

Teacher Notecards Level 6, Quarter C— Standing Above the Crowd

Use these Teacher Notecards as a reference when teaching
Explore Scripture.*

Print on paper or cardstock. Fold in half, then fold again along the
gray line. This will create a two-sided, notecard-sized piece for you
to hold in your hand.

*The narrative has been edited to fit on these cards. Please see the full *Explore Scripture*
sections of each lesson for more interactivity, application, and content.

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Big Idea: **God works through people who courageously choose to stand above the crowd.**

Esther 1-10 [outline form]

Grave Danger—Esther 1-4

Esther 1-2

- *Time:* 483-479 B.C.
- *Key Theme:* Conflict
- *Key Person:* Queen Esther (2:17)
- *Key Event:* Esther replace Vashti as queen (2:17)
- *Feast:* Xerxes' feast (1:1-3)

Esther 3-4

- *Time:* 479-473 B.C.
- *Key Theme:* Persecution
- *Key Person:* Cunning Haman (3:8-9)
- *Key Event:* Haman plots to destroy the Jews (3:6)
- *Feast:* Esther's fast (4:15-16)

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Great Deliverance—Esther 5-10

Esther 5-7

- *Time:* 473 B.C.
- *Key Theme:* Preservation
- *Key Person:* Humiliated Haman (7:6-7)
- *Key Event:* Esther acts to save the Jews (7:3)
- *Feast:* Esther's feast (5:5)

Esther 8-10

- *Time:* 473 B.C.
- *Key Theme:* Celebration
- *Key Person:* Exalted Mordecai (10:3)
- *Key Event:* Jews celebrate God's deliverance (9:28)
- *Feast:* Feast of Purim (9:28)

2

Big Idea: **God works through people who courageously choose to stand above the crowd.**

Esther 1-10 [narrative form]

Over the next six lessons we will study the book of Esther. Esther is a fascinating story of courage and cunning. Let's find clues to figure out the "big picture" of Esther.

Let's find out about the major characters in this book and their roles or relationships with one another. Be sure to discuss the following highlights: King Xerxes took Esther as his queen; Esther was Mordecai's cousin; Haman hated Jews, especially Mordecai.

Think about what things you'd like to learn about the story of Esther—the characters, the setting, the problems, and the responses to the problems. As I read some background information, you may discover answers to some of your questions.

- The book of Esther wasn't written by her. The author is unknown, but it was someone who had access to the story's information. Some scholars believe

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Mordecai wrote it. Ask volunteers to read Esther 6:1 and 9:20. How might someone have found information about Esther's story?

- The setting is the Persian palace of King Xerxes. The winter palace was located in the city of Susa, in modern-day Iran.
- The historical era when the events in the book of Esther occurred was 486-465 BC. Many Jews had made their home in Jerusalem until the Babylonians captured the city and took the Jews as captives to Babylon in 597 BC. After a final battle in 586 BC, the rest of the Jews were removed. The Jews were finally allowed to return to their destroyed city in 537 BC, but not everyone went home. The book of Esther explains what happened to the remnant of Jews who remained in the Persian Empire (picture 6C.1). Why do you think some Jews stayed in Persia? Encourage responses.
- You may hear Esther referred to as Hadassah, her Jewish name.

(picture 6C.2) As we study each chapter of Esther, you will discover more about being courageous and standing above the crowd. You will see God help His people during some very difficult situations. Let's all agree to read Esther as many times as we can and ask God to show us timeless truths that we can apply to our lives. Ask a volunteer to pray.

2

Big Idea: **God prepares His people to accomplish His good purposes.**

Esther 1-2 [outline form]

Intro: *God raised up a humble Jewish woman to be queen of an empire.*

Ask: *What limits do you set on what you think God will do with your life?*

1. Queen Vashti offended King Xerxes.

- *Xerxes put the wonders of his kingdom on display. Esther 1:4*
- *Xerxes threw a great banquet 1:5*
- *Xerxes wanted to “show off” Queen Vashti, but she refused 1:10-12*
- *Xerxes publicly punished the queen for disobeying him 1:19-22*

2. King Xerxes chose a new queen.

- *A search was made for the most beautiful women in the kingdom 2:2-3*
- *Esther was chosen and favored by the king’s servant (picture 6C.3) 2:8-9*
- *Esther hid her Jewish nationality from everyone 2:10*
- *The king favored Esther and chose her for his queen (picture 6C.4) 2:17*

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3. Mordecai, Esther’s cousin, waited at the king’s gate for news of Esther.

