



LEADER GUIDE

Unit 10: Surf
Lesson 1: Nehemiah's Heart

OVERVIEW

UNIT OVERVIEW

Lesson 1: Nehemiah's Heart

DISCIPLINE: Lining up with God's heart

KEY VERSES: Nehemiah 1:1-4; 2:12b; 1 John 4:7-9

Lesson 3: Nehemiah's Mouth

DISCIPLINE: Communicating God's will to others

KEY VERSES: Nehemiah 2:1-8; 2:17; 1 Peter 4:11

Lesson 2: Nehemiah's Ears & Eyes

DISCIPLINE: Noticing God's work

KEY VERSES: Nehemiah 2:11-17; John 5:17

Lesson 4: Nehemiah's Hands & Feet

DISCIPLINE: Faith in ACTION

KEY VERSES: Neh 6:10b-16; James 1:22; Matthew 21:28-32

LESSON 1 OVERVIEW

Serving in God's Kingdom is a bit like surfing.

Just as the ocean provides the energy, direction, and timing for a surfer, God provides the guidance, strength, and timing for serving in His Kingdom. Ministry leaders often begin by offering leadership opportunities to preteens, but preteens may approach it for self-centered reasons.

This series aims to reframe their understanding of serving the local church, focusing on partnering with and submitting to God rather than seeking personal fulfillment. The teachings are anchored in 1 Peter 4:10-11, emphasizing that all service should glorify God.

Using Nehemiah as an example, preteens will work throughout the series on planning a "Surv Day" to serve the local church. This first lesson helps preteens take the first step toward this by helping them align their hearts with God's, much like how a surfer aligns with the waves to surf effectively.

LESSON 1 LEADER DEVO

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11

Notice the last line of 1 Peter 4:11: *all glory and dominion belong TO HIM.*

Sometimes there is a thrill in serving others that can lead to self-exaltation. This passage of Scripture serves as a remedy and reminder that this shouldn't be the case.

Sometimes, we might look for a "good job" or a "thank you" after giving of our time in service to the Church, but according to these verses, who should those praises and those accolades be directed toward?

Take a few moments and reset your heart when it comes to serving the preteens at your church. **What is God's heart toward the preteens in your church?** Write your thoughts.



SCHEDULE

Lesson 1: Nehemiah's Heart



01 WARM-UP

10 min

Preteens will play an Opening Game and get a brief overview of today's lesson topic.

Today's Opening Game: Line up Your Board



02 M.A.P.

10 min

Preteens will read through a passage of Scripture on their own. They'll consider what stands out to them from the passage and why it stands out to them. They'll also be given time to talk with God about the passage.

Today's Passage: Nehemiah 1:1-4



03 DISCOVER

20 min

Preteens will learn about spiritual disciplines that will help them draw closer to God. They'll discover the Biblical basis for these disciplines, the purpose and benefit of these disciplines, and the reasons why Christians have practiced these discipline throughout history.

Today's Discovery: What is my heart pointing toward?



04 QUEST

10 min

Preteens will move into action as they practice different ways that they can grow in their own personal relationship with Jesus.

Today's Quest: Aligning Our Hearts with God's



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⌚ 10 min



NOTE: Highlighted words indicate supplies to prepare. These are also listed in the ADMIN GUIDE.

[Slide 01 Surf]

Explain that today is the beginning of a new series called SURF and that you're looking for six surfers to play a game called "Line Up Your Board."

[Slide 02 Line Up Your Board]**[AUDIO 01 Opening Game]**

Call forward six "surfers" and hand them each a surfboard prop.

Explain that in a moment, on the screen, they will see a picture of waves. The surfers' job is to quickly turn their bodies and point their surfboard in the direction that the waves are going.

The last one to have his or her board pointing in the correct direction after each photo is shown is out.

Use **Slides03-05** to demonstrate and practice the ways that the waves point and which direction surfers should stand and point their boards. They'll point their boards and face to the right (**Slide03**), to the left (**Slide04**), toward the audience (**Slide05**).

[Slide 06 Line Up Your Board]

Make sure the surfers understand how to play and answer any questions before beginning the game.

[Slides 07-14 Game Slides]

Show each slide and eliminate the surfer who is the last to point his/her board in the correct direction. The last surfer remaining is the winner. Optionally, award this "surfer" a prize.

