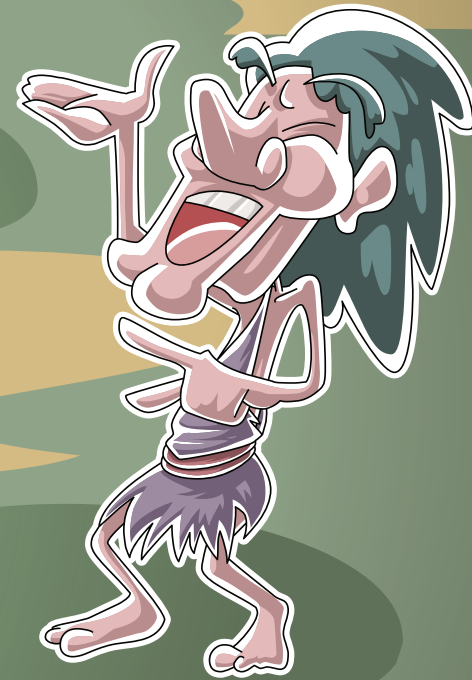
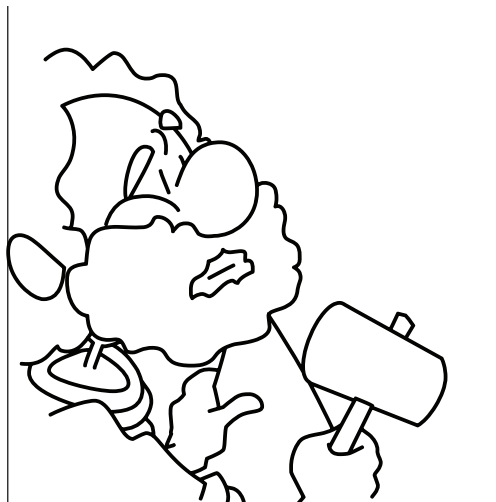


# Rebuilding the walls



## Colour me!



## Nehemiah 4:6-20

**With the help of the king of Persia, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem along with a large number of Jewish people who wanted to rebuild their ancestral home.**

The people worked hard, and we built the walls of Jerusalem halfway up again. But Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people from the city of Ashdod saw the walls going up and the holes being repaired. So they became angry and decided to stir up trouble, and to fight against the people of Jerusalem. But we kept on praying to our God, and we also stationed guards day and night.

Meanwhile, the people of Judah were singing a sorrowful song: "So much rubble for us to haul! Worn out and weary, will we ever finish this wall?" Our enemies were saying, "Before those Jews know what has happened, we will sneak up and kill them and put an end to their work." On at least ten different occasions, the Jews living near our enemies warned us against attacks from every side, and so I sent people to guard the wall at its lowest places and where there were still holes in it.

I placed them according to families, and they stood guard with swords and spears and with bows and arrows. Then I looked things over and told the leaders, the officials, and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of your enemies! The Lord is great and fearsome. So think of him and fight for your relatives and children, your wives and homes!" Our enemies found out that we knew about their plot against us, but God kept them from doing what they had planned. So we went back to work on the wall.

From then on, I let half of the young men work while the other half stood guard. They wore armour and had spears and shields, as well as bows and arrows. The leaders helped the workers who were rebuilding the wall. Everyone who hauled building materials kept one hand free to carry a weapon. Even the workers who were rebuilding the wall strapped on a sword. The worker who was to blow the signal trumpet stayed with me. I told the people and their officials and leaders, "Our work is so spread out, that we are a long way from one another. If you hear the sound of the trumpet, come quickly and gather around me. Our God will help us fight."

## Commentary

Nehemiah had taken on a big job! The walls of Jerusalem were in a terrible state, and all his organizational skills were needed to gather workmen to begin the repairs. As if that wasn't challenging enough, there was also the daily mockery coming from the leaders who lived in the districts nearby. But Nehemiah was not discouraged. What is remarkable is the way in which everyone got involved in the work. Nehemiah was clearly a great team builder and encourager. His confidence in God was infectious. When the threats from neighbouring tribes grew, he arranged for some of his people to be on guard while the rest worked. God was looking after them in other ways, as on many occasions they received early warning of imminent attacks and so were prepared.

The image of the workforce with spades or trowels in one hand and swords or bows in the other is a powerful reminder that even when we pray to God for help, God also expects us to be ready to help ourselves and others. Nehemiah's story is an example of how to 'work together with God'.

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## Questions

- ▶ How did Nehemiah manage to cope with the threats and the insults coming from the people who lived nearby?
- ▶ What can we learn from the way Nehemiah 'worked together with God'?
- ▶ How did God answer Nehemiah's prayers for help?
- ▶ Nehemiah had the gift of being a good organizer and encourager. How can you be an encouragement to someone today?
- ▶ What do you most admire about Nehemiah and his story?



## Visual aid

Collect pictures from the internet of the tools needed to build a wall. Maybe you have access to some real tools and equipment, such as a bucket, shovel, trowel or level.



## Activity idea

Talk about what is involved in building a wall, and then imagine having to carry a weapon as you worked. Using some wooden bricks or Lego™ or Duplo™ pieces, or just by drawing bricks in outline on a large piece of card, build a wall using your weaker hand only. It will take some patience and cooperation. The story also says that the people sang while they worked. Can you make up a building song together, with a rhythm that will help you keep on task?



## Prayer idea

Nehemiah was certainly a man of prayer. He prayed day and night. Using rectangular sticky notes to look like bricks, write on each one the name of a person, place or situation you want to pray for and then build them up as prayer bricks into a strong wall of faith in God.

## Key verse

Our God will help us fight (Nehemiah 4:20).

## New Testament story link

1 Peter 2:4-10: Peter describes Christians as stones in God's building (which is the church), each resting on the other but with Jesus as the most important stone of all.



Colour me!

