1. The royal cupbearer receives bad news (445 BC)
   a) Nehemiah 1:1-3 More than 90 years have passed since the first group of Jewish exiles returned from Babylon, and more than a decade since Ezra returned with the second group of exiles. Why has their progress in rebuilding Jerusalem been so slow?
   b) Nehemiah 1:4 What can we learn about Nehemiah from his reaction to this bad news from Jerusalem?
   c) How does Nehemiah’s reaction to bad news differ from those who lack a close relationship with God?

2. Nehemiah’s prayer
   a) Nehemiah 1:5-11 What impresses you the most as you listen to Nehemiah’s prayer?
   b) What promises of God have brought comfort and hope to you when facing hardship or trials?

3. Nehemiah’s prayer is answered (4 months later)
   a) Nehemiah 2:1-3 Why was it dangerous for Nehemiah to be sad in the presence of the King?
   b) Nehemiah 2:4-8 What important lessons can we learn from Nehemiah’s response to the King?
   c) Sometimes God’s answers to our prayers seem delayed from our perspective. How can we learn to wait patiently for the Lord’s perfect timing? Psalm 27:13-14
   d) Think of other Bible characters who were bold and courageous when God opened a door of opportunity for them.
   e) What opportunities has God given you to serve Him and make a difference in the lives of those around you?

4. The royal cupbearer embarks on a mission
   a) Nehemiah 2:9-10 Contrast the reaction of Sanballat and Tobiah with that of Nehemiah.
   b) Name other men and women who experienced opposition when they sought to fulfill the mission given to them by God.

5. Nehemiah prepares for his special assignment
   a) What is the significance of the 3 days mentioned in Nehemiah 2:11 (see Esther 4:15-16, Acts 9:8-9)?
   b) Nehemiah 2:12-16 Why did Nehemiah assess the condition of the city under the cover of darkness?
   c) Nehemiah 2:17-18 What important information did Nehemiah include in his challenge to local officials and residents of Jerusalem?
   d) How did Nehemiah respond to ongoing opposition? Nehemiah 2:19-20
   e) What can we learn from the example of Nehemiah?