Lesson 4

Patience

Nehemiah Waited On God To Lift His Burden

Nehemiah 1:1-2:8

The Southern Kingdom, Judah and the capital city, Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the people of Judah were their captives. Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego along with many other Hebrews were sent to Babylon to be trained as leaders. King Nebuchadnezzar was Babylon's mightiest ruler. His successors were weak. During Daniels time, King Cyrus of the Persian Empire conquered Babylon. Cyrus was a merciful man who allowed the Hebrew people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. The successor to the throne after Cyrus was Cambyses and he stopped the work on the temple. Haggai and Zechariah were able to continue work on the temple when Darius I became ruler (Ezra 4:23,24; 5:1). Approximately 34 years passed and Esther became queen when she married Darius' son Xerxes. When Xerxes died, his son Artaxerxes became ruler. Our story begins here with Nehemiah, a Hebrew who is the cupbearer for Artaxerxes.

Introduction

Before beginning the lesson, show your class a map of Persia and the Holy Land. Explain how Israel was the land God gave the Jewish people. It was their homeland. Jerusalem is the capital city of Israel and this is where the temple was built.

Next, locate Persia. Persia is a land where many of God's people were taken as captives because they disobeyed the one true God.

Progression of Events

Nehemiah was a problem solver and a man who knew God would use his talents to get a job done. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king in Persia. A cupbearer was a palace official who served wine to the king. This was

forsaken God's way. God allowed and used the Babylonians to execute judgment upon the Hebrew people. It was the will of God to displace His people and the Babylonians did just that.

- Even though Nehemiah had never been to Jerusalem, when he heard the news, he sat down and wept. He wept because Jerusalem was the Jews' Holy city. For many days he mourned. He fasted and prayed to God. He wanted Jerusalem to be restored. He wanted to remove the shame that had befallen his people and he wanted to bring glory to God and lead his people back to worshipping the one true God.
- Read Nehemiah's prayer (Nehemiah 1:5-11). First Nehemiah praised God and then he confesses he is a sinner and identifies with his people as sinners. He realized that because of the people's sin, God allowed Jerusalem to be destroyed in the first place. He pleaded that God hear his prayer. He asked God to help him speak to King Artaxerxes about Jerusalem. Nehemiah prayed to God about this matter for four months. Praying for the needs of others is a good thing to do. When you hear of people who have lost everything in a fire, flood, hurricane, etc. you should pray for them. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight" (Proverbs 15:8). Certainly God was pleased that Nehemiah cared so much for his people.
- One day when Nehemiah was bringing wine to the king, the king asked, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart" (Nehemiah 2:2). Nehemiah was fearful because being sad in the presence of the king could bring death.

Climax

- Nehemiah knew he had to answer. He says, "May the king live forever!" and continued with, "why wouldn't I be sad when my homeland is in rubble and the gates are burned down?" (Nehemiah 2:3).
- The king then asked, "What do you request?" Nehemiah said a quick prayer before he answered.
- "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it" (Nehemiah 2:5).
- The king said, "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" Imagine the joy Nehemiah must have felt. God had answered his prayers.

Conclusion

Nehemiah was prepared with an answer, as he had planned how long it would take. He then asked the king to write letters to the rulers in the other countries so he could have safe passage. He asked as well for the king to give him wood from his forest so that he could make the gates for the wall and build himself a home. Nehemiah knew God had given him favor in the eyes of the king and he knew it was God who had caused the king to be willing to do these things. Nehemiah had patiently waited for God to answer his prayer.

Patience

Having patience means one has the ability to suppress frustration in the midst of a difficult situation. It is quiet perseverance, care and submissiveness that God is in control. God has patience with each of us. God will help us endure pain, trouble and wrongdoing that other people bring upon us. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:3,4).

Memory Verse
"I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1).

Questions
For class discussion ask your students any of the following:

1. What was Nehemiah's job?
2. Why was Nehemiah concerned about Jerusalem?
3. Why was Nehemiah sad?
4. Why did the Hebrew people become captives many years prior to this?
5. How did Nehemiah start his prayer?
6. How many months did he pray his prayer?
7. When the king saw that he was sad, why was Nehemiah fearful?
8. Did Nehemiah ever show impatience?
9. What does patience mean?
10. Explain why it is important to pray for others.

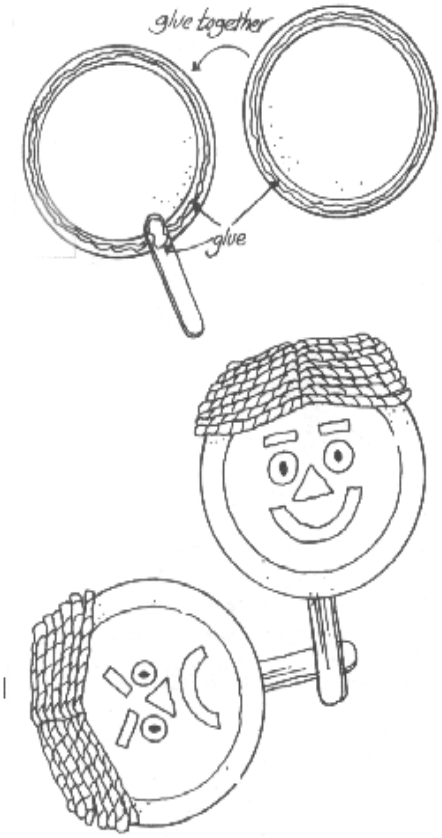
FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23

Lesson 4
Craft

Materials

- Small white paper plates
- Tongue depressors.
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Yarn



Directions

1. Cut out eyebrows, eyes, nose and mouth for happy and sad faces from construction paper.
2. Cut yarn for hair.
3. Glue happy face features on side of one paper plate and sad features on side of other paper plate.
4. Spread glue on both sides of one end of the tongue depressor.
5. Glue to front edge of one paper plate.
6. Spread glue around end of paper plate.
7. Place second paper plate on top; press edges together. Let glue dry.
8. Turn paper plate to show happy then sad face.

Questions

- What does it mean to be patient?
- How did Nehemiah show patience?
- Why was Nehemiah sad and happy?