- *Mordecai overheard two officers plotting to kill the king 2:21*
- *Mordecai informed Esther, who in turn told King Xerxes 2:22*
- *Esther rightly gave Mordecai the credit for discovering the plot 2:22*

Conclusion: *God prepared Esther and Mordecai for the great roles they were to play in the salvation of their people. What might God be preparing you to do?*

2

Big Idea: **God prepares His people to accomplish His good purposes.**

Esther 1-2 [narrative form]

King Xerxes’ kingdom spanned from India across to Cush, which is part of the upper Nile region of Egypt. Susa is located in modern-day Iran. Imagine spending half a year, 180 days, displaying your wealth and power and then feasting for seven solid days! How might Queen Vashti’s banquet have differed from the king’s banquet? Possible answers: no drinking, more orderly, quieter, etc. When the king asked for the queen, why do you think she refused? Possible answer: she didn’t want to go because they’d been drinking for seven days. How did the queen’s answer show courage? (She could lose her title and be kicked out of the palace.) When have you faced a difficult decision that may not have a “good” solution?

(picture 6C.3) What information do we have about Mordecai? (He was a Jewish exile from the tribe of Benjamin. Mordecai had raised his orphaned cousin, Esther.) Why do you think Mordecai warned Esther to keep her Jewish identity secret? Encourage responses. Why do you think Mordecai went regularly to check on her? (He was concerned about her.)

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In selecting a group of girls to be considered for the queen, beautiful young ladies were taken from their families. They were kept in a special area of the palace and received a year’s worth of beauty preparations. How would you respond to being taken from your family and kept from them? Let each child answer. How did Esther respond? (She handled it in a way that earned favor with the man in charge.) What are some characteristics you notice about Esther? Possible answers: she made the best of each situation, she was obedient, she followed directions, etc.

(picture 6C.4) When Esther was chosen as queen, how did King Xerxes celebrate? (The king gave a banquet, proclaimed a holiday, and gave gifts.) How do you think Esther felt? Mordecai? Queen Vashti? King Xerxes? Encourage responses.

Sometime later, Mordecai overheard a plot to kill the king. How did revealing the plot require courage from both Mordecai and Esther? (The king might not believe them.) How was God working in the lives of Esther and Mordecai to put them in a position to serve others? Let students explain their answers. Esther shows us how God uses events in our lives to prepare us to serve Him. Let’s be watching to see how God uses the events this coming week to prepare us to serve Him.

2

Big Idea: **God gives opportunities for His people to use their influence for His plan.**

Esther 3-4 [outline form]

Intro: *God placed Esther in a position where her influence could help her people.*

Ask: *What influence do you exert on the people around you?*

1. The king elevated Haman to a position of honor.

- *All the royal officials knelt before Haman* *Esther 3:2*
- *Mordecai refused to honor Haman* *3:2*
- *Mordecai's disrespect enraged Haman* *3:5*
- *Haman was determined to exterminate Mordecai's people.* *3:6*

2. Haman found a way to destroy the Jews.

- *Haman told the king that there were people disobeying his laws* *3:8*
- *The king agreed to have these people destroyed* *3:9*
- *Haman issued a decree to destroy the Jews on a specific day.* *3:13*

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3. Mordecai heard about the plot, and was greatly distressed.

- *Esther learned of Mordecai's distress and inquired after him* *4:4-5*
- *Mordecai begged Esther to intervene on behalf of the Jews* (picture 6C.5) *4:8*
- *Esther reminded Mordecai of the great danger in approaching the king* *4:9*
- *Mordecai reminded Esther that she must serve the LORD* *4:13-14*
- *Esther asked Mordecai and the people to fast and pray* (picture 6C.6) *4:16*

Conclusion: *Mordecai knew that God would deliver His people, and he urged Esther to be part of God's plan. How can you step into the role God has prepared for you?*

2

Big Idea: **God gives opportunities for His people to use their influence for His plan.**

Esther 3-4 [narrative form]

Why did people bow down to Haman? (The king elevated Haman, and the royal officers bowed to honor him.) How did Mordecai react to Haman's powerful new role? (He refused to bow down to him.)

Why do you think Haman had so much hatred for the Jews? Let the kids speculate. One possibility may have to do with his ancestors. What do we learn about Haman's family in Esther 3:1? (He is the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite.) The Agagites were descendants of King Agag and were also known as Amalekites, a group that had often warred with the Jews.

Why do you think the king was willing to go along with Haman's murderous plan? What lie did Haman tell the king? (He said that this unidentified group of people were secret enemies who disobeyed the king's laws.) Haman suggested that it was in the king's best interest not to tolerate these people. How did Haman

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use his influence to accomplish his own personal agenda? What does the king's agreement with Haman reveal about the king?

Have volunteers read Esther 4. The royal edict was sent to all 127 provinces of the Persian Empire. How did Mordecai respond? (He put on sackcloth and ashes and wailed.) Why do you think Mordecai refused the queen's gift of fresh clothes?

