



## TODAY'S SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

### TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

#### Makin' Plans

Nehemiah Plans to Rebuild the Wall  
Nehemiah 1:1-2:18

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What around you needs  
to be done?

### TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Don't wait for someone else  
to do what needs to be done.

### LARGE GROUP SUPPLIES

- Three flashlights
- Two raised platforms
- Cardboard boxes, all sizes
- Two tarps
- Two chairs
- Two blankets
- Two lengths of rope

### STORY SUPPLIES

- Cardboard Boxes to make a good-size wall
- Flashlight

### PRELUDE: Setting the tone for the experience

See the **Getting Ready** pages at the end of this document for a detailed description of what you'll need for today. In the **Prelude** folder of your curriculum, you'll find a variety of other resources to help you prepare.

### SMALL GROUP

**15**  
MIN

#### SOCIAL: Providing time for fun interaction

Just for Fun  
Opening Activity

### LARGE GROUP

**35**  
MIN

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- MONTHLY CHALLENGE - INITIATIVE
  - Shares stories each week with your groups that showed someone who has initiative.

#### WORSHIP:

- THE BEST IS YET TO COME
- GOOD GRACE

### SMALL GROUP

**25**  
MIN



WEEK  
**ONE**  
SEPTEMBER 2021

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

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WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

## TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

### Makin' Plans

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Nehemiah 1:1–2:18

## TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What around you needs  
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## TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Don't wait for someone else  
to do what needs to be done.

## MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

Work at everything you do with  
all your heart. Work as if you  
were working for the Lord.  
Colossians 3:23a, NIRV

## MONTHLY LIFE APP

Initiative—Seeing what needs  
to be done and doing it

## BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

## LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

**AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP**

## WORSHIP

*Worship Leaders enter*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** "Wow, I've been waiting all week for this! It's time for us to lift our voices and worship our amazing God.

**AUDIO: THE BEST IS YET TO COME**

**AUDIO: GOOD GRACE**

*Host enters . . .*

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN (30- OR 60-SECOND VERSION)**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME**

## WELCOME

*Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week, the latest video game or movie launches, back-to-school or sporting events, and so on. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.*

*The Host enters holding a flashlight.*

## OPENER

**HOST:** "Hello, and welcome to Mission! We're blasting off this morning, launching into what I think is the coolest thing we've done here yet—exploring the vast unknown and charting mysterious and fascinating new discoveries. It's almost as if we're . . ."



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10 MINUTES

*The lights suddenly go off.*

**AUDIO: "INTERSTELLAR JOURNEY" FROM MUSIC FOR SPACE**

*The Host flips on the flashlight, shining it around the room.*

“. . . on a mission!”

*Move around the room slowly, as if in outer space. Talk to the group and shine the flashlight on those who give responses to questions.*

“I love space—the bigness, the majesty of it! It’s the easiest way for me to feel the overwhelming size and scope of just how massively creative God is! Is there anyone out there who would love to go to space? Where would you go? *(Pause for responses)* Do you think it’s dangerous? What do you think is out there? *(Pause for responses).*”

“Space is pretty cold and, for the most, part pretty empty—but we’re told there are *lots* of dangers we just don’t know about and probably can’t even imagine. For example, scientists have discovered a planet called K2-141b where it rains rocks and the oceans are literally made of lava! You’re definitely going to need some protection!”

“Coincidentally, I just *happen* to have the materials to build a few shelters on either side of the room. Who’s up for a friendly competition in which the losers could possibly end up burning alive in a fiery ray of blazing hot plasma?”

*Have two Small Group Leaders take their positions on the ladders with flashlights. Move to one build area and explain the competition.*

“Each team has a set of building materials. It’s going to be your job to construct a shelter that will protect you from the harsh environments on K2-141b or, as I lovingly call it, ‘The Lava Planet of Extreme Death.’ Your shelter must be free-standing, meaning you can’t just hold it up. The shelter has to stand on its own. Also, you must use all of the materials, and all of your team members must fit inside the shelter!

