

UNITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

LESSON TEXT

Nehemiah 1-6

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- The students will identify three ways that Nehemiah instilled unity to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.
- The students will identify three obstacles to unity in relationships.
- The students will make a plan for building unity in one personal relationship.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For each student:

- pencil or pen
- 12 craft (Popsicle) sticks
- small reclosable plastic bag (snack-size)

For the teacher:

- playing cards, 1 deck for every 4 students
- several sheets of paper for each group of 4 students
- 1 copy of "Good News from the Kingdom"
- globe or map of the world
- extra Bibles
- 2 embroidery hoops or similar type rings (approximate diameter 4"-5")
- 2 or more long feathers
- colored markers
- sequins and small stickers (optional)
- craft glue (optional)

Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 1 copy for each student
- Page B, 1 copy for each student
- Page C, 1 copy for each student

LESSON PLAN

Getting Ready

Faithful Instruction
 Teacher Focus
 Teacher Tips
 Preclass Activity: House of Cards
 Starting Up
 Welcome and Singing
 Opening Prayer
 Victories
 Good News from the Kingdom

Getting into God's Word

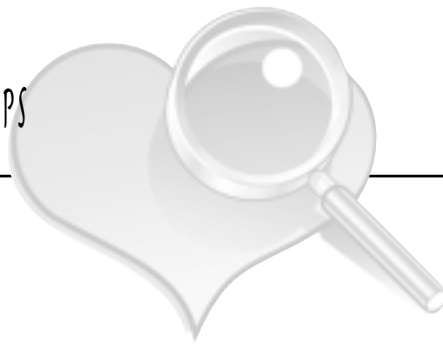
Scripture Study
 Activity: Unity Hoops

Getting It to Others

Scripture Memory: Psalm 133:1
 Weekly Challenge and Snack Time
 Conclusion

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

How good and pleasant it is
 when brothers live together in unity!
 Psalm 133:1



FAITHFUL INSTRUCTION

TEACHER FOCUS

Pray before preparing this lesson. Read through Nehemiah 1-6, noting how important it was for Nehemiah to create unity in order to rebuild the wall. Jesus said in John 17:20-23 that unity is necessary in order to fulfill our mission to win the world for Christ. Indeed, Satan's greatest weapon against the church is disunity. Preteens must learn to be aware of Satan's schemes in this area. They need to understand that personality differences, discouragement, distraction and persecution can bring disunity between friends in the church. Equipping them now to consistently maintain unity in their relationships will strengthen and protect the church of the future.

TEACHER TIPS

Spend some time this week thinking about different situations that can cause disunity between your students and their friends and classmates. Consider the internal and/or external forces that can cause disunity in your life. Be prepared to share some of your experiences during the Scripture Study discussion. Pray to deepen your own conviction of the importance of unity in the church.

PRECLASS ACTIVITY

HOUSE OF CARDS

The students will begin to learn the importance of unity by trying to build a house of cards without using any words.

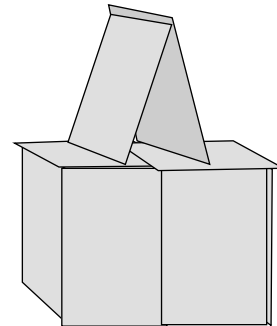
MATERIALS USED

For each student:

- pencil or pen

For the teacher:

- playing cards, 1 deck for every 4 students
- several sheets of paper for each group of 4 students

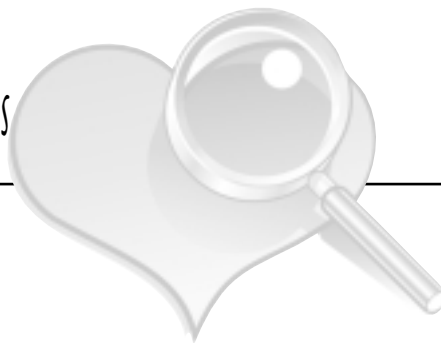


PREPARATION

1. Before the students arrive, divide the class into separate areas in which the teams will work.
2. Each area will need a desk or flat surface. Equip each area with a deck of playing cards, several sheets of paper and several pens or pencils.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As the students arrive, separate them into teams of four students each, assigning each team to a station in the room.
2. Tell the students that the assignment for each team is to build a house of cards. The challenge is that no one on the team may speak during the activity. The team members may communicate by any other method (writing, hand signals, etc.), but may not speak.
3. Declare the team that has the highest structure at the end of the time allotted to be the winner.