What report did Esther's servant give her (picture 6C.5)? What dilemma did she face? (She couldn't talk to the king unless he sent for her.) How did Mordecai respond? What did Mordecai agree to do (picture 6C.6)? They supported Esther's efforts and asked God to give her strength for her task.

How did Esther decide to use her position as queen? Why do you think Esther chose to go to King Xerxes uninvited, rather than waiting for her next scheduled time with him? Encourage responses. What are some ways Esther could have misused her power and influence against Haman?

God gives opportunities for His people to use their influence over others. Each person chooses whether he or she will use that power selfishly or for the good of others. Let's watch for opportunities to use our God-given influence for good!

2

Big Idea: **God rewards His people when they trust His timing.**

Esther 5-6 [outline form]

Intro: *God rewarded Esther and Mordecai for their faithfulness to Him.*

Ask: *How has God rewarded you?*

1. Esther made a bold request of King Xerxes.

- *Esther entered the king's presence uninvited* (picture 6C.7) Esther 5:1
- *The king allowed Esther to approach him* (picture 6C.8) 5:2
- *The king told Esther to ask for anything she wanted* 5:3
- *Esther threw a banquet for the king and Haman* 5:5
- *Esther asked the king and Haman to come to a second banquet* 5:8

2. Haman was filled with pride.

- *Once again Mordecai's disrespect filled Mordecai with rage* 5:9
- *Haman boasted about himself to friends and family* 5:11-12
- *Haman also complained about Mordecai* 5:13
- *Haman's wife told Haman to have Mordecai publicly executed* 5:14

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3. The king could not sleep and so reviewed the record of his reign.

- *He found that Mordecai had never been honored for uncovering the assassination plot* 6:3-4
- *Haman unknowingly told the king how to honor Mordecai* 6:6-8
- *Haman had to honor Mordecai as he had prescribed* 6:10-11
- *Haman's friends and family told him that he was doomed* 6:13

Conclusion: *Haman was publicly humiliated for his pride while Esther and Mordecai were honored. Jesus said, "the first will be last, and the last will be first" (Matthew 20:16)!*

2

Big Idea: **God rewards His people when they trust His timing.**

Esther 5-6 [narrative form]

Esther learned that Haman planned to kill all the Jews. She, her servants, her cousin Mordecai, and all the Jews in Susa had been fasting and praying for three days. What were they preparing for? (picture 6C.7)

How did the king respond to Esther (picture 6C.8)? Describe how you think Esther felt while she waited for the king's approval or disapproval. Let the kids tell their ideas. Why might the fasting have given Esther courage?

The king offered Esther up to half the kingdom. Why didn't she tell the king her problem then? Possible answers: God told her to wait, she wanted to make sure she was in favor with him, she needed more courage, etc.

What does Haman's range of emotions tell us about him? Possible answers: he's consumed with hatred, he can't be happy, etc. Why did Haman boast? How does a prideful attitude affect people's actions? Possible answers: they think they are above consequences, they think they can do anything they want, etc.

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What advice did Haman's wife and friends give? (Build a gallows and ask the king to hang Mordecai on it.) Sometimes powerful people have a hard time getting honest answers from others, even their closest friends. Haman was powerful and hated Mordecai. He was delighted with the advice. Do you think they told Haman what they really thought or what they knew he wanted to hear? Have the students explain their answers. How did Haman respond? (He had the gallows built that day.)

The king couldn't sleep. What do you do when you can't sleep? Let kids answer. Why do you think the king asked Haman how to honor someone? Possible answers: he had recently been honored so he would know, he wanted to make a big deal about someone who helped protect the king, etc. What do we learn about Haman from his answer to the king? (He liked public honor.) How do you think Mordecai responded to being honored before his peers? Let kids speculate. How do you think Haman felt as he publicly honored Mordecai?

Esther and Mordecai both received rewards for their faithful and courageous acts for the king and for God's people. God remembers and keeps His promises to be with us. Watch carefully and you'll see how God is at work in your life.

2

Big Idea: **God reverses situations to bless His people and to display His power.**

Esther 7-8 [outline form]

Intro: *God caused everything to work for the good of His people.*

Ask: *How can you trust the Lord to orchestrate events for your good?*

1. The king and Haman attended Esther’s second banquet.
 - *Again the king asked what he could grant Esther (picture 6C.9) . . . Esther 7:2*
 - *Esther asked for her life and the lives of her people 7:3-4*
 - *Esther revealed that Haman’s plot would destroy her and the Jews 7:6*
 - *The king had Haman hanged on his own gallows. 7:9-10*

2. Esther’s people were still in danger.
 - *The king’s edict could not be repealed 8:3*
 - *Esther urged the king to write a new edict to counteract Haman’s decree . . 8:5*
 - *King Xerxes let Esther and Mordecai compose a suitable decree 8:8*