“Our twin suns, [Name of Leader 1] and [Name of Leader 2], are coming up over the horizon. Every 10 seconds, the blazing hot beam will move closer to hitting you and your crew. It’s your job to finish the shelter, get everyone inside, before the light vaporizes you and your entire team! Let’s pick two teams, start the timer, and let’s see who is safe. . . and *who is melted!*”

*Choose two teams of five, and when you start the competition, start the repeating 10 second timer and the music.*

**AUDIO: "ODIN'S SWORD"**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO: 10-SECOND REPEATING COUNTDOWN**

*Run the game. Keep the energy up in the Large Group by getting them to cheer on the volunteers. When the flashlights hit the build areas, declare winners.*

“You did it! You survived K2-141b! Now all we have to do is figure out how to cross the ocean of lava.



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## COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Communicator enters. A wall of cardboard boxes is preset on the left side of the stage. Communicator will interact with this wall throughout the story.*

### INTRODUCTION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Good morning, everyone! Great to see you all this morning!"

*Note: Edit the following paragraph based on how your specific community was impacted during the 2020-2021 school year.*

"It's September, and that means back to school! I know, I know, for some—or most—of you, the thought of school elicits a collective groan. Some of you have been virtual for over a year. Some of you haven't seen the inside of a real classroom in months. ZOOM or Google Classroom learning or maybe cramming a week's worth of homework on a Sunday night."

"I don't know about you, but one thing I learned throughout the past year or so is that I really missed people. I missed hanging out. I didn't realize what I had until it was totally gone!"

"Another strange side effect of the pandemic was seeing things completely change because there weren't people to mess them up. For example, rivers, waterways, and canals started clearing up, because there weren't people or boats to kick up debris. Wildlife started returning to areas where they were scared off by people and machinery. Sea life flourished because people weren't out fishing. Air pollution was down worldwide because factories were shut down and people weren't driving. And the craziest thing? According to manufacturing.net, 'Seismic noise fell by as much as 50 percent in some areas. Reduced travel and industrial activity mean fewer vibrations in the Earth's crust. With less noise, scientists could identify and predict events like earthquakes more accurately.' Ridiculously enough, all of that sheltering in place did some work to clean up the planet."

"But before the pandemic, things didn't look so rosy. Let me ask you—and I want you to be honest—how many of you would just walk by a cup, or a napkin, or trash on the ground or in your own house because it's not yours to throw away? (Pause for hands up or a few responses.)"

"What about a shopping cart you find in the middle of a parking lot? Or a playground that is falling apart? What kinds of things would you walk right past because you think, 'Eh, they've got people who take care of that stuff. It's not my problem.'"

*Take a moment and discuss this with a few kids from the Large Group.*

### TENSION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "I'm sure there are lots of times when we've all thought to ourselves, they'll take care of it. And whatever we happen to be seeing at the time, that can be classified as an S.E.P. (Pause.) That stands for 'Someone Else's Problem.' Someone else, some 'they,' will handle it. It's not yours, after all. You didn't make the mess. Not your fault. It's an S.E.P."



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"Let's be honest. We can be pretty selfish sometimes. We care about our own needs and don't even see what might need to be done around us. Dishes in the sink, a pile of laundry, that stuff outside your room or on the stairs that's been literally sitting there for months and you step over it every time—you see it but do nothing. Sometimes, we might even see what needs to be done but assume that someone else will take care of it. It's not our job, right? 'They'll' take care of it. (beat) It's an S.E.P."

"But what if you were 'they'? Hear me out. What if you were the one who saw something and did something about it? What if you didn't wait for someone else to take care of the problem staring you in the face? Could you even make a difference? Could one person actually make things better?"

"These are great questions, and they're at the heart of the Bible story this morning. It's so important to God's One Big Story that this guy even has a book in the Bible named after him. His name is Nehemiah; let's check it out!"

## TRUTH

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Nehemiah is actually written in a very cool way; it's in first person. Some books of the Bible are letters to other people and others are accounts of what Jesus did, but this one reads like a diary, straight from the hand of Nehemiah. Listen to the first entry:"

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 1:1-2 (NirV) and read.*

*"I was in the fort of Susa. I was there in the 20th year that Artaxerxes was king. It was in the month of Kislev. At that time Hanani came from Judah with some other men. He was one of my brothers. I asked him and the other men about the Jews who were left alive in Judah. They had returned from Babylon. I also asked him about Jerusalem."*

"It's almost like, 'Dear diary, here's where I was, and here's who I saw, and here's what I said,' right? After being taken captive for 70 years, some of God's people had been allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Nehemiah was Jewish, but he was still living in Persia. He held a high-ranking position in the royal court of Persia. He was employed by King Artaxerxes himself as cupbearer."

