



WEEK 3

HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

GOALS

THE BIG IDEA

God gives us strength to pursue God-sized goals.

THE BIBLE

Nehemiah 3, 4:1-23, 6:9; II Timothy 1:7;
Philippians 4:13

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Going, Going, Gone

- Since we've been busy dreaming, setting goals, and making plans, I've got a few goals for you today. But each of these goals must be completed quickly! After 15 seconds, they're "going, going, gone!"
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, create a list of scavenger-hunt-style challenges for individuals and groups. Break your students into two or more teams and give students 15 seconds per challenge to send at least one person from their team running to the front of the room with the object or people you requested, like . . .*
 - *A student ID with the letter "J" on it.*
 - *A chewed piece of gum.*
 - *Someone wearing black socks.*
 - *A group selfie with an adult leader.*
 - *Enough money to buy a Red Bull and bag of Hot Cheetos or Takis.*
 - *One of your baby pictures.*
 - *A phone with a screenshot of a Bible verse on it.*
 - *Three right shoes tied together.*
 - *Four pens.*

QUESTION | Who's trying to get physically stronger this year?

- We've been talking about setting goals — both regular goals and God-sized goals that we couldn't possibly complete on our own. But before we get to God-sized goals, let's talk about us-sized goals.
- **Is it anyone's goal to get physically stronger this year?**



- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond. Ask each of them what they're doing to get stronger and how they'll know when they've reached their goals.

ACTIVITY | Whooped

- I need at least two volunteers who think they're pretty strong to join me at the front of the room for a challenge.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask your participants to do a [forearm plank](#) and see who can hold it the longest. You can add more endurance challenges (like students holding their arms above their heads, staring without blinking, or staring without smiling), depending on how much time you have.
- Congratulations to all of our participants — you're pretty tough!

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 the most difficult goal you've ever accomplished?**
 - **What's one difficult goal you're working on right now and what challenges are you currently facing?**
 - *** What are some of the ways we might face opposition when trying to achieve a goal?**
 - *** Are you ever your own biggest obstacle when trying to complete a goal? Tell us how!**

GOALS GETS DIFFICULT

- Two weeks ago, we started this series by talking about New Year's resolutions. Did you know that, after two weeks, most people have already given up on their New Year's resolutions? By the end of January, fewer than 25% of people are still committed to their goals.
- That's because achieving our goals is hard work! Even when we make detailed plans and have the best intentions, it takes strength, commitment, and perseverance to follow through.
- I don't know what your goals are right now. Maybe they're . . .
 - Spiritual goals.
 - Physical goals.
 - Mental goals.
 - Relational goals.
 - Maybe they're even God-sized goals.
- Whatever goals you have right now, I've got some good news and some bad news.
 - The bad news: if you haven't already, you're going to experience opposition, frustration, and a lack of motivation on your way to achieving your goals.
 - The good news: there's hope when your goals are too much to handle on your own.
- When things get difficult and you feel weak or discouraged, how do you keep pursuing your goals and finish strong? Let's see what the story of Nehemiah has to show us.



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

ACTIVITY | And Then What Happened?

- If you weren't here last week, let's see if we can work together to get you up to speed. It all started with the city of Jerusalem — the home of the Jewish people.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Ask students to help you recap the story so far by repeatedly asking the question, "And then what happened?" If they skip anything important, ask more questions until all of the main points are covered.*
 - *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.*
 - *For months, Nehemiah prayed, planned, and prepared.*
 - *Nehemiah asked the king to let him repair the walls. The king said yes, so Nehemiah recruited a team to help — but not everyone was excited about this idea.*

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 3

- Once he arrived in Jerusalem, Nehemiah got to work. He convinced tons of people living in Jerusalem to work together and repair the city walls.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Quickly summarize Nehemiah 3, listing some of the people involved and how they contributed.*
- Maybe you're wondering why all of these boring details are in the Bible, but here's the incredible thing I see in these details: there were so many people involved! This wasn't a project Nehemiah could have done on his own. This was a team effort.