STARTING UP

WELCOME AND SINGING

Call the students together in a circle. Welcome everyone by name, being sure to recognize anyone who is visiting. Let them know how glad you are to see them, and how much you looked forward to being with them. Sing a few great songs.

OPENING PRAYER

Who would like to say a prayer to start today's time together? Let a few students lead the prayer. Encourage the students to mention missing students, special church activities, illnesses and to be especially thankful for the chance to be together.

VICTORIES

Take time to have the students share about the challenges they were given at the end of last week's class. *Did everyone complete their challenge? How did it go? What fears did you face as you met the challenge to put the lesson into practice? How did everyone do with having consistent quiet times? Would anyone like to share something they learned this week?*

Praise and encourage all the students' efforts, especially noting any area of significant growth. Offer help and suggestions so they can have even more victories in the coming week.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE KINGDOM

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- 1 copy of "Good News from the Kingdom"
- globe or map of the world

INSTRUCTIONS

Now let's take a few minutes to share "Good News from the Kingdom." Be excited as you read about what is happening around the world. Have a globe or map ready, pointing out the location as you share. Remind your students that the kingdom of God is worldwide, and that the victories of our brothers and sisters in other countries can inspire us and spur us on.





SCRIPTURE STUDY

MATERIALS USED

For each student:

- pencil or pen

For the teacher:

- extra Bibles

Reproducible Pages:

- Page A, 1 copy for each student
- Page B, 1 copy for the teacher

Discuss the preclass activity. Help your students understand the concept of unity and how important it is in completing a task successfully.

- *How many of you enjoyed the preclass activity today? Why or why not?*
- *What were some of the difficulties your team faced as it tried to construct the house of cards?*
- *If you were to do the task again and could change any part of it, what would you change and why?*

Today we are going to read about Nehemiah, a man who helped to unify a group of people who had become disunited but needed to complete a very difficult task. The nation of Israel had been taken captive by the Babylonians, who destroyed their temple in Jerusalem (the one built by Solomon) and took them away as prisoners to Babylon. Many years later, the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians and allowed the Jews to go back to their homeland. The story of Nehemiah begins in 444 BC, about 100 years after the Jews had returned to Jerusalem.

Have the class open their Bibles to the book of Nehemiah. Select a volunteer to look at the last line of Chapter 1 to find out who Nehemiah was.

- *What does it mean to be "cupbearer to the king"?* (a palace official who served wine at a king's table; would sample the wine first before giving it to the king to make sure the wine was not poisoned)
- *What kind of person do you think Nehemiah had to be in order to get this job?* (very loyal and trustworthy)

Nehemiah was also a Jew who discovered his people had a problem. Select another volunteer to read Nehemiah 1:1-3. *The Jews had rebuilt their temple, but had not been able to complete the wall around it due to interference by their more powerful neighbors who wanted the city to remain unfortified. Every*

ancient city had a huge wall surrounding it that protected it from its enemies. Without its wall, Jerusalem was vulnerable to attack and unable to properly defend itself. A broken-down wall also signified disgrace and the spiritual weakness of the people.

Nehemiah decided to go and lead the Jews in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. However, there were many obstacles to his work. Have several volunteers read Nehemiah 2:10, 4:1-3, 4:7-8 and 6:10-13. Briefly discuss the ways Sanballat schemed to discourage Nehemiah from building the wall and how Satan works the same way in our lives today to cause disunity (being negative, belittling someone's efforts, listening to/spreading rumors, lack of confidence, feeling overwhelmed, peer pressure).

