



WEEK 4 HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

GOALS

THE BIG IDEA

God-sized goals require
God-sized gratitude.

THE BIBLE

Nehemiah 8, 9:5-31, 10:28-39, 12:27, 13:19-21;
I Thessalonians 5:18

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

DISCUSSION | What have you achieved?

- Welcome to our final week of Goals! We've been talking a lot about setting and achieving our goals — big goals, small goals, and even God-sized goals.
- Everyone in this room has achieved something before. Maybe you haven't changed the world (yet) but you've done some pretty cool things, like . . .
 - Winning a championship.
 - Improving your grades.
 - Learning a new skill.
 - Finishing a big project.
 - Making it through a big challenge.
- **So what have you achieved recently?** Don't be shy! This is the time to brag!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give your students a moment to share their achievements with the people sitting near them.*

QUESTION | What did the person next to you achieve?

- Now that we've bragged about ourselves, let's brag about each other. **What has the person next to you achieved?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to share with the group about what the person next to them has achieved. As students' achievements are shared, celebrate together!*

STORY | Talk about a goal you achieved and who helped you achieve it.

- It feels pretty good to be celebrated for our achievements, doesn't it?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you achieved a big goal with the help of other people. Maybe your baseball team won the championship, or your big sister tutored you for weeks before your final exam, or your friends*



got together to help you complete a big project. The goal of this story is to show students how important it is to be grateful for people who help you achieve your goals, and that you couldn't achieve your goals alone. So you can either tell a story about a time when you failed to be grateful for people who helped you, or you can speak hypothetically and ask students to consider how selfish you would have been if you hadn't been grateful.

- Let's say your biggest goal in life was to climb a mountain. So your family and friends all chipped in to buy you mountain-climbing gear. They trained with you. They jumped on a plane with you. They climbed the whole mountain with you! At the top, they even grabbed your hand and pulled you to the top because you were kind of tired. Pretty awesome, right? But what if, that whole time, you never once thought to say, "thank you"? Not a very good look, right?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **Tell us about something you've achieved that wouldn't have been possible without the help of other people.**
 - *** Beyond our words, what are some creative ways we say "thank you" to each other?**

VIDEO | "Thank You" in Multiple Languages

- We've been talking a lot about setting and achieving our goals, but we couldn't wrap up this conversation without talking about these important words . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show a short video that shows people saying "thank you" in multiple languages. You could play a video like [this one](#) or [this one](#). Or, if you have people in your community who speak other languages, you could ask them to send you quick video clips that you edit together. You can either play the video all the way through or pause after each language and have students repeat the phrase they just heard.*
- "Thank you" is a phrase you'll say pretty often, but today we're going to talk about how important this phrase is when it comes to our goals — big goals, small goals, and God-sized goals too.

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?*

ACTIVITY | Fill-In-The-Blank Recap

- For the last few weeks, we've been following the story of a man in the Bible who had a big goal. Today we're going to hear how that story ends.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Recap the story so far, but ask students to fill in the blanks with easy key words like "Nehemiah," "Jerusalem," or "walls." Here are some of the main points you probably want to hit . . .*
 - *Long ago, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by an enemy army.*
 - *God promised the Jewish people they would one day return to Jerusalem.*
 - *The Jewish people slowly began rebuilding Jerusalem.*
 - *Although people were living in Jerusalem, Nehemiah learned the walls were falling down.*



- *Nehemiah wanted to repair the walls to honor God and protect his people.*
 - *The king allowed Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem to build a team that would rebuild the walls, but he faced a lot of opposition.*
 - *Despite mockery and threats of violence, Nehemiah and his team continued rebuilding the walls.*
- In case you forgot, there were two big reasons why Nehemiah cared so much about rebuilding these walls, and it wasn't because he had nothing better to do.
 - There was a practical problem. Without walls, God's people would be vulnerable to another attack.
 - But there was also a spiritual problem. The city of Jerusalem was deeply connected with the Jewish people's relationship with God. Rebuilding the walls would be a way for them to honor God, but leaving them in shambles would be a sin against God.
- Nehemiah was eager to see the nation of Israel obey and turn back to God, so the sooner he could complete the wall, the better.
- After months of praying, planning, preparing, recruiting a team, and standing strong in the face of opposition, the walls were finally rebuilt in just 52 days!
- The completion of this building project was a huge deal. Nehemiah had accomplished his goal and that was worth celebrating! So let's take a look at how Nehemiah celebrated his achievements and see if we can learn something.

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 8

- To celebrate the completion of the walls, Nehemiah threw a party. But it wasn't a party for himself. He teamed up with Ezra (the city's priest and teacher of the law and Scripture) and they organized a big worship festival to honor God rather than themselves.
- Ezra read Scripture to the residents of Jerusalem for hours and hours, leading everyone in worship and prayer. Then Nehemiah took the mic (okay, no, there wasn't actually a microphone) and told everyone to celebrate.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Nehemiah 8, especially verses 10-12.*
- Not only were the walls completed, but the Jewish people were turning their hearts back to God. It was everything Nehemiah had hoped for when he set out to complete his goal way back in chapter one. **So when Nehemiah's goal was achieved, he celebrated with joy, and invited others to join him.**

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 9:5-31

- This festival went on for an entire week and ended with a time of worship and praise for what God had done.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Nehemiah 9:5-31.*
- The Jewish people may have done the physical work to build the wall, but they knew the credit wasn't theirs. It was God's! They may have been working hard for 52 days, but God had been making and fulfilling promises to them since the beginning of time, and the completion of these walls was just one more fulfilled promise to add to the list.
- **When their goal was achieved, they gave God the credit.** Here's how . . .
 - They praised God.
 - They remembered what God had done for them.
 - They acknowledged their own shortcomings, mistakes, and sins.