NOTE: There are a few extra slides included in case you have a tie or there is uncertainty about who should be eliminated in a couple of the rounds.

[Slide 15 Surf]

Today we're starting a new series called "Surf." It's a series about the ministry of Nehemiah. Has anybody ever heard of Nehemiah from the Bible? (*Look for hands.*)





Nehemiah was a great man of God who did something big, and he did it for God's glory. You might already know this, but there's a whole book in the Bible called Nehemiah that tells the story of what Nehemiah did for God.

[Slide 16 The Book of Nehemiah]

This month, we're going to learn how Nehemiah did something big for God, and at the same time, WE are going to follow Nehemiah's example and do something big for God, too.

The reason this series is called SURF is because when Nehemiah did something great for God, he followed some of the same steps that a surfer follows to catch a gnarly wave. Each week during this series, we'll look at a super obvious surf tip, and then see if we can connect what Nehemiah did with that surf tip.

To help us each week, we'll hear from expert surfer Menehiah. Then, we'll look at a passage from Nehemiah and see if we can connect Menehiah's surf tip with something that Nehemiah did. Let's get started with Menehiah's first super obvious surf tip.

[VIDEO 01 Surf Tip 1]

[Slide 17 Surf Tip 1]

Thank you, Menehiah. Our first surf tip is "Line up with the waves." That makes sense, doesn't it? If the waves are moving this direction (*point right*) and we're pointing our board in this direction (*point left*), we're not going to be able to surf.

Now that we've learned today's surf tip, let's look at a part of the book of Nehemiah from the Bible, and see if we can make a connection between this surf tip and something that Nehemiah did in order to do something great for God.



**[Slide 18 MAP]**

As you're going through M.A.P. time today, see if you can connect what Nehemiah in the Bible did with today's surf tip. Don't worry if you don't see the connection; I'll help you make the connection in a little bit. This time is called M.A.P. time because of the letters M, A, and P. Watch this video, which will help you to understand.

[VIDEO 02 MAP 01]**[Slide 19 MAP Nehemiah 1:1-4]**

There are a few things you should know before you dive into reading Nehemiah for yourself. First, Nehemiah is written from Nehemiah's perspective, so when it says, "I did...whatever," that's Nehemiah telling us what he did.

Also, Nehemiah was alive about 130 years after the Babylonians had invaded Jerusalem. Jerusalem is God's Holy City, and the Babylonians came in with their army, destroyed Jerusalem, and burnt down Solomon's temple. They forced God's people to leave Jerusalem and scattered them throughout other parts of the world. God's people, the Israelites, lived in exile from their homeland for many years until the Babylonians were conquered by the Medes and Persians. The Persian Emperor allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland. Many Jewish people returned to Jerusalem, and they even rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

Also, Nehemiah lived about 130 years after the Babylonians destroyed God's Holy City, Jerusalem. The Babylonians burned down Solomon's temple and forced the Israelites into exile. Years later, the Babylonians were conquered by the Medes and Persians, and the Persian Emperor allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland. In Nehemiah's time, Jerusalem was still a mess, and its wall remained unbuilt. Nehemiah, a Jewish man living 800 miles away in Susa, received news about the poor condition of God's Holy City, Jerusalem.

Does anybody have any questions? *(Answer any questions.)* OK. Let's see what happened when Nehemiah found out about the condition of Jerusalem.

[AUDIO 02 MAP Time]

(After the video/instructions, hand out MAP Cards to preteens who didn't bring a Bible. Also, give each preteen a pen/pencil (if they don't already have one from the "Spot the Difference" game) and a highlighter.)

Give preteens time to complete M.A.P. as explained in the video. When it looks like most preteens are done, you can have preteens describe what they highlighted and wrote in their Bibles – or on the M.A.P. Cards – either in Small Groups or with the whole group.)





⌚ 20 min

**[Slide 20 Surf]**

During M.A.P. time, you read the first four verses of the book of Nehemiah. Right away, Nehemiah was crying. We weren't even three minutes into the story, and Nehemiah was crying!

What was he crying for? Let's look again at verses 3 and 4. I'll read the words in blue and you read the words in red.

[Slide 21-22 Nehemiah 1:3-4]

(Read the verses, from the screen or a Bible.) Great job. Who can tell me what Nehemiah was crying for? (Take answers. You're looking for something about the wall of Jerusalem being broken down and burnt with fire.)