"A cupbearer is kind of like a bodyguard but with food. People were always plotting against the king, and to ensure his food wasn't poisoned, the king would have someone else taste it first. If they didn't die from taking a sip of the drink or eating the food, all was good. Nehemiah was trusted."

"Even though Nehemiah hadn't ever been to Jerusalem, his heart and thoughts were still with his homeland. When his brother, Hanani, returned from a trip to Jerusalem, Nehemiah asked how things were going—a chance to get some news about friends and fellow Jews in the city."

"The news, though, wasn't very good."

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 1:3 (NirV) and read.*

*"[Hanani] and the men with him said to me, 'Some of the people who returned are still alive. They are back in the land of Judah. But they are having a hard time. They are ashamed. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down. Its gates have been burned with fire.'"*

"The wall of Jerusalem. Broken down. I'm not sure you all understand what this means."



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*Walk over to the cardboard box wall.*

"The wall surrounding Jerusalem had stood for hundreds of years. The wall was both a protection against enemies and a monument of blessing from God. The walls were impressive. However, when the Babylonian Empire conquered and destroyed Jerusalem, the people were scattered and the city was left in ruins. Since then, the Persian Empire had conquered the Babylonian Empire. And remember—Nehemiah worked for the King of Persia."

"The big, strong, fortified wall now laid in ruins."

*Knock over the cardboard wall. Make sure nothing is left stacked. When finished, leave that area and move away.*

"And a city without walls could never prosper. The people there would live in constant fear of being attacked. This news affected Nehemiah deeply. Listen to what he wrote.

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 1:4, 6-11 (NIRV) and read.*

*"When I heard about these things, I sat down and wept. For several days I was very sad. I didn't eat any food. And I prayed to the God of heaven. I said, 'Lord, you are the God of heaven . . . Please pay careful attention to my prayer. See how your people are suffering . . . We haven't obeyed the commands, rules and laws you gave your servant Moses. Remember what you told [Moses]. You said, 'If you people are not faithful, I will scatter you among the nations. But if you return to me, I will bring you back. If you obey my commands, I will gather you together again' . . . Lord, they are your people . . . Give me success today when I bring my request to King Artaxerxes.'"*

"Powerful words. Nehemiah was upset, but he didn't go straight to King Artaxerxes. Instead, he prayed every day—for four whole months. He knew how he felt, that something needed to be done, but he also knew that he had to listen to God, pray, and prepare. After months on his knees before the Lord, he was ready.

"Normally, anyone who entered the presence of the King was supposed to be in a happy mood. This time, though, the King immediately noticed something was wrong with Nehemiah. He wrote this in his diary, too. Listen."

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 2:1-2 (NIRV) and read.*

*"Wine was brought in for King Artaxerxes. It was the month of Nisan in the 20th year of his rule. I got the wine and gave it to him. I hadn't been sad in front of him before. But now I was. So the king asked me, 'Why are you looking so sad? You aren't sick. You must be feeling very sad.'" I was really afraid."*

"You have to understand, people were put to death for addressing the King in the wrong way. This guy had a reputation for not messing around. Nehemiah took a deep breath and addressed the King in a polite but passionate way. These are Nehemiah's words:"

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 2:3-5 (NIRV) and read.*

*"I said to the king, 'May you live forever! Why shouldn't I look sad? The city where my people of long ago are buried has been destroyed. And fire has burned up its gates.'" The king said to me, 'What do you want?' I prayed to the God of heaven. Then I answered the king, 'Are you pleased with me, King Artaxerxes? If it pleases you, send me to Judah. Let me go to the city of Jerusalem. That's where my people are buried. I want to rebuild it.'"*



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"Guys. This was SUPER bold. The King of Persia, the king of the empire that had conquered the Babylonians who had destroyed Jerusalem, was listening to this Jewish person ask him to go rebuild the very city that had been conquered and made a part of his empire! Nehemiah asked God for the right words, and God helped him."