- They said "thank you."

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 10:28-39

- Even after a full week, the Jewish people still weren't done celebrating and showing their gratitude for all God had done. They had celebrated, they had given God the credit, but here's what they did next . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Nehemiah 10:28-39.*
- **When their goal was achieved, they made promises to God.** They had already thanked God with their words and their songs, but this was a deeper level of gratitude. With these promises, the Jewish people thanked God with their actions.
 - "Repentance" is a word you hear a lot in the Bible. Some people think it means to apologize, but it's more than that. When you "repent," you completely turn away from your old behaviors and choose to behave differently.
 - The Jewish people understood they could show their gratitude to God by "repenting" — changing their behavior and turning toward God.

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 12:27-44

- But the Jewish people still weren't done! They knew God had done something big for them, so they wanted to do something big for God in return.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Nehemiah 12:27-44. As you read, use a white board or pre-made slides on a screen to make three lists:*
 - *The people who expressed gratitude to God.*
 - *The instruments people used to express gratitude to God.*
 - *The actions people took to express gratitude to God.*
- Over the last few weeks, we've mentioned that sometimes the story of Nehemiah is filled with a lot of seemingly unimportant or boring details.
 - Why do we need to know who played the harp, whose son showed up, or how many choirs there were?
 - The fact that Nehemiah takes 18 verses to describe the details of this huge celebration should be a clue to pay attention. Nehemiah probably didn't care if we remembered any of these details — he just wanted us to imagine how grateful they were for everything God had done.
- What a way to express gratitude to God — tons of people, tons of music, and tons of activity! **When their goal was achieved, they worshiped God together.**

GOD-SIZED GRATITUDE

- The goal of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem began with Nehemiah. In the beginning, it was a goal shared between him and God, and no one else. But over time . . .
 - Nehemiah's God-sized goal outgrew Nehemiah — he needed more people involved.
 - As more people got involved, passion grew for this God-sized goal. Nehemiah wasn't alone anymore in his desire to see his people turn back to God.
 - As more people got involved, Nehemiah's gratitude had to grow too. When his goal was between him and God, he only had God to thank for any progress he made. But when the entire community got involved, Nehemiah had to extend his gratitude to them too — so maybe that's why he mentioned so many people by name throughout this book.



- When they finally achieved their goal, Nehemiah wasn't the only one celebrating. By the time the walls were rebuilt, the entire city was worshipping God together.
- **When their goal was achieved, Nehemiah was grateful to God and to his community.**
- As Nehemiah's goal grew, his gratitude for both God and his community had to grow too. Because **God-sized goals require God-sized gratitude.**

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What's one way Nehemiah expressed gratitude that you think we can all learn from?**
 - *** When is it most difficult for you to be grateful? What are some things we can be grateful for even when things don't turn out the way we we'd hoped?**
 - **Read I Thessalonians 5:18. Do you think ungrateful people can become grateful people? If so, how?**

REFLECTION | **Your Goal Updates**

- Throughout this series, we've been inviting you to set some goals — big goals, small goals, and even God-sized goals.
 - First, we said that **big difficulties can inspire God-sized goals**. So if you're looking for a goal to set or a problem to solve, start by looking for the difficulties in the world around you. God might be inviting you to help solve those problems.
 - Then, we said that **you are designed for God-sized goals**. God made you to dream big, but God also gave you everything you need to do the work you're called to do. Between your mind, your skills, your relationships, your resources, and the power of God, you're designed to achieve big things.
 - And then last week we said that **God gives us strength to pursue God-sized goals**, because when we're trying to do something difficult, we will always eventually face opposition. But God gives us the strength to keep going.
- As we close this series today, I want you to think about the goals you've already achieved or are working on achieving — especially the ones you need God's help to complete. Even if your goal is still in progress, there is still something worth celebrating!
- Whatever your goals are, how can you grow your gratitude right now?
 - **What can you celebrate with joy?** What progress have you already made? How have you grown? How have you seen God work? You don't need to wait until the end of a project to be joyful about its progress!
 - **How can you give God credit?** Most of the time, when it feels like God isn't working or present with us, it's simply because we haven't noticed all that God is up to. So what's God doing right now? How can you give God credit?
 - **What promises can you make to God?** It's one thing to thank God with our words, but it's another to thank God with our actions. How can you show gratitude for what God has done in you and through you by making God a promise?



- **Who do you need to thank?** Is it God? (Probably!) Is it a friend? A family member? A mentor? Who has helped you grow and achieve your goals recently? And how can you thank them?

RESPONSE | "Made a Way" Balloon Offering

- And one more question: **how can we worship together, saying "thank you" for all that God has done?** I've got an idea.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *You'll need [balloons](#) and permanent markers. If you'd like to use helium, we suggest inflating the balloons before your program and hiding them behind your Goals wall until you're ready. If you won't be using helium, students can inflate the balloons with air and place them on the ground in front of the wall or tape them to the wall. When you're ready for this time of response, play or perform the song ["Made a Way," by Travis Greene](#). During the song, ask students to write a prayer or statement of thanks on a balloon and place it in front of the Goals wall.*
- Even if you feel like you haven't achieved as many goals as you wish you had achieved, there is still so much to be grateful for. God has done so much in you and through you, and this is only the beginning.
 - What's next?
 - What goal is God inviting you to set?
 - When will you begin?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What do you need to thank God for today? What do you need to thank someone else for today?**
 - *** How often do you think you fail to notice, or give credit for, something God has done? How can we learn to do this more often?**
 - **What's one way you can show God gratitude through your actions (and not just your words) this week?**
 - *** What's one "God-sized" goal you're still working on? How can our group help you with that goal moving forward?**