Nehemiah knew that Jerusalem has a special place in God's heart. We see this throughout the Bible. *(For reference on this, check out Jeremiah 3:17, Psalm 125:2, Zachariah 8:3, Joel 3:20, et al.)*

In the verses we read today, Nehemiah was crying for Jerusalem, but do you know who else cried for Jerusalem in the Bible? Jesus. That's right. Look at this verse from the Gospel of Luke.

[Slide 23 Luke 19:41]

Wow. Jesus, who is God in human form, also cried for Jerusalem. Jesus' heart was moved for the people of Jerusalem when he saw the city's condition.

Nehemiah - many, many years before Jesus was even born - also was moved for Jerusalem.

God's heart *(point to the right)*. Nehemiah's heart *(point to the right)*.

Nehemiah's heart was lined up with God's. Is anybody starting to see the connection between the passage we read today from Nehemiah and today's surf tip? *(Look for hands, but don't call on anybody.)*

Look at today's surf tip again with me. Who can come up front and read this for us? Bonus points if you can read it like a surfer.

[Slide 24 Surf Tip 1]

(Call on somebody to read it, possibly like a surfer. After (s)he has read the surf tip, hand him/her a surfboard with a heart drawn on it.)





Imagine that this surfboard is your heart. There are so many directions you could point it.

Some people's hearts are pointed toward getting rich. *(With a marker, write "getting rich" one of the poster boards that is posted)* Some people's hearts are pointed toward becoming famous *(Write "famous" on this same poster board or the one in another part of the room).* What are some other directions somebody's heart might be pointed? *(The preteen up front can answer, but so can others. Answers could include, "sports, girls, success, doing God's will, etc." You can write these on any of the poster boards you have posted except the "Jerusalem" poster board.)*

Around the room, you see several poster boards with different things written on them, including this one over here *(point to "Jerusalem" poster board)*. What does this one say, everybody? Shout it out. *(JERUSALEM)*

When Nehemiah heard about the condition of Jerusalem, he started to weep. What does that tell you about the direction Nehemiah's heart was pointing? *[Preteen in front], show me what direction Nehemiah's heart was pointing. (Preteen should stand with surfboard facing the "Jerusalem" poster board.)*

Nehemiah's heart was pointed toward Jerusalem. Whose heart was Nehemiah's lined up with? *(GOD'S)* Right.

[Slide 25 Waves toward Jerusalem]

Look at *[preteen]* and notice how his/her heart is lined up with God's heart. Do you see the connection between today's surf tip and what we read about Nehemiah today? *(Call on a preteen who can explain; perhaps the one who's up front with you. You're looking for something like, "Nehemiah was lining up his heart with God's heart, because God cares about Jerusalem and so did Nehemiah.")*

Right. The first step to doing something great for God is for our hearts to be lined up with his. Thank you, *[preteen]*. *(Dismiss him/her to return to his/her seat.)*

God is up to something. All the time. He's doing a new thing. Right here. Right now. If we want to do something awesome for God and catch some gnarly waves of adventure, we have to open our hearts and love what God loves. We have to allow him to mold our hearts to be lined up with his. Nehemiah did this, and we can do it, too.

If I were to ask this amazing group of preteens, I think you could tell me about some of the people who God cares about. In fact, I think we could easily come up with dozens of different groups of people that God cares about.

Let's test this. Huddle up with the people around you and see if you can come up with six groups of people that God cares about. You have thirty seconds. Ready. Go.

[VIDEO 03 30-Second Countdown]





[Slide 26 Groups of People]

(Walk over to the poster with Jerusalem written on it.) OK. I already have one group of people that God cares about. It's Jerusalem. God cares about the city itself AND he cares about the people living in the city.

Let's hear some other groups that God cares about. *(Call on preteens and write their answers on the poster board. Leave space in the middle to write your church name in big print in just a moment. Stop when you have a good variety of answers from the preteens.)*

I'll tell you something else that God cares about. God cares about this place; this church. He cares about the special set-apart places where people gather to worship him. However, he doesn't just care about this place, he cares about the people who gather here, too. *(Write your church name on the board in the center.)*

The people of the Church are precious to God. He calls us his bride, his body, his children. We could spend months talking about how God feels about his people, but I think there's one famous verse that sums it up pretty good. Stand up and read this with me.