There was also disunity from within the Jews themselves. Have several volunteers read 3:5 (pride, not supporting the work and not being willing to help); 4:10-11 (discouragement, lack of faith in God, not believing in the work); and 5:15 (unspiritual leaders who treated the people unjustly). Also, refer to 5:1-8: Rich Jews were taking advantage of poor Jews by exacting usury from them. Due to the famine in the land, many people had to borrow money to buy grain. "Usury" is charging interest on money loaned, an illegal thing for one Jew to do to another Jew at the time.

Give each student a copy of Reproducible Page A (Unity Building Blocks). *As we go through the story and find out what Nehemiah did to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem and to build unity in the hearts of the people, write those things down on the blocks that make up the wall on your paper.*

Let's see what Nehemiah did first. Have a volunteer read Nehemiah 1:4. Briefly discuss the importance of prayer and turning to God for help in solving any problem. *Nehemiah's first impulse was always to pray. He spent four months praying about this situation (verses 1:1, 2:1) before taking the next step.* Instruct the students to write the word "Pray" in the first block of their wall.

What else do you see about Nehemiah's response in this verse? (He "mourned and fasted" about the problem.) Have the students write "Be Sad About Disunity" in the second block. Explain that disunity should make us sad whenever we see it, so that we will be motivated to change it.



Have a volunteer read Nehemiah 2:1-6. *Nehemiah again used prayer to overcome his fear. Then he took the amazingly bold step of asking the king for a leave of absence from his job so that he could go to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. In verse 8, he also requested timber from the king's forest for materials needed for the project. Imagine a disciple asking his boss to give him a holiday plus supplies so that he could help his church become stronger!* Have the students write "Be Radical About Building Unity" in the third block.

Continue to go through the following verses, asking the students what Nehemiah did and briefly discussing how each of those actions helped to build unity. (See a list of all the building blocks on Reproducible Page B.)

ACTIVITY

UNITY HOOPS

The students will practice unity and teamwork in a relay competition.

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- 2 embroidery hoops or similar type rings (approximate diameter 4"-5")
- 2 or more long feathers

PREPARATION

1. If a ready-made hoop is not available, construct your own by cutting out the inside of two plastic plates, leaving a rim. (The ring must be large enough to easily fit over a preteen's hand and wrist.)
2. Trim any sharp edges.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide the class into two teams.
2. Have each team stand in a line, side by side and facing the same direction.
3. Give a hoop to the first student in each line.
4. *Each of your teams has a purpose to fulfill, just like the Jews rebuilding the wall. You are to pass your hoop down your line by shaking hands. If the hoop is moved by any other method than by shaking hands or if it is dropped, then it has to go back to the first person in the line and your team must start over. While you are passing the hoops, the other teacher(s) and I are going to try to distract you. In order to finish this race, your team will have to stay very unified.*
5. Have the play begin on the call of "On your mark, get set, GO!" Have each student with a hoop turn to the student on his or her right, shake hands with him or her, allow the hoop to slip onto the other student's wrist, and then let go of the other student's hand. (See diagram below.)
6. While the hoops are being passed, try to obstruct the process by tickling the students with feathers, engaging in baseball outfielder type chatter, etc. Keep the teasing and taunting lighthearted, fun and not personally hurtful to anyone.
7. The first team to get the hoop to the end of the line wins.
8. If your class is small, have the hoops pass to the end of the lines and then back up to the beginning of the lines in order to win.





SCRIPTURE MEMORY

How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!
Psalm 133:1

ACTIVITY

MEMORY VERSE PUZZLE

MATERIALS USED

For each student:

- 12 craft (Popsicle) sticks
- small reclosable plastic bag (snack-size)

For the teacher:

- extra Bibles
- colored markers
- sequins and small stickers (optional)
- craft glue (optional)

Reproducible Pages:

- Page B, 1 copy for each student

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each student twelve craft sticks, a marker and a plastic bag.
2. Have the students open their Bibles to Psalm 133:1.
3. Instruct the students to write each word of the verse horizontally on a different craft stick.
Optional: Allow the students to glue sequins or attach stickers to the ends of the sticks for decoration.
4. Have the students recite the memory verse aloud together as a class.

