



# NEHEMIAH

God's People Repented

**Welcome** students.

**Prayer Cards:** Ask, "How can I pray for you?" Ask students to fill out the cards. Tell the students, "I will pray for you this week."

**Lesson Objective:** God gives us the opportunity to repent, turn away from sin, and turn towards Him.

**Activity:** Party Time (supplies: long piece of paper, party streamers, party hats, party decorations, markers)

Today's Bible story is about celebrating a special day. Help kids set the stage by decorating the classroom for a celebration. Decorations can be as elaborate or as simple as you want. You might have kids work together to make a "Celebration!" banner on a long piece of paper. Consider purchasing decorations from a party supply store, or provide materials for the kids to make decorations themselves.

## Connect the Activity to the Lesson

Ask the kids, as they are decorating, how they celebrate special things in their families. What is your favorite reason to celebrate? How do you think people celebrated during Bible times? Have you ever celebrated a big accomplishment? If so, what was it?

## Introduction:

We've seen in our past lessons that God's people had a habit of straying away from God. But in today's lesson we will learn about a time in their history when all God's people recognized their sin, repented, and turned towards God. After they finished rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem and the city gates, which only took 52 days by the way, Ezra, the priest, took out the Book of the Law and began to read it to the people. Let's find out how that sparked a heart change in the people of God.

## Video Recap: "God's People Repented" – Nehemiah 8-13

Early one morning, after the walls and city gates of Jerusalem were completed, all the men, women, and children gathered together at one of the city gates. They came to listen to Ezra the priest read out of the Book of the Law of Moses that God had given to His people. Ezra read for hours and all the people listened carefully. They stood up while listening to show their respect for God's Word. Ezra praised God and the people lifted up their hands. They also bowed down with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. Some of the leaders, called Levites, explained the law to the people and helped them understand the words Ezra read. As the people heard the words of the law, they began to cry. The law was God's rules for living and the people realized they had disobeyed God and that they had sinned against Him. Ezra, the Levites, and Nehemiah, the governor, declared the day to be a holy day to the Lord. They told the people not to be sad or cry. Instead, they explained that it was a happy day and told them to go to their homes, prepare a feast, eat rich food, and drink sweet drinks. The leaders also told them to share what they prepared with those who had nothing prepared. Ezra rejoiced saying, "This is holy to the Lord our God. This is not a day to be sad because the joy of the Lord is your strength." Then Nehemiah led God's people to repent and confess their sin. They agreed to worship only God and promised to obey Him.

*Christ Connection: God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.*

**Debrief: Questions to ask**

**How did the people react to hearing God's Word?** *(They didn't make excuses for their sin or ignore God. Instead, they confessed their sin, repented, and turned to God and promised to obey Him.)*

**What should we do when we do something wrong?** *(We should do like the Israelites did and confess our sin, ask God to forgive us and turn towards Him and away from our sin, and begin to obey Him.)*

**Why is often hard for us to confess when we have done something wrong?** *(Our pride often gets in the way of our admitting we have sinned. We don't want to submit ourselves to God's will, but rather we want to live as we choose. But God promised that if we ignore our pride and confess our sin He is faithful and just and will forgive us and cleans us from all we've done wrong.)*

**Apply the Story**

God's Word is powerful. When Israel heard God's Word it changed them. They trusted God's Word, stood when it was read, listened attentively, and praised God. They respected His Word and trusted that it was true, even when it showed they needed to repent and make changes in their lives. God's Word can change us too! 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that it can be used to teach, rebuke, correct, and train us to follow God. The Bible is trustworthy and can speak to every area of our lives. We can respect, follow, and trust the Bible because it comes from God. It enables us to respond to God by repenting and turning away from bad choices and turning toward God. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. When we read God's Word, the Bible, we love God more and it changes our hearts which changes our behavior and attitudes. John 1 tells us that Jesus is "the Word". Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth so that we might know Him. Jesus has the power to change our hearts. God gives us the opportunity to repent and turn away from sin and turn toward Him. Just like the Israelites learned in our lesson today, when we turn away from sin God supports us, restores us, forgives us, and shows us grace. And Luke 15:10 tells us the angels celebrate when even one sinner repents!

**Bible Drills** (supplies: Bibles)

Challenge the students to look up the following verses and stand up when they find it. Recognize the first person to stand and ask them to read the verse. After all the verses are read, discuss the theme each verse has in common (Underlined Words below)

**God tells us to repent of our sins:**

Acts 3:19

2 Chronicles 7:14

1 John 1:9

Proverbs 28:13

2 Chronicles 30:9b

2 Peter 3:9

Matthew 4:17

Revelation 3:19