[Slide 27 John 3:16]

1...2...3...*(Read John 3:16 with the preteens.)* You can sit down.

God's heart is pointed toward the people of *[your church's name]*. Jesus died on the Cross so that the people here could have eternal life. This place *(refer to the building you're in)* is where his people gather to worship God. The waves of God's love are pointing in this direction *(point to the church name in the center of the posterboard)*.

This month, we could consider any of these groups that are written on this board, but we're going to focus on one. We're going to do something for *[church name]* that honors God. Just like Nehemiah did something big for Jerusalem *(point to Jerusalem)*, we're going to do something for *[church name]* *(point to your church's name)*.

Throughout this month, we're going to be thinking about a question. It's actually a question for God. Check it out.

[Slide 28 In our church]

God, what do you want to do in our church? This question gets me excited as I think about it. What would the Lord and King of the entire Universe want to do in our church, right here at *[church name]*?

Long ago, when Nehemiah was alive, Nehemiah knew what God wanted to do in Jerusalem. God wanted to rebuild the walls of his beloved city. Nehemiah pointed his heart in that same direction and rode that wave!





That would be amazing for us to do, wouldn't it: for us to consider what God wants to do in this church and then partner with him in making it happen. Imagine it!

Some of you already have an excitement bubbling up inside you as I'm talking about this. Your hearts are already lined up with God's, and you're excited to do something for His people here at *[church name]*.

Others of you may not feel the same way. Maybe your hearts aren't quite warm toward God's people here at *[church name]*.

My prayer today is that God gives all of us a heart like Nehemiah's.

[Slide 29 Hearts like Nehemiah's]

My prayer is that we would care about what God cares about, and that our hearts would be ready and excited to serve the people of *[church name]*.

The first step to surfing is to line up our board (*hold up a heart surfboard*) with the waves. The first step for us to do something awesome for God, like Nehemiah did, is to line up our hearts with God's. (*Place the heart surfboard in front of the poster board that has your church name written on it. During today's Quest, preteens will have an opportunity to write their names on this surfboard as a sign that their hearts are lining up with God's.*)

I'm going to pray, but I want to give you a chance to talk with God about this, too, before we start today's Quest.

[AUDIO 03 Prayer Music]

(Say a word of prayer, asking God to give you, your leaders, and your preteens hearts like Nehemiah's, full of love for the places and people that God loves. Then pause and allow preteens to pray, either silently or out loud.)





⌚ 10 min



(As you are explaining today's quest, ask a volunteer to flip the poster boards that you've hung up on the walls to reveal the writing prompts that are written on the backs of them. Ensure that there are markers near each one.)

[Slide 30 Quest | Line up our hearts with God's heart]

On [date], we're going to have a special event called, "Surv Day."

[Slide 31 Surv Day]

On that day, we have a special service planned and we're going to do something awesome for [church name]. I don't even know what it that we're going to do yet, because you are all going to help me figure it out as we think about this question.

[Slide 32 In our church]

God, what do you want to do in our church?

During each week of this series, our Quest time will move us closer to knowing what we'll do on Surv Day.

We'll start today with the first letter of SURF: the "S." The "S" stands for "See the Church like God does."

[Slide 33 S = See]

This is what we're going to do during our Quest time today. Before we ask God what he wants to do in our church, we're going to ask him to help us see our church like he does. That way, we can line up our hearts with his and think about what he wants to do here.

Around the room are poster boards with prompts for you to think about. Each prompt is something that will help you consider what God sees when he looks at [church name].

You can go up to any poster board and read a question to yourself. Pray about it and think about it as you walk over here (refer to the pile of sticky notes). Then grab a sticky note and find a place to write your answer to the question on the sticky note. Return to the poster board and post your answer. Then, move to another poster board and read a new question. Keep repeating this until our time is up.

If you feel that God's love for [church name] is growing inside of you, I also want to invite you to come write your name on this "heart" surfboard that I've placed in front of the [church name] sign.





If there's a question that you're having a hard time with, you can move to another question and come back to it later if you have time. Is everybody ready? *(Answer any questions and then start the video timer.)*

[VIDEO 04 8-minute Countdown]

[Slide 34 Surf]



GOALS:

- Engage your preteens in serving the local church.
- Create a memorable event for preteens to “flesh out” the messages in this series.
- Allow preteens a chance to explore what it's like to partner with God in Kingdom-Building.