5. Instruct the students to close their Bibles, mix up their craft sticks, and then each put their sticks in the correct order for the memory verse.
6. Instruct the students to store their Memory Verse Puzzles in the plastic bags. They can take them home and practice their verse before next week's class.
7. Distribute a copy of Reproducible Page B (Scripture Memory) to each student.

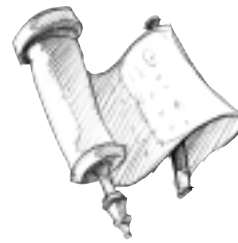
WEEKLY CHALLENGE AND SNACK TIME

If your students bring a snack, allow them to eat while you explain to them the challenge for the week.

Ask each student to identify either: (1) one person in his or her life with whom he or she tends to have conflict (e.g. brother or sister, bully at school) or (2) someone in the preteen class that he or she doesn't know well. Have the students make and carry out a plan for: (1) resolving the conflict with that person this week or (2) getting to know that person better this week.

CONCLUSION

End the class with a prayer.



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Select one person with whom you generally have conflict or someone in your preteen class that you don't know well. Make a plan to resolve your differences with the first person or to get to know the second person better. Carry out that plan during the week.

UNITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

LESSON TEXT

Romans 15:1-7

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- The students will explain how unity brings glory to God.
- The students will identify three ways they can personally build unity in the church.
- The students will make a plan for building unity in one personal relationship.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For each student:

- 1 plastic spoon
- 1 drinking straw

For the teacher:

- 1 sheet of newsprint or butcher paper, 10' long
- crayons or markers
- 3-4 bowls or baskets
- cassette or CD player
- several music cassettes or CDs
- extra Bibles
- 1 bag of candy-coated chocolate pieces
- 2 stuffed animals, medium-sized
- 6 sheets of facial tissue

LESSON PLAN

Getting Ready

- Faithful Instruction
 - Teacher Focus
 - Teacher Tips
- Preclass Activity: Group Mural
- Starting Up
 - Welcome and Singing
 - Opening Prayer and Review
 - Great News Sharing

Getting into God's Word

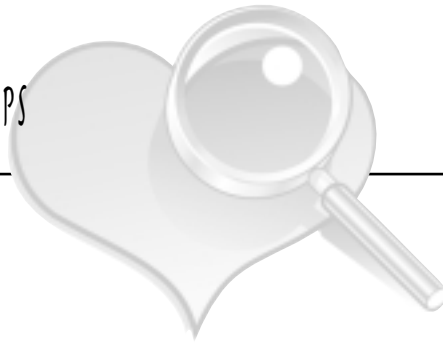
- Scripture Study
- Activity: Team Relays

Getting It to Others

- Scripture Memory: Psalm 133:1
- Weekly Challenge and Snack Time
- Conclusion

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

How good and pleasant it is
 when brothers live together in unity!
 Psalm 133:1



FAITHFUL INSTRUCTION

TEACHER FOCUS

Pray before preparing this lesson. Have one of your quiet times this week on Romans 15:1-7. Jesus said in John 17:20-23 that unity is necessary in order to fulfill our purpose of winning the world for Christ. Indeed, Satan's greatest weapon against the church is disunity. Preteens must learn to be aware of Satan's schemes in this area. They need to understand that personality differences, discouragement, distraction and persecution can bring disunity between friends in the church. Equipping them now to consistently maintain unity in their relationships will strengthen and protect the church of the future.

TEACHER TIPS

Spend some time thinking about different situations that tempt you to be disunited with others in the kingdom. What can you do to put this scripture more into practice in your life? Be prepared to share these thoughts during the Scripture Study discussion. Pray that your convictions about unity will be strengthened as you deliver this lesson.

PRECLASS ACTIVITY

GROUP MURAL

The students will practice unity by creating a mural of their own design.