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3. Mordecai and Esther wrote a decree to save their people.
 - *The edict gave the Jews a right to assemble and defend themselves 8:11*
 - *Defending Jews could destroy their enemies and claim the property. 8:11*
 - *Couriers took the edict to all people of the kingdom (picture 6C.10) 8:14*
 - *The king honored Mordecai 8:15*
 - *The Jews celebrated their deliverance 8:16-17*

Conclusion: *Haman was brought to justice and the Jewish people were saved. Why do you think God allowed the Jews to be threatened in the first place?*

2

Big Idea: **God reverses situations to bless His people and to display His power.**

Esther 7-8 [narrative form]

At the end of Esther 6, in what uncomfortable situation did Haman find himself? (His wife realized that Mordecai would ruin Haman, and Haman was escorted away to the banquet.) What major disaster was looming for the Jews in the Persian Empire?

For the third time, the king asked Esther to tell him what she wanted of him (picture 6C.9). What response do you think the king expected Esther to give? Let the kids suggest ideas. What was Esther’s response? What immediate reversal do we see in Haman’s attitude? (Instead of being boastful or proud, he was terrified.) How was King Xerxes involved in Esther’s impending doom?

In the Persian Empire, banquet guests didn’t use chairs, but reclined on low couches. When the king reappeared, it looked like Haman was attacking the queen! What did King Xerxes decide to do? Did Haman’s death instantly solve

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Esther’s problem?

Invite volunteers to read Esther 8. What immediate reversals took place in the first two verses? How did these reversals, these blessings, show God’s power?

According to Persian law, when the king sealed a decree with his signet ring, nothing could change it. Was that a good law or not?

There was one situation that even the king couldn’t stop, but God showed how to reverse the situation. Explain the reversal that took place in the second edict of the king. (Jews were now allowed to defend themselves, to fight anyone who attacked them, and to take plunder from their enemies.) How did the new message get to all 127 Persian provinces (picture 6C.10)? (They used fast horses that were bred especially for the king.)

God’s power brought great blessing to His people—reminding them of the Lord’s great deliverance from Egypt! Let’s look for ways God’s power brings blessings to you and how you can use those blessings to benefit others!

2

Big Idea: **God brings victory to His people and great glory to Himself.**

Esther 9-10 [outline form]

Intro: *God delivered His people.*

Ask: *How has God delivered you?*

1. The Jews defended themselves against their enemies.
 - *No one could stand against the Jews, and the officials sided with them.* . . . Esther 9:2
 - *Haman's sons were also destroyed.* 9:7-10
 - *King Xerxes asked if Esther needed anything else* 9:12
 - *Esther requested a second day for the Jews to defend themselves* 9:13
 - *The Jews did not take plunder, in accordance with God's laws* 9:15

2. The Jews rested after their victory.
 - *The Jews celebrated and worshiped God for their victory.* 9:17-18
 - *Mordecai established the celebration as a Jewish holiday* (picture 6C.9) . . . 9:20
 - *They celebrated with feasting and with helping the poor* (picture 6C.10) . . . 9:22
 - *All the events and celebration details were carefully recorded.* 9:29-31

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3. Mordecai continued to advise King Xerxes.
 - *Mordecai was second only to the king* 10:3
 - *Mordecai always worked and spoke for the good of his people.* 10:3

Conclusion: *The Jews responded to their deliverance by celebrating and praising the Lord. How much more should we celebrate our deliverance from our sins?*

2

Big Idea: **God brings victory to His people and great glory to Himself.**

Esther 9-10 [narrative form]

Encourage the kids to help you review the events in the book of Esther.

Now we are ready to find out what happened to the Jews on the fateful day before the Feast of Passover. Ask for volunteers to read Esther 9 to the group. Before the day arrived, what had the Jew's enemies expected? (They had hoped to overpower the Jews.) What do you think the Jews expected? (They just wanted to survive.)

What took place on the very day that Haman had expected to celebrate the Jews' destruction? (God delivered them from their enemies, just as God had done for Moses at the original Passover.) Let the kids cheer and celebrate the ironic change that took place on Haman's planned day.

According to Esther 9:27, who is to observe Purim? (Jews, their descendants, and all who join the Jews.) What might "all who join the Jews" mean? Let children speculate.

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Have the class read Esther 10 together. What change do you notice between Esther 2:5 and Esther 10:3? (Mordecai was unknown and now he is second in rank in the huge Persian Empire.) Use a world map to show the class the expanse of the Persian Empire: from India in the east to Asia Minor in the west, from southern Russia as a northern boundary down to Egypt, including areas around the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

(picture 6C.11) What similarities do you see between Mordecai and both Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon? Possible answers: they were Jews, they all rose to power in foreign lands, they all had suffered due to foreigners, etc. What godly traits are recorded about Mordecai? (He was held in high esteem, he worked for the good of the Jews, and he spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.) What godly traits might someone recognize in you? Encourage volunteers to respond.