BEFORE BEGINNING THE SURV SERIES:

Pick a date and time for Surv Day, so you can start promoting the date early on. Invitations are provided in the Printables section of Lessons 3 and 4, but you could certainly hand those out earlier.

Figure out the extent of what will be “doable” on Surv Day, but don't plan out the projects. It will be much better if the preteens can consider what they can do for Surv Day and select the projects themselves. By considering the extent of what is doable, you will be better able to communicate boundaries to the preteens as they start the planning process.

Decide who you will invite to participate in Surv Day. You'll probably want to involve volunteers in your ministry, but you could also involve parents, siblings, and people from other ministries as well.

KNOW THE PLAN:

Each week during the Surf series, your preteens will work towards planning projects for Surv Day. Here are the goals for each week's Quest.

Week 1 = Hearts lined up with God's heart.

Week 2 = Preteens will explore what God would want to do at your church.

Week 3 = Surv Groups organized, Surv Day plans started and communicated*

Week 4 = Surv Day plans finalized and prayed over

Consider taking pictures and/or video during Surv Day and sharing it with other preteen ministry leaders on the FourFiveSix Facebook group.





ADMIN GUIDE

Unit 10: Surf
Lesson 1: Nehemiah's Heart

SUPPLIES

Lesson 1: Nehemiah's Heart



01 WARM-UP

10 min

- 6 Foam or cardboard surfboard props, at least two feet in length
- Paint or draw a large heart on the front end of at least one of these surfboards
- Optional: Prize for the winner



02 M.A.P.

10 min

- Highlighters for each preteen
- Pens for each preteen
- **MAP Card** for each preteen (*copy on cardstock*)



03 DISCOVER

20 min

- Bible
- Surfboard with a heart drawn on it, from the Opening Game
- 7 poster boards, prepared according the Quest directions, below, posted on the walls of your ministry space with the blank side showing
- On one of the poster boards, write "Jerusalem" in large letters at the top
- Markers, placed on the ground in front of the poster boards



04 QUEST

10 min

- Prepare 7 posterboards by writing these headers on each:
 - Write the names of five people at [church name] that God loves:
 - When God looks at [church], what's happening here that makes him happy?
 - When God looks at [church], what do you think he'd like to see more of?
 - When God looks at [church], what do you think he'd like to see less of?
 - What's one thing God loves about the people of [church name]?
 - If Jesus came to [church], what do you think he would do?
 - When God looks at [church], what is one need that he sees?
- Markers, placed on the ground in front of the poster boards

NOTE: Within the leader guide, supplies are **highlighted** so you can understand how they'll be used and prepare accordingly.

NOTE: Supplies on this page that are written in a **bold font** can be found in the *Printables* Section.



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PRINTABLES

Lesson 1: Nehemiah's Heart



MAP Card (Nehemiah 1:1-4)

1 Nehemiah's heart Nehemiah 1:1-4 Nehemiah's heart was full of grief and sorrow for the people of Jerusalem. He was a man of prayer and fasting, and he was deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of his people. He was a man of action, and he was determined to do something about the situation in Jerusalem.	2 The heart of Nehemiah Nehemiah 1:1-4 Nehemiah's heart was full of grief and sorrow for the people of Jerusalem. He was a man of prayer and fasting, and he was deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of his people. He was a man of action, and he was determined to do something about the situation in Jerusalem.
M.A.P. M: Nehemiah's heart was full of grief and sorrow for the people of Jerusalem. A: Nehemiah was a man of prayer and fasting, and he was deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of his people. P: Nehemiah was a man of action, and he was determined to do something about the situation in Jerusalem.	3 Nehemiah's heart Nehemiah 1:1-4 Nehemiah's heart was full of grief and sorrow for the people of Jerusalem. He was a man of prayer and fasting, and he was deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of his people. He was a man of action, and he was determined to do something about the situation in Jerusalem.

1 Highlight what stands out for Me.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

2 How does what I highlighted Affect me?

¹These are the words of Nehemiah. He was the son of Hakaliah.

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. ² 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.

³ He 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."

⁴ 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.

M.A.P.

3 Pray about what you highlighted.

1 Highlight what stands out for Me.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

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