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 4:1-3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Nehemiah 4:1-3.*
- Let's talk about bullies. These guys . . .
 - Called them weak.
 - Mocked the quality of their work.
 - Mocked their pain.
 - Mocked their beliefs.
 - Tried to crush their hope.
- Even though Nehemiah and his team were being obedient to God, they still had to deal with haters.

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 4:4-6

- Let's see how Nehemiah and his team handled this opposition and frustration.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Nehemiah 4:4-6.*
- There's so much we could talk about here, but here's what I notice:
 - **Nehemiah didn't get distracted.** He didn't fight with these guys. He didn't add to their drama. He didn't even respond.



- **Nehemiah took it to God.** He asked God to hear his prayers and make it right. And he wasn't afraid to be honest with God about what he was feeling — he wanted those guys to be punished!
- **Nehemiah kept going.** He and his team kept building, no matter what those guys had to say. They rebuilt the wall to half of its original height, and everyone poured their hearts into it! That's amazing!

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 4:7-23

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize Nehemiah 4:7-23.*
- After so much opposition, the strength of Nehemiah's team was giving out. These bullies were relentless, but Nehemiah was committed (and strategic).
 - **Nehemiah took it to God (again).** He'd been in constant communication with God since the very beginning, and this moment was no different.
 - **Nehemiah prioritized rest.** He knew he and his team needed rest if they were going to have the strength to keep going, so he found a way for them to work in shifts.
 - **Nehemiah chose community.** Nehemiah's team committed to protecting and supporting each other for as long as their opposition lasted.
 - **Nehemiah kept going (again).** The job was a little more difficult than it had been in the beginning, but Nehemiah never stopped. He kept moving forward, adjusting his plan, and getting creative in order to continue their work.
- I wish I could tell you Nehemiah's opposition ended there, but it didn't. He faced even more obstacles in chapters five and six — both from his enemies and from his fellow Jewish people.

SCRIPTURE | Nehemiah 6:9

- At one point, Nehemiah received a series of terrifying letters and death threats. These men did not want Nehemiah to finish this wall, but watch how Nehemiah reacts.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Nehemiah 6:9.*
- "Strengthen my hands," Nehemiah prayed. He could have asked God for anything, but he simply asked for strength to finish the work.

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 dealt with opposition? How can you apply that to your own life?**
 - *** How can opposition help our faith grow stronger?**

STORY | Talk about a time you needed God's strength.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Talk about a time when you needed God's strength to persevere through opposition. Your opposition may have come from people (like it did in Nehemiah's case), or your opposition may have come from yourself or your circumstances. You might talk about a specific goal God led you to complete, or a spiritual discipline you were trying to establish, or a situation that became difficult to navigate. Share what you were experiencing and how God answered your prayer for strength.*



SCRIPTURE | II Timothy 1:7

- Hundreds of years after Nehemiah lived, there was another man with a God-sized goal: to spread the good news of Jesus to the whole world. His name was Paul and he was one of the leaders of the early church.
- At some point during Paul's ministry, he wrote a letter to a young man named Timothy who he was mentoring to encourage him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read II Timothy 1:7.*
- We all know what it's like to face obstacles, and this is never more true than when we're chasing God-sized goals. Although God never promises the process will be easy, here's what we are promised:
 - We don't need to be afraid.
 - God's Spirit will be with us.
 - God will give us strength.
- Along with strength, Paul mentioned love and self-discipline too. When God gives us God-sized goals, the challenges and opposition we face can be a gift. The resistance helps us . . .
 - Strengthen our faith muscles.
 - Grow in love.
 - Develop grit.
- Just like Nehemiah planned to experience opposition, we should expect to face difficulties when we're pursuing God-sized goals. But here's the good news I promised — no matter what the world throws at us, **God gives us strength to pursue God-sized goals.**

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

VIDEO | Derek Redmond and His Dad Cross the Finish Line

- Sometimes it seems like our challenges become the most difficult just before we cross the finish line. That was certainly true for Derek Redmond, a runner who competed in the 1992 Olympics. Derek planned, prepared, and trained hard, but 250 meters away from the finish line, his hamstring tore.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show a portion of [this video](#) from the 1992 Olympic Games. You can play the clip with the audio or teach while the clip plays silently in the background.*
- At some point, we're going to face opposition that threatens to keep us from achieving our goals. Opposition can feel overwhelming — especially if you're alone. But when you're following Jesus and chasing a God-sized goal, you're never alone. God is with you. God gives you strength. God will even carry you when you can't keep going on your own.

