feet can touch are these two sheets of paper. And here's the second catch: No one can carry anyone else.**

Place the two sheets of paper on the floor just past the masking tape line. Then say: **That's it. Those are all the instructions I have for you.** Sit down and see how kids react to the challenge. If they seem totally stumped, encourage them to brainstorm solutions to their problem. You may need to drop hints such as "Suppose you stepped on one sheet, then picked it up and moved it..." and "I wonder how many people's feet could fit on one sheet of paper."

At this point, signal your helper to appear. The helper should walk around and shake his or her head and mumble comments such as "They'll never be able to do that" and "Yeah, right. Are they supposed to sprout wings and fly? Flap-flap-flap." The doubting, discouraging comments should be delivered quietly and with humor, and the helper should keep some distance from the children so they won't be intimidated or overly distracted.

While the helper is mumbling, remain quietly supportive. Don't offer information right away. If necessary, guide kids to discover that two people can step on one sheet of paper, that they can place the other sheet of paper a foot or two in front of them and step on that

one, pick up the paper that's now behind them and move it forward, and so on until they've made their way to the treat. Their combined efforts will be comical and fun to watch! One person will need to go back to the group in the same manner and bring another person to the treat. By continuing with two people going and one person coming back, all the kids will eventually make it to the treat.

Once kids have discovered the key to the challenge, the helper should mumble comments such as "Oh, now don't they look silly," "I hope nobody expects *me* to do that," and "Hmph—I guess they think they're pretty smart. *I* would've figured that out a long time ago."

When all the kids finally reach the treat, have the helper say, "Yuck! I never did like that kind of treat. I bet it tastes awful!" Then have him or her make a funny face and storm out of the room.

Congratulate kids as you serve them the treat. Say: **Wow—you guys really hung in there!** Ask:

◆ **Did you ever doubt that you'd be able to meet my challenge?** (Yes, I thought you'd have to help us; no, I thought we could figure it out.)

◆ **How did [name of helper] affect your determination to reach the treat?** (He made me want to give up; because she mocked us I wanted to try harder.)

Say: **You didn't know it, but in getting to the treat you demonstrated the two fruits of the Spirit we're learning about today: patience and faithfulness.** Ask:

◆ **How did you show patience?** (By working on a solution until we got one.)

◆ **How did you show faithfulness?** (By hanging in there; by believing that we could do it.)

Say: **Our Bible story today is about a wall-builder who believed that ★ we can trust God to help us. His name was Nehemiah. And the wall he built required an enormous amount of patience and faithfulness. It wasn't the wall of a house or even a castle or temple. It was a wall around the entire city of Jerusalem. And he wasn't starting from scratch; he was starting with a mess that had been there for nearly 140 years. Let's see what happened.**

## BIBLE STUDY

### Up With the Wall! (Nehemiah 1:1–6:16)

Before class, photocopy the "Jerusalem Wall" pattern. Place a sheet of blank paper underneath the copied pattern. The pattern and the sheet behind it eventually will be cut to create four wall sections.

Say: **When God's people begged for a king, God gave them Saul. But Saul disobeyed God, so God made David king in his place. David was a great king.** Ask:

◆ **What can you tell me about David?** (He started out as a

### Teacher Tip

*If you have more than 12 students, offer four sheets of paper rather than two.*



shepherd; he played the harp for Saul; he killed Goliath; he wrote part of the book of Psalms.)

Say: David also built up the city of Jerusalem, which he used as his capital. To this day, Jerusalem is called the city of David. After David came his son Solomon, who continued to build Jerusalem. Solomon's most famous building project was God's Temple. After David and Solomon came a series of kings—some good and some bad. The bad kings led God's people away from God and taught them to worship idols. Through the prophets God warned his people they would be punished. They would be invaded and conquered by foreign kings, and their beautiful city would be destroyed.

And that's exactly what happened. Five hundred eighty-six years before Jesus was born, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and destroyed God's Temple. He burned the city and had his soldiers tear down the walls. So the city of David was left to lie in ruins for well over a hundred years.

All the leaders of God's people were marched hundreds of miles to Babylon, where they served the Babylonian and Persian kings. While they were in captivity, they kept the memories of their homeland alive through songs and stories. Some of the Jews rose to be important people in their new land. Nehemiah was such a man.

Nehemiah held the important position of cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. Ask:

◆ Does anyone have a clue about what a cupbearer might do? Let kids guess.

Say: It was actually an important position of great trust. The cupbearer tasted the wine that came to the king's table to make sure it wasn't poisoned. Many kings of the Persian empire lost their lives through plots and intrigues at court, so the cupbearer needed to be a man of extreme loyalty who couldn't be bribed at any price.

Nehemiah served the king faithfully, but his heart was elsewhere. He thought of Jerusalem lying in ruins, and the thought made him sad. He longed to go to the homeland he'd never seen. King Artaxerxes noticed his sad face and asked, "Why do you look so sad?"