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- 1 sheet of newsprint or butcher paper, 10' long
- crayons or markers
- 3-4 bowls or baskets
- cassette or CD player
- several music cassettes or CDs

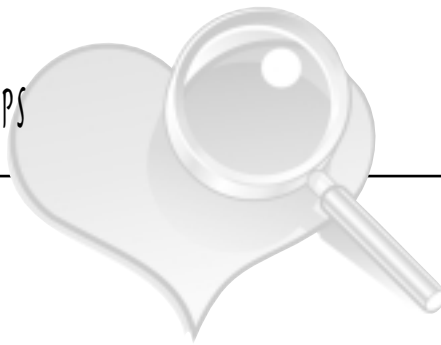
PREPARATION

1. Tape or pin the newsprint across one wall of your classroom, at the eye level of the students.
2. Put the crayons or markers in several bowls. Spread the bowls out along the floor underneath the wall on which the paper is hung.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As students arrive, direct them to the wall where the paper is, telling them that their job is to create a group mural. They can choose any theme they like, but everyone must agree on the theme and work together to complete the mural.
2. Play music in the background as the students draw.

NOTE: As students will be coming in at different times, the first few students will have to decide and agree upon the theme of the mural. The others will express unity by joining them in the project.



STARTING UP

WELCOME AND SINGING

Call the students together in a circle. Welcome everyone by name, being sure to recognize anyone who is visiting. Let them know how glad you are to see them, and how much you looked forward to being with them. Sing a few great songs.

OPENING PRAYER AND REVIEW

- Open with one of the students praying for each student to be unified with the other preteens and for the church as a whole to be unified.
- Have one student recite the memory verse for this lesson: Psalm 133:1.
- Have a student briefly review the previous lesson (Core Lesson).

GREAT NEWS SHARING

Allow several minutes for the students to share great news about their lives. This could be about a family member who became a disciple, someone healed from an illness, someone studying the Bible, great grades, etc. Remind the students to be brief so that as many as possible can share.

How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!

PSALM 133:1



SCRIPTURE STUDY

MATERIALS USED

For the teacher:

- extra Bibles

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have the students open their Bibles to Romans 15.
2. Ask for volunteers to read verses 1-4 and 5-7.
3. Have an informal, practical discussion about the attitudes that are necessary in order to build unity in the group. Make sure the following is covered:
 - *How could you help someone who is physically weak (sick, handicapped)? (v.1)*
 - *How could you help someone who is depressed and discouraged? (v.1)*
 - *How could you help someone who is shy and timid? (v.1)*
 - *What can you do to build up your best friend? (v.2)*
 - *What can you do to build up your parents? (v.2)*
 - *How can the Scriptures encourage us and give us hope? (v.4)*
 - *What can help us develop a "spirit of unity"? (v.5—following/obeying Jesus)*
 - *With what types of people do you have difficulty getting along?*
 - *How does the principle of accepting people apply when you see someone sinning? (v.7—still love and believe in the person, but hate the sin / help the person get away from the sin)*
 - *How does the unity of his people bring glory to God?*
 - *What does it mean to glorify God "with one heart and mouth"?*

ACTIVITY

TEAM RELAYS

The students will participate in a variety of activities which will sharpen their unity skills.

MATERIALS USED

For each student:

- 1 plastic spoon
- 1 drinking straw

For the teacher:

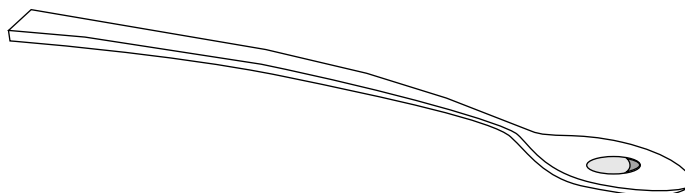
- 1 bag of candy-coated chocolate pieces
- 2 stuffed animals, medium-sized
- 6 sheets of facial tissue

INSTRUCTIONS

1. *Now we are going to do some relay races to help us develop unity and teamwork.*
2. Divide the students into two teams.
3. Do as many of the races as time permits.
4. Encourage the students to cheer their teammates on during the relays.
5. Use the extra candies as prizes for the winners.

Candy Relay

- Have the two teams line up, single file, with a twelve-inch space between students.
- Give each student a plastic spoon to hold in his or her mouth.
- Put a candy on the spoon of the first student in each line.
- On "Go!" have the first student turn around and face the student behind him, then pass the candy from his spoon to the other student's spoon. Continue this action on down the line.
- No hands may be used. If the candy is dropped, it returns to the first student in line.
- The first team to get the candy to the end of its line is the winner.