"The king, sitting next to his wife, the queen, looked intrigued—but he didn't immediately order Nehemiah's death. God was working on the king's heart, right then and there, softening it and allowing Artaxerxes to hear Nehemiah's plea."

"But listen. Nehemiah wasn't finished being bold. It wasn't just that he asked to go back and rebuild it . . . he was going to ask that Artaxerxes basically pay for it."

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 2:6-8a (NIRV) and read.*

*"The queen was sitting beside the king. He turned and asked me, 'How long will your journey take? When will you get back?' It pleased the king to send me. So, I chose a certain time. I also said to him, 'If it pleases you, may I take some letters with me? I want to give them to the governors of the land west of the Euphrates River. Then they'll help me travel safely through their territory until I arrive in Judah. May I also have a letter to Asaph? He takes care of the royal park. I want him to give me some logs so I can make beams out of them. I want to use them for the gates of the fort that is by the temple. Some of the logs will also be used in the city wall. And I'll need some for the house I'm going to live in.'"*

"Nehemiah was like, 'Hey, King, I'd like to go do this. Oh, and by the way, can I have this? And this, too? And these things? And this over here? And this?' The King could've been totally annoyed with all of these requests and ordered Nehemiah to be punished. But he wasn't. And he didn't. God had moved the king's heart and God had given Nehemiah such favor with the king that he gave Nehemiah everything he asked for—officers, horsemen, letters of passage, spending money—for his journey to Jerusalem."

"Nehemiah set out immediately after talking with the king for Jerusalem. It wasn't an easy journey—the distance between Babylon and Jerusalem was 2700 kilometers. That's over 1600 miles! It would be like walking or riding a horse from Philadelphia to Denver! However, with the king's (and God's) help, Nehemiah made it all the way back to his homeland. To Jerusalem."

*Cross back to the knocked down cardboard box wall.*

"When Nehemiah arrived, he was heartbroken. It was as if he came back to his home and it had all burned down. Everything was in shambles, and people were saddened. However, he noticed that everyone was simply stepping over the stones or walking around the piles. No one was doing anything to solve the problem right in front of them."

"Nehemiah didn't start working right away. He knew he needed a plan. He stayed in the city for three days, just watching. Looking. Observing."

**LIGHTS: STAGE LIGHTS DIM TO 10%**

*Communicator turns on a flashlight.*

"Then, in the middle of the night, he, a few trusted friends, and a donkey went out to get a close-up look at what he was facing. He needed to know the scope of the project he was about to take on."



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*Move around the cardboard boxes, surveying the damage.*

"At last, Nehemiah got a real good look at the devastation. Jagged piles of rock lay everywhere. The gates were gone with scorched, gaping holes in their place. He wrote about it in verse 13."

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 2:13-15 (NIRV) and read.*

*"That night I went out through the Valley Gate. I went toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate. I checked out the walls of Jerusalem. They had been broken down. I also checked the city gates. Fire had burned them up. I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool. But there wasn't enough room for my donkey to get through. It was still night. I went up the Kidron Valley. I kept checking the wall. Finally, I turned back. I went back in through the Valley Gate."*

"He hadn't talked to anyone else about what he was thinking—no officials, priests, nobles, no one. Plus, he hadn't told any other Jews living in the city about his plan either. After seeing the damage, he knew he couldn't do this alone. It was a HUGE undertaking. Only God could help him with it."

"Nehemiah gathered the officials together and gave a very passionate speech."

*Open the Bible to Nehemiah 2:17-18 and read.*

*"I said to them, 'You can see the trouble we're in! Jerusalem has been destroyed. Fire has burned up its gates. Come on. Let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Then people won't be ashamed anymore.' I also told them how my gracious God was helping me. And I told them what the king had said to me."*

"Nehemiah inspired those he talked to—and they agreed to do whatever it took to start this massive job to rebuild the wall."

## APPLICATION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "I think one of the coolest things about this story is how God was with Nehemiah the whole time. He gave him the right words to say to the King. He helped him across the hard journey to get to Jerusalem. He moved on the hearts of the officials and the people of Jerusalem to inspire them to help with the wall."