Nehemiah had been praying for a long time about his desire to return to Jerusalem. He realized that God might be ready to answer his prayers, so he replied, "May the king live forever!" (That's how you spoke to a king in those days if you didn't want your head chopped off!) "How can I not be sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins?"

"What do you want?" the king asked.

Nehemiah sent up a quick prayer, then asked the king to let him go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls. The

king gave his permission! And besides that, he gave letters to the governors along the way with instructions to protect Nehemiah while he traveled and to give him the wood he would need for constructing the gates.

Nehemiah was overjoyed! He'd prayed for this opportunity for a long time, and finally God made it happen.

After a long trip, Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. He rode around the city and looked at all the places that needed repair. You can't imagine what a mess he found. Huge boulders had tumbled in every direction. They were charred and cracked from the fires so long ago. All the rubble and useless rock would have to be cleared away before the new walls could even begin to go up. But when Nehemiah told the people who lived there about his plan to repair the wall, they were excited and glad to help with the work.

**Fold the pattern and the sheet of paper behind it in half along the dotted line.**

Nehemiah organized different groups of families to work on different sections of the wall.

**Cut from A to B.**

But Sanballat and Tobiah, two enemies of God's people, made trouble for the people building the wall.

**Cut from C to D, then from D to E and from D to F.**

Despite the threats of their enemies, the people faithfully kept on building. They worked with all their hearts because they knew this was God's work.

**Cut slits 1 and 2; then open the gates.**

And little by little the wall grew.

**Separate the four wall sections, and fasten two of them together.**

Then Sanballat and Tobiah decided to get an army together and attack Jerusalem. So Nehemiah posted guards all around the wall. Half the people worked while the other half kept watch, ready to fight. Nehemiah said to everyone, "Don't be afraid of our enemies. Remember, God is with us."

So the people kept working faithfully, and the wall grew some more.

**Add the third section of the wall.**

Everyone worked from the first light of morning until the stars came out at night.

**Add the last section of the wall, and fasten it to the first section, creating a circle.**

At last the wall was finished! Nehemiah and his helpers were so faithful in their work that rebuilding the wall around the entire city took just 52 days! Here's what Nehemiah wrote when the wall was completed:

"So the wall was completed on the 25th of Elul, in 52 days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding



nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God" (Nehemiah 6:15-16, NIV).

**Let's have a big round of applause for Nehemiah and his helpers!**

Lead kids in a round of applause; then ask:

◆ **How did Nehemiah demonstrate patience?** (He waited for just the right moment to ask for the king's permission.)

◆ **What does it mean to be faithful?** (To hang in there because you know God wants you to; to keep plugging away at a hard job.)

◆ **How did Nehemiah demonstrate faithfulness?** (He didn't give up when the job looked too hard; he kept working and kept counting on God to help him.)

◆ **What kinds of discouragement did Nehemiah face?** (The task was so big; enemies tried to stop him.)

◆ **How were Sanballat and Tobiah like the person who made fun of you earlier in our lesson?** (They tried to stop him; they made fun of him and threatened him.)

◆ **Why weren't they successful in stopping Nehemiah?** (He kept trusting God to help him; he believed God was on his side.)

◆ **How did God help Nehemiah? Let's name all the ways we can think of.** Help kids come up with a list similar to this one: God answered Nehemiah's prayer to go to Jerusalem and caused the king to cooperate with him; God helped him understand how to organize the job; God helped the people work from dawn 'til dark; God protected them from their discouraging enemies; God helped them finish the wall in an amazingly short time.

Say: **Nehemiah believed that when we're patient and faithful, ★ we can trust God to help us.**

## LIFE APPLICATION

### How Tough Is It?

Say: **Now I'd like you to close your eyes and think really hard.** Ask:

◆ **Tell about the last time someone said to you, "Be patient."** Allow kids to respond.

Say: **Let's have some fun discovering when you struggle with patience and faithfulness.**

Place five paper plates labeled 1 through 5 across the floor of your room, with 1 being at the far left side and 5 being at the far right.

Say: **I'm going to read a list of things you might have to do. If you would have a lot of trouble being patient and faithful doing that task, stand somewhere between numbers 3 and 5. If you wouldn't have a problem with that task at all, stand closer to number 1. Got that? Five means you'd**

**have lots of trouble being patient and faithful; 1 means you wouldn't have a problem at all. You can stand anywhere between those numbers.**

Read the following list, pausing between each item for kids to rate how much they would struggle with being patient and faithful at that task. To encourage kids to be honest, participate in the activity by placing yourself along the continuum as well.