(picture 6C.12) Holidays are about honoring the Lord and remembering the good things He has done. Purim is no different. The Jews remember how God used two devout people, Esther and Mordecai, to stand up and speak for their people, saving them from destruction. Remember to honor God for all He has done for you!

2

Level 6C—Standing Above the Crowd Lesson 7: Take Action

Big Idea: Leaders stand above the crowd, taking action for God.

Nehemiah 1-13 [outline form]

Rebuilding the Walls (Physical Security)—Nehemiah 1-7

Nehemiah 1-2

- *Time:* 445 B.C.
- *Key People:* Nehemiah, Artaxerxes
- *Key Event:* Work planned
- *Challenges/Obstacles/Victories:* Gaining the king's permission

Nehemiah 3-4

- *Time:* 445 B.C.
- *Key People:* the priests, Sanballat, Tobiah
- *Key Event:* Work begun and opposed (picture 6C.13)
- *Challenges/Obstacles/Victories:* Gates are built and guards are placed

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Nehemiah 5-7

- *Time:* 445-444 B.C.
- *Key People:* officials, opposition, Shemaiah
- *Key Event:* Work threatened and finished (picture 6C.14)
- *Challenges/Obstacles/Victories:* Poor are helped and wall is completed

Rebuilding the People (Spiritual Purity)—Nehemiah 8-13

Nehemiah 8-10

- *Time:* 444 B.C.
- *Key People:* Ezra, Levites
- *Key Event:* Consecration—revival of the people
- *Challenges/Obstacles/Victories:* A return to God's Word

Nehemiah 11-13

- *Time:* 432 B.C.
- *Key People:* returnees, Eliashib, merchants
- *Key Event:* Cleansing—reform of the nation
- *Challenges/Obstacles/Victories:* A return to righteousness

2

Level 6C—Standing Above the Crowd Lesson 7: Take Action

Big Idea: Leaders stand above the crowd, taking action for God.

Nehemiah 1-13 [narrative form]

Nehemiah was a man who oversaw the reconstruction of Jerusalem's destroyed walls (picture 6C.13). To understand why Nehemiah's job was so important, let's look back into Israel's history.

During King David's reign, Jerusalem became an important city to the Jews. Although David wanted to build a Temple for the Lord, God didn't allow him to build it. David's son, Solomon, had that honor.

Israel's disobedience brought God's judgment. In 586 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar reduced Jerusalem to rubble and burned the Temple. Why was the loss of Jerusalem so devastating to the Jews?

In 537 BC, the first Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem. Jeshua and Zerubbabel worked to rebuild the altar. What hindered their work? Why was the altar more important than rebuilding Jerusalem's walls? The leaders knew that sacrifices led to confession and repentance that would bring God's presence back to them.

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Next came the rebuilding of the Temple. After the Temple's foundation was laid, the Jews' enemies set out to discourage and frustrate their plans. The Temple was rebuilt in 515 BC.

Ezra, a scribe and priest, led a second group of Jews back to Jerusalem in 458 BC. Ezra helped them return to obeying God. Why was it important for Ezra to step up and become their spiritual leader? Encourage responses. Ezra prepared the people's hearts to finish the Temple and return Jerusalem to a place of honor.

Nehemiah entered the scene after the Temple was rebuilt. Why do you think no one had tried to rebuild the walls? Nehemiah lived a thousand miles away, in the palace of the Persian king. He had a comfortable job as the king's cupbearer. Why would Nehemiah care about the exiles? (He was a Jew.)

In the coming lessons, we will discover how Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around their great city (picture 6C.14). Many people came before Nehemiah who were willing to step up and do what God had asked them to do. Let's look for ways God is asking us to stand above the crowd and take action for Him.

2

Big Idea: **Leaders respond when God’s work needs to be done.**

Nehemiah 1-2 [outline form]

Intro: *Nehemiah was willing to take action for Jerusalem.*

Ask: *What situations are calling you to act?*

1. Nehemiah was a Jew serving as cupbearer for King Artaxerxes (picture 6C.15).
 - *Nehemiah’s brother told him of Jerusalem’s disrepair* Nehemiah 1:3
 - *Nehemiah wept and prayed for the people* 1:4
 - *Nehemiah confessed Israel’s sins* 1:6-7
 - *He asked God for mercy and for success* 1:9-11

2. Nehemiah came into the king’s presence.
 - *Nehemiah told the king why he was heartbroken* 2:3
 - *Nehemiah requested permission to rebuild Jerusalem* 2:5
 - *The king gave him all he asked* 2:8

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3. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem.
 - *Nehemiah told no one why he was there* 3:12
 - *He secretly surveyed Jerusalem by night* (picture 6C.16) 3:13
 - *After his survey, Nehemiah made his case to the Jewish officials* 3:17-18
 - *Everyone agreed to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls* 3:18