"And God was going to help Nehemiah create a plan to make it all happen. God was with Nehemiah, and He was helping him accomplish a humungous task. God's with us, too, and He can do big things through us just the same!"

"The first step? Noticing that something needs to be done. The next step? Doing something about it. Showing initiative means getting things done, not waiting for someone else to do it. That's what Nehemiah did when he started rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. Don't just see what needs to be done, *do something about it.*"

"When Jesus saw a need, He did something about it. He healed people who needed healing. He taught people who needed to learn. And Jesus took care of our greatest need when He died on the cross for our sins."

"See a need, fill a need. Jesus did it for us. Now we can do it for others!"





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## LANDING

**COMMUNICATOR:** "As you head to your Small Groups, think about this question:

### **SLIDE: KEY QUESTION**

**"What around you needs to be done?"** What projects could you do that would fix a problem? What things, like the wall, are laying in ruins that you could take care of? You'll dig deeper in your Small Group, but before we head there, let's pray and ask God to show us things that maybe we haven't noticed before."

*Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.*

**AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS EXIT.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP**



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## GETTING READY

HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET READY FOR THIS WEEK

### STORY: COMMUNICATING GOD'S TRUTH IN ENGAGING WAYS (25 MINUTES)

### WORSHIP: INVITING PEOPLE TO RESPOND TO GOD (10 MINUTES)

#### 1. WELCOME/OPENER

##### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- Two Leaders
- Three flashlights
- Two ladders
- Cardboard boxes, all sizes
- Two tarps
- Two chairs
- Two blankets
- Two lengths of rope

##### MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

- Upbeat music to use as kids enter the room
- "Interstellar Journey" from Music for Space Travelers
- "Odin's Sword" by Fred Bouchal

##### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Slide
- Memory Verse Slide

##### OPTIONAL VIDEOS (AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE THROUGH THE 252 MEDIA PACKAGE):

- Theme Loop
- Countdown (30- or 60-second version)
- Theme
- Optional Video: 10-second Repeating Countdown

##### WHAT YOU DO:

- Download and print this week's tech sheet for everyone helping with Large Group.
- Download the slides or optional videos and have them ready to use. If you do not have screen capabilities, you have Orange's permission to enlarge and print the slides on paper.
- Download music from a resource such as iTunes® and have it ready to play. *Note: Legally a song belongs to*

*the songwriter/composer who created it and the publisher who markets it. Performance rights organizations (PROs) license public performances (live or recorded) of their members' music. Usually, but not always, PROs give general permission for performances in worship services. We recommend you obtain permission from the PRO representing the song or the publisher of the song you wish to play. PROs in the U.S. are ASCAP, BMI, and SESAC. For a list of PROs in your part of the world: [www.iamusic.com](http://www.iamusic.com). Look at the copyright on the CD or sheet music to discover the PRO or publisher of the song. It is up to you to make sure your church has permission to perform or play a recording of a song.*

- *Optional:* Download a countdown video from a royalty-free site. Load it into your presentation software and have it ready to play during the Opener. You could also keep time on a smartphone or watch. *Note: Some presentation software such as ProPresenter have a countdown clock built into the program that you can overlay on a still image.*
- A 252 Media Package is available for purchase to go along with each curriculum tier. These graphic motion loops are included in the package. For more information, visit [Store.ThinkOrange.com](http://Store.ThinkOrange.com).
- You'll need as many cardboard boxes as possible, all shapes and sizes, from shoe boxes to Amazon boxes to refrigerator boxes. Assemble these boxes in the largest stacked wall you can create, from floor to ceiling if possible—this is going to represent the wall around Jerusalem and will stay for the entire month.
- Gather the remaining boxes, tarps, chairs, blankets, and ropes, and create two separate "build areas" for the Opening game. Give one flashlight to the Host and the other two flashlights to two other leaders. Explain the game to the leaders ahead of time, and during play, have the leaders stand on the ladders to act as the "twin suns" incrementally shining beams of light closer and closer to the build areas.

#### 2. WORSHIP

##### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Worship Leader(s)