**How difficult is it for you to be patient and faithful when you're**

- ◆ **doing your math homework?**
- ◆ **cleaning your room?**
- ◆ **practicing a musical instrument?**
- ◆ **writing a big report?**
- ◆ **memorizing spelling words?**
- ◆ **helping a younger child?**
- ◆ **saving your money to buy something you really want?**
- ◆ **waiting your turn to play a video game?**
- ◆ **dusting or vacuuming your house?**
- ◆ **trying to be nice to someone who isn't very nice to you?**
- ◆ **helping out at home when all the rest of your friends**

**are playing?**

Ask:

◆ **Why is it important to be patient and faithful in all those things?** (Because then people will trust you with bigger things; because you're obeying God and teachers and parents.)

Say: **Listen to these words of Jesus from Luke 16:10: "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest with little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities."** Ask:

◆ **Why is it important to God that we're patient and faithful in everything that he gives us to do?** (Because then he can trust us with more; because we're setting a good example of what Christians are like.)

Say: **The good news is that we're not on our own. When we're patient and faithful, ★ we can trust God to help us, just as he helped Nehemiah. Let's make a craft that will remind us of that.**

## COMMITMENT

### Faithfully Yours

Make a sample "Jerusalem Pop-Up" card before class.

Distribute photocopies of the "Jerusalem Pop-Up" pattern. Show the kids your completed sample, and say: **We're going to make a 3-D model of the Jerusalem wall.**

Show kids how to fold the pattern in half on Line 1. Have them cut from the middle dot to the outside dot on the middle and bottom lines of the city. The top line of the city should remain uncut—it becomes the background when the card is finished. Then unfold the page. Have kids fold down on Line 2. Show them how to rub a little glue around the background at the top and bottom of the city and then press the outline of the city into place against the back of the card.

Demonstrate how to pull the city gently forward and pull the card back so the center of the card becomes a valley fold and the city pops forward. To give the city more dimension, fold forward (valley folds) at the two edges, fold back (mountain folds) at the first tower, fold forward (valley folds) at the inner edge of the first tower, and fold back (mountain folds) at both edges of the center tower.

When the folds are done correctly, the city will fold back into the card when it's closed and pop out when the card is opened.

When the cards are finished, have kids read aloud the verse that's printed above the city: "So the wall was completed...in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God" (Nehemiah 6:15-16, NIV).

Ask:

◆ **How can this card encourage you to be faithful?** (It can help me remember that Nehemiah was patient and faithful and finished a hard job; it can remind me that God will help me.)

Say: **Turn to a partner and tell one way that you'll be patient and faithful this week.** After kids have shared, tell them one way *you'll* be patient and faithful.

### Teacher Tip

Encourage older kids to help younger ones with the "Faithfully Yours" activity. They can assist with the assembly and read the verse to them.



## CLOSING

### **Fruit Rap-Up**

Say: **Patience and faithfulness are two qualities in Paul's list called the... (allow kids to respond) fruit of the Spirit! You'll find the whole list on the back of your Jerusalem Pop-Up. Let's sing our song and review the fruit of the Spirit together.**

#### **The Fruit of the Spirit**

*(to the tune of "Rock Around the Clock")*

**Love and joy.**

**Love, joy, peace.**

**In your heart may they increase.**

**We're talking patience, kindness, goodness, too.**

**And faithfulness to last your whole life through.**

**Gentleness and self-control—**

**God's Spirit in you!**

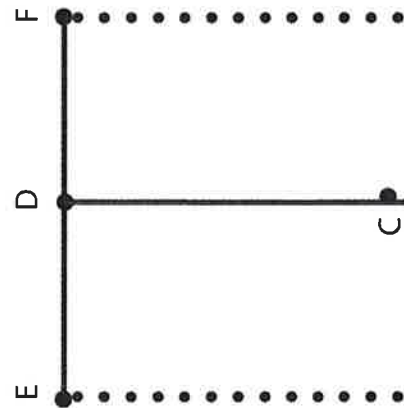
*(Repeat.)*

Close with a prayer similar to this one: **Lord, it's not easy to be patient and faithful, but we know that ★ we can trust you to help us. Thank you for the story of Nehemiah and for the great things he accomplished for you. Help us to be patient and faithful this week in the small things we have to do so that someday we may be able to do great things for your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.**

Remind kids to take their Jerusalem Pop-Up cards with them.

# JERUSALEM WALL

Slit 2



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Slit 1

A

B

# JERUSALEM POP-UP

*When we're patient  
and faithful, we can  
trust God to help us.*

Line 1

Love and joy.  
Love, joy, peace.  
In your heart may they increase.  
We're talking patience, kindness, goodness, too.  
And faithfulness to last your whole life through.  
Gentleness and self-control—  
God's Spirit in you!  
(Repeat.)

(to the tune of "Rock Around the Clock")

## The Fruit of the Spirit

Line 2

*"So the wall was completed...  
in fifty-two days.  
When all our enemies heard about this,  
all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence,  
because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God"*

(Nehemiah 6:15-16, NIV).