Conclusion: *Nehemiah was bold in his actions and careful in his planning. God rewards people who serve Him boldly!*

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Big Idea: **Leaders respond when God’s work needs to be done.**

Nehemiah 1-2 [narrative form]

What were the key places of Nehemiah 1-2? (Susa, palace of King Artaxerxes.) Susa was the winter capital of the Persian Empire. Today its ruins are located in modern-day southwestern Iran. Who were the key people? (Nehemiah, Hanani, King Artaxerxes, the queen, Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem.) What events took place? (Nehemiah talked with his brother, Hanani; he prayed; the king confronted Nehemiah about his sadness; Nehemiah left Susa, traveled to Jerusalem, and inspected the walls.) What theme emerges? (Nehemiah learns about a problem and then takes action.) What title could you give chapter 1? What title could you give chapter 2? Encourage responses.

Now let’s look for some grammatical clues. Have the groups quickly look for key words, repetition, contrast, comparison, purpose, verb tenses, cause/effect, and climax. As soon as the kids locate a clue, they should stand and name it aloud.

As we think about the passage, consider the historical and cultural context.

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Nehemiah was a foreigner who had an important role in the king’s court (picture 6C.15). A cupbearer not only checked the safety of the king’s drinks, he also advised and guarded the king. The Persian court didn’t allow anyone to display negative emotions in the king’s presence. If the king was displeased, he might impose the death penalty! How does this information change how you view Nehemiah speaking the truth to the king? Allow several kids to respond.

Nehemiah’s passions about Jerusalem were so strong that he chose not to hide them from a king. His emotions revealed the pain he felt that God’s people and God’s city were disgraced. How do you respond to mistreatment of God’s people or God’s property? Let the children answer. What can you do to lead others to respect God’s people and His property? Encourage responses.

Nehemiah was a man of passion and a man of action (picture 6C.16). Because Nehemiah answered honestly, the king not only allowed him to leave—but sent letters of approval and money to pay for the building project!

②

Big Idea: Leaders motivate people to work together for God.

Nehemiah 3-4 [outline form]

Intro: *Nehemiah used teamwork to accomplish his goals.*

Ask: *Why is the Church stronger when we work together?*

1. The people went to work rebuilding the wall's gates.
 - *The priests were the first to work* Nehemiah 3:1
 - *Workers rebuilt all the gates* 3:1-15
 - *Families repaired wall sections beside their homes* (picture 6C.17) . . . 3:23-25

2. Opposition came against the project.
 - *Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed the project* 4:1-3
 - *Nehemiah prayed for justice* 4:4-5
 - *The people continued to work with all their heart* 4:6

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3. People who opposed the Jews soon threatened violence.
 - *The workers began to lose heart* 4:10-12
 - *Nehemiah encouraged the people and reminded them of God's power* . . . 4:14
 - *Nehemiah took definitive steps to defend the project* (picture 6C.18) . . 4:16-19
 - *Nehemiah trusted God* 4:20

Conclusion: *Nehemiah responded to threats and opposition with prayer and planning. Trust God to help you in whatever obstacles you face!*

2

Big Idea: Leaders motivate people to work together for God.

Nehemiah 3-4 [narrative form]

Let's discover how Nehemiah managed to motivate thousands of people to work at a task they considered impossible. Who was the first to join Nehemiah's work team in Nehemiah 3:1? Why do you think the priests were the first workers? What do you notice in Nehemiah 3:5? (Some of the nobles or leaders wouldn't work.) What is different about the work team mentioned in verse 12? (Shallum received help from his daughters.) Why might the daughters have worked (picture 6C.17)? (The family probably did not have sons.)

In chapter 4, Nehemiah meets some initial opposition. Let's get some background information on them. The first man is Sanballat, the governor of Samaria. What was his response to the rebuilding (4:1-2)? The next leader was the governor of the Transjordan region, Tobiah. How did he insult the workers (4:3)? How do you think these government officials felt when a foreigner with the king's authority showed up?

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How did Nehemiah respond to the ridicule and insults (4:4-6)? What might have happened if Nehemiah had focused on retaliating against the opposition? Let the kids respond.

These enemies tried to undermine the work and to divert their focus. Nehemiah helped the Jews put the focus back where it belonged—on God! Deep inside, a great fear gripped Nehemiah's enemies. What fear does Nehemiah 4:15 reveal?

The Jews worked with amazing speed because they followed Nehemiah's plan. What was the revised work plan (picture 6C.18)? (Half worked and half guarded; trumpet sound meant everyone came to help; no one went home.) How would you respond to a leader who asked you to work under those conditions? Do you think people work that hard today? Why were the Israelites willing and able to work so hard?