Stuffed Animal Relay

- Have the two teams line up, single file, with a twelve-inch space between students (same as for Candy Relay).
- Give a stuffed animal to the first person in each line.
- On "Go!" have the first student pass the animal over his head to the second student. Continue this action on down the line.
- When the person at the end of the line receives the animal, have him or her run to the beginning of the line and pass it down the line again as before.
- Repeat until the original first person has returned to the first place in line.
- The first team to have the person return to the beginning of the line is the winner.

Tissue Relay

- Have the teams line up as in the Candy Relay.
- Give each student a straw.
- Give the first student in each line a sheet of facial tissue.
- Have the student with the tissue hold it to his straw by drawing in his breath. Then have him pass the tissue to the next student in line.
- The tissue can only be passed to the next player by the straws.
- If the tissue falls to the floor, it must be picked up using only the straw.
- The first team to get the tissue to the end of the line wins.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY

How good and pleasant it is
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Psalm 133:1

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Review the scripture memory verse that was given during the previous class.
2. Practice the verse together as a group, encouraging the students to have the verse completely memorized by the next class.
3. OPTION: Allow the students to stay in their teams and take turns saying the memory verse with each person saying one word at a time.

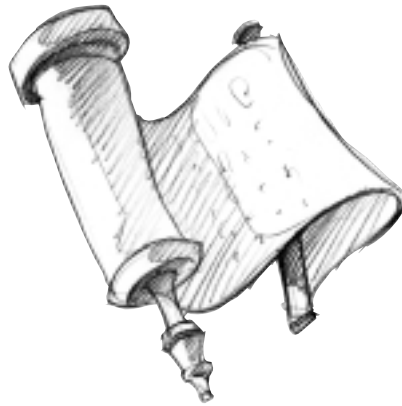
WEEKLY CHALLENGE AND SNACK TIME

If your students bring a snack, allow them to eat while you remind them of the challenge for the week.

Ask each student to identify either: (1) one person in his or her life with whom he or she tends to have conflict (e.g. brother or sister, bully at school) or (2) someone in the preteen class that he or she doesn't know well. Have the students make and carry out a plan for: (1) resolving the conflict with that person this week or (2) getting to know that person better this week.

CONCLUSION

End the class with a prayer.



WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Select one person with whom you generally have conflict or someone in your preteen class that you don't know well. Make a plan to resolve your differences with the first person or to get to know the second person better. Carry out that plan during the week.



BUILDING BLOCKS

8	9	10	
4	5	6	7
1 PRAY	2	3	

BUILDING BLOCKS
Answer Key

Verses	What Nehemiah Did	Building Block
1. 1:4	prayed	pray
2. 1:4	mourned and fasted	be sad about disunity
3. 2:1-6	asked the king for a leave of absence and materials to rebuild the wall	be radical about building unity
4. 2:13-15	examined the walls to determine the extent of the problem (like Jesus clearing the temple in Mark 11:11, 15-16)	take time to evaluate the problem
5. 2:16-18	shared his dream of rebuilding the wall with the people of Jerusalem	share your dream of unity with others
6. 3:1-4	had each family work on one part of the wall	teamwork
7. 4:6	inspired the people to work with all their hearts	be wholehearted
8. 4:12-14	encouraged the people to trust in God	encourage others
9. 4:16-18	kept the people on battle alert	stay alert
10. 4:19-20	made a plan to handle enemy attacks	make a plan
11. 5:9-11	made the nobles and officials stop exacting usury	get rid of sin
12. 5:17-18	shared his food and home with other people	use your strengths to build others up
13. 6:1-4	refused to stop working/be distracted from his work	never give up

THE END RESULT: 6:15-16! (Have one of the teachers read these verses powerfully.)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

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PSALM 133:1

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Select one person with whom you generally have conflict or someone in your preteen class that you don't know well. Make a plan to resolve your differences with the first person or to get to know the second person better. Carry out that plan during the week.