REFLECTION | How to Find Strength

- So what's one of your goals? Are you thinking of something right now?
 - If you're not sure what you think about God or "God-sized goals" right now, that's okay. What I'm going to share with you applies to any kind of opposition, discouragement, or difficulty you might face.
 - If you're not sure you've found a God-sized goal for yourself yet, that's okay too. Your God-sized goal doesn't need to be about changing the whole world. It might be as simple



- (and powerful) as making a difference for Jesus in your school, family, or circle of friends.
- If you think you might have a God-sized goal growing in your heart, that's great! Keep listening, because you're bound to face some opposition to that goal eventually.
 - A few moments ago, we saw how Nehemiah handled opposition. Now what if we took those same tactics Nehemiah used and applied them to our goals?
 - Do you have one of your goals in mind? Is there something you want to do, become, or change, but you're facing opposition? Keep your goal in mind as we think about these five things together.
 - When you need strength to pursue God-sized goals:
 - **TAKE IT TO GOD.** Nehemiah was in constant communication with God, but this was especially true when he was facing opposition. When you're struggling with the goals God has called you to pursue, what would it look like for you to talk to God more regularly? What would you ask for? What would you say?
 - **CHOOSE COMMUNITY.** God gives us strength through the Holy Spirit, but God also gives us strength through community. We weren't designed to pursue God-sized goals alone. We need each other! So when you're facing opposition and losing strength, what would it look like for you to lean on your community? Are you surrounded by people you trust? If not, maybe building that community is your first step.
 - **REST.** Nehemiah asked God for strength to keep going, but he knew he and the rest of his community needed to rest too. We weren't designed to hustle forever. So what would it look like for you to make rest a priority? When you're feeling overwhelmed, weak, or tired, what helps you feel rested and renewed so you can keep going? Is it sleep? Time with friends? Time by yourself? Time away from the internet and your devices?
 - **DON'T GET DISTRACTED.** When you're following God, not everyone will like it or support your God-sized goals. That's okay. It's not your job to please everyone. All you need to worry about is pleasing God and staying close to the people who want what's best for you. So what would this look like for you? Whose voices do you need to learn to ignore?
 - **KEEP GOING.** Take a deep breath in. Now, slowly breathe out. If you can feel that breath, it means you're still here and you have another chance to keep going. Opposition will come. Things will get difficult. But if you know Jesus, you've got the Spirit of God inside you, filling you with strength, power, love, and self-discipline. With God, you can keep going.

RESPONSE | "Enough," by Koryn Hawthorne

- So what's one goal you're working on right now that requires God's strength? Got it? Now, do you believe (like, *really* believe) God can help you reach that goal?
- If your goal honors God or was given to you by God, then yes! God can help you see it through, no matter what comes. Take it from Nehemiah, Paul, and Timothy — **God gives us strength to pursue God-sized goals.**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, place at least one [LEGO® Note Brick](#) under each seat, along with a pen. Have a volunteer standing with a roll of tape near your Goals wall or a wall of your choice. As you close, play or perform the song ["Enough," by Koryn Hawthorne](#).*



While the song is playing, encourage students to write down a goal that requires God's strength, come to the front, and tape it to the wall.

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 God gives us strength when things get difficult?**
 - **Read Philippians 4:13. Do you think God give us strength to complete every goal we set? Why or why not?**
 - *** Think about a goal you're working on right now. Which of the following is most difficult for you and why?**
 - Asking for God's help.
 - Getting help from other people.
 - Resting.
 - Not getting distracted.
 - Persevering.
 - **What's one reason you need God's strength this week and how can our group help?**