God was with Nehemiah and all the workers. Everyone knew that the Lord was helping them. Whenever you do a job for God, He will be your strength and help you focus on Him.

2

Level 6C—Standing Above the Crowd Lesson 10: Solve Problems

Big Idea: Leaders solve problems to overcome obstacles.

Nehemiah 5-7 [outline form]

Intro: Nehemiah solved problems and completed the wall.

Ask: Do problems typically energize you or defeat you? Why?

1. Nehemiah faced more problems among the workers.

- A famine was hurting the workers' families Nehemiah 5:1-3
- Others were profiting by lending money. 5:5-7
- Nehemiah confronted the offenders 5:9-11
- Everyone promised to do right by the people. 5:12-13
- Nehemiah led by his example 5:15-16

2. More opposition came as the wall neared completion.

- Nehemiah's enemies tried to trap him and make him lose heart. 6:1-8
- Nehemiah prayed for strength (picture 6C.19). 6:9
- Nehemiah avoided sin and stood his ground 6:11-13

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3. Nehemiah and the people completed the wall.

- The wall was completed in record time with God's help 6:15-16
- Nehemiah placed his brother in charge of Jerusalem 7:2
- Many Jews were now living in the area (picture 6C.20). 7:8-63
- People returned to their own towns and homes. 7:73

Conclusion: Nehemiah completed a huge project in a very short amount of time, all while facing obstacles and opposition. Imagine how God can help you!

2

Level 6C—Standing Above the Crowd Lesson 10: Solve Problems

Big Idea: Leaders solve problems to overcome obstacles.

Nehemiah 5-7 [narrative form]

What situation does Nehemiah face at the beginning of chapter 5? What were some Israelites doing to their fellow Jews? Nehemiah knew God's Word. He based his solution to this problem on following God's plan. What was God's plan? (Deuteronomy 23:19-20—Jews were not allowed to charge interest to other Jews.) What incentive did God give His people to follow that law? Nehemiah solved the problem by following God's laws. He knew God would bless the people who followed that plan, but he wanted to make sure they understood the consequences of disobeying. Verse 13 describes a strange cultural practice. What do you think "shake out the fold of his robe" meant? Do you think this helped motivate the Israelites to obey?

Nehemiah 5:14-19 explains that Nehemiah did not charge food or taxes like previous leaders had done. How do you think the people responded to Nehemiah's selfless leadership?

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Nehemiah's enemies just wouldn't go away. They kept causing more problems. Describe the problem and how Nehemiah solved it. Nehemiah knew his leadership was needed in Jerusalem, so he stayed there. He also boldly called their accusations "lies." Nehemiah figured out what was behind the problem, and then he concentrated on solving it (picture 6C.19).

Explain this new problem and how Nehemiah overcame the obstacle. Although problems kept coming, Nehemiah overcame each obstacle and finished the task! How did their opponents respond?

(picture 6C.20) How many people do you think were under Nehemiah's leadership? After the wall was completed, God gave Nehemiah the plan to take a census, and the results are recorded in chapter 7.

Nehemiah wasn't intimidated by the huge number of people under his leadership, or by the obstacles he encountered. He solved his problems by turning to God and by following His direction. How do you think Nehemiah's prescription for solving problems would work for you today?

2

Big Idea: **Leaders guide others to God’s faithfulness and His Word.**

Nehemiah 8-10 [outline form]

Intro: *Nehemiah reintroduced God’s Word to the people.*

Ask: *Why is knowledge of God’s Word important?*

1. Nehemiah and Ezra brought God’s Word to the people.

- *Ezra read from the book of the Law* (picture 6C.21) Nehemiah 8:5
- *The priests helped people understand the words* 8:8
- *The people responded with great emotion* 8:9-11
- *The Jews rediscovered the festival of booths* (picture 6C.22). 8:13-18

2. The Jews gathered to praise God.

- *The priests acknowledged God’s greatness and power* 9:5-6
- *They remembered what God had done for His people* 9:7-25
- *They confessed that they had turned from God* 9:26-35
- *The priests asked God for mercy* 9:36-37

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3. The Jews made a written covenant with God.

- *Nehemiah recorded those who signed the covenant* 9:38—10:27
- *They promised to obey God’s commands* 10:29
- *They promised to keep themselves set apart (holy)* 10:30-31
- *They promised to honor God in giving and sacrifice* 10:32-39

Conclusion: *After restoring Jerusalem’s walls, Nehemiah knew it was important to restore people’s hearts to God. God cares more for people than for institutions and buildings!*

2

Big Idea: **Leaders guide others to God’s faithfulness and His Word.**

Nehemiah 8-10 [narrative form]

The Jews have finished rebuilding the wall and are settling into their towns. Who was Ezra? (He was a scribe and a priest.) Ezra had previously encouraged the people to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple (picture 6C.21).

Why did the people stand when Ezra opened the book? (They showed respect and honor for God’s words.) Nehemiah, Ezra, and 13 priests helped explain God’s Word to the people. How did they respond to what they heard—and why? What did Nehemiah guide the people to do?

As the people listened to the Law of Moses, what did they discover about their current month? (It was time to celebrate the Feast of Booths.) The Feast of Booths, sometimes called Feast of Tabernacles, is also known as Sukkot (picture 6C.22). God had instructed the Israelites to build booths to remind them of the tents their ancestors lived in during the forty years of wandering in the desert. They ate, talked, and even slept in the portable tents. How did the people respond to what

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they had learned? (They all cut branches, built booths, and lived in them.) Besides living in the booths, what did the people do every day during that week? (They gathered together to listen to Ezra read God’s law to them.) What benefits might come from daily Bible reading? Encourage responses.

After the week of living in the booths, the feast took a different mood. Let’s see how the leaders guided the Jewish people through the next phase. Read Nehemiah 9:1-4 and ask kids to picture the scene. What change happened in how they responded to God’s Word? (They fasted, wore sackcloth, put dust on their heads, confessed their sins, read God’s Word, and worshiped.)

After hearing of God’s faithfulness, the Israelites wanted to sign a commitment to trust and obey God. Who agreed to sign the oath? (Men, women, sons, and daughters all signed the oath.)

Nehemiah, Ezra, and the priests guided the people to hear and understand God’s Word. As they understood God’s faithfulness, it built their confidence in God to the point that they signed an oath, promising to follow and obey the Lord. What a great example for us to renew our faith and trust in God!

2

Big Idea: Leaders encourage others to follow God’s way.

Nehemiah 11-13 [outline form]

Intro: *Nehemiah worked to keep the people “on track” with God.*

Ask: *How can you stay focused on God and His will?*

1. The Jews determined to increase the population of Jerusalem.
 - *The leaders all went to live in Jerusalem* Nehemiah 11:1
 - *They cast lots to decide who else would live there* 11:1
 - *Those who went were commended by everyone* 11:2
 - *Nehemiah recorded those who went.* 11:3-36

2. The people dedicated Jerusalem’s wall to the Lord.
 - *Nehemiah assembled priests and choirs* (picture 6C.23) 12:27-28
 - *Everyone rejoiced in the Lord* 12:40-43
 - *The celebration reflected the days of David and Solomon* 12:46-47

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3. Nehemiah returned to King Artaxerxes in Susa.
 - *While he was gone, the people fell into disobedience* 13:4-6
 - *Nehemiah corrected the people and honored God* 13:7-14
 - *Nehemiah witnessed merchants disregarding the Sabbath* 13:15-16
 - *He closed the gates to commerce on the Sabbath* (picture 6C.24) 13:19
 - *Nehemiah kept the people of Judah set apart* 13:27

Conclusion: *Nehemiah helped the people remain faithful to the Lord and corrected wickedness when he found it. God is looking for leaders willing to step up and speak out for what is right and true!*

2

Big Idea: Leaders encourage others to follow God’s way.

Nehemiah 11-13 [narrative form]

Today we will finish studying the life and leadership of Nehemiah. Why did Nehemiah want people to settle in Jerusalem? Why didn’t everyone want to live there? How did they respond to people who volunteered to move to Jerusalem? (They congratulated and blessed them.)

The rest of chapter 11 gives detailed lists of the people who returned to Jerusalem. Why do you think these lists are kept in the Bible for us? Listing the family names kept track of genealogies. It also was a list of people who faithfully followed and served God. The list showed God’s “star workers” that He was proud of and wanted everyone to notice.

Nehemiah 12 begins with a list of Levites. What role was given to the Levites? Because the Levites were the spiritual leaders, they led the wall dedication service (picture 6C.23). How did they contribute to the celebration? The joyous celebration was styled after David’s own celebrations more than 500 years earlier. Have

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volunteers read 1 Chronicles 15:16 and 25:1. Why do you think the Levites were worship leaders? (They spent time studying God’s Word, and it would be natural that they would lead worship.) Today, how can we be purified? Take time to help kids understand that Jesus Christ paid the blood sacrifice by His death on the cross.

Ask a volunteer to read Nehemiah 13:1-3. Nehemiah 13:1 shows us that God’s Word was publicly read. Why was it important to read publicly? (The people didn’t have copies to read on their own, so when it was read to the group they were reminded of God’s ways.) What did the people discover as they listened? (They had allowed foreigners to gather in the assembly of God.) (picture 6C.24)

Nehemiah had a tough role to lead the Jews to rebuild the walls and then rebuild their relationships with God. The strength of Nehemiah’s leadership was his dependence on God. Even when he had to respond in a tough way to the Israelites’ disobedience, Nehemiah encouraged them to follow God’s ways.

2