This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
Nehemiah wept over the destruction in Jerusalem, and his grief led to action. Not content to respond from a distance, he traveled to Jerusalem to tackle the problem firsthand. This lesson will encourage your teenagers to begin taking steps to respond to real-life issues on their campuses and in your community. God wants us to recognize the needs around us, but he also calls on us to respond and act.

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: God calls us to look for ways to respond to specific problems and issues in our world.
2. WHY: If we feel passionately about a particular problem or need, it’s usually a sign that God is calling us to act in that area.
3. HOW: Encourage your students to put their faith into action by sharing their concern with others and motivating others to get involved, too.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Nehemiah 2

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES
Nehemiah 5:14, 8:9; and James 2:14-17

TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your small group lesson.

Read Nehemiah 2.

This lesson builds on the ideas and truths we examined in the first week. God wants us to identify and recognize the needs around us, but as Christ-followers, we are called to do more. We are called to put our faith into action.
Nehemiah got the news about Jerusalem in the fall (see 1:1) but didn’t immediately act. His opportunity came in the spring (2:1), when the king realized that Nehemiah, his cupbearer, was “deeply troubled” about some issue.

We don’t know why several months passed between identifying the problem and taking action. When the time was right, everything fell into place: The king noticed Nehemiah, allowed him to leave, and empowered him to lead.

Verse 9 tells us that the king gave Nehemiah army officers and horsemen, a reflection of his appointment as governor of Judah (see Nehemiah 5:14 and 8:9). Once Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he surveyed a portion of the damaged walls, most on the southern side of the city. He then moved forward with the process of turning his compassion into action.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What makes compassion more than a feeling? Let’s talk about it tonight at small group.

- How will our world be different when you turn your compassion into action? Be at small group tonight to talk about it.

Parent Email

We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We are continuing our study of Nehemiah. He wept over the destruction in Jerusalem, and his grief led to action. Not content to respond from a distance, he traveled to Jerusalem to tackle the problem firsthand. We encouraged our teenagers to begin taking steps to respond to real-life issues on their campuses and in your community. God wants us to recognize the needs around us, but he also calls on us to respond and act.
Look for an opportunity this week to talk with your teenager about this lesson and the idea of turning our concerns into action. Here are some questions that could fuel your conversation:

- What’s the most practical way to determine if it’s time to turn your concern into action? What is prayer’s role in this process?
- James 2 encourages us to live out our faith in tangible, practical ways. Why is your faith “dead and useless” if it isn’t put into action?
- When have you felt the kind of confidence in God each day that Nehemiah had when he talked about the rebuilding project?

Thanks for praying for the teenagers in our small group ministry. Have a blessed day!
2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

As you begin your small group, welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then jump right into the lesson.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Turn your concern into action, (2) Share your concern with others, and (3) Motivate others to respond.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Nehemiah 2 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: In our previous lesson, we examined the importance of identifying the problems and needs around us. God wants us to have the same kind of compassion Jesus had as we see people who are hurting or struggling or searching for hope. But identifying the problem is just the first step. This week, we look at the next step: responding with action.
1. Turn your concern into action

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Nehemiah didn’t just sit around and pray that God would send someone else to address the problem. He recognized that he was in a unique situation and had unique access to resources to help rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He boldly asked his king for permission and resources. The king agreed, and even sent along army officers and horsemen to provide protection.

**ASK:**
- How do you know when it’s time to act? What information or evidence or feelings might you rely on, if you’re trying to determine if God wants you to turn your compassion into action?
- Why is it human nature to let something impact our heart, but then fail to let it move us to do something about it?
- What is prayer’s role in this process?
- Lots of people see problems in the world that they could tackle, but they don’t—what are some typical reasons why people don’t get involved?

2. Share your concern with others

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** When God gives us a burden for a specific problem or need, he often will allow our lives to intersect with other people who share that burden. As you begin talking about the problem you’ve identified and how God can help change things, you’ll discover people who are passionate about the same need.

**ASK:**
- Look at verses 11-18. Why didn’t Nehemiah immediately tell anyone in Jerusalem why he had traveled to the city?
- What truths or lessons can you learn from the way Nehemiah handled himself when sharing his concern with the citizens of Jerusalem?

3. Motivate others to respond

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Sometimes it takes leadership to motivate us to do something we already know needs to be done. When you step into a role as a leader, you have the opportunity to inspire others to transform their concern into action, too.
ASK:

• In verse 17, the people seemed to reply immediately and enthusiastically. They already knew the walls were in bad shape. Why do you think they hadn’t acted until Nehemiah arrived, observed the situation, and spoke to them about the need?
• Why is it better to involve others? When is it not better? What are some things that can hold us back from inviting others to work alongside of us?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: In many ways, fear is the opposite of faith. When God calls us to take big steps of faith, we will face fear. Overcoming fear isn’t easy, but we can find a measure of confidence knowing that God is on our side, and if God has called us to do something, he will protect and guide us as we move forward in obedience.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]
ASK:

• In verse 8, Nehemiah says “the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me.” What does this mean, really? How does God influence decisions like these?
• What role did Nehemiah’s faithful service to the king play in this story?
• Why was Nehemiah so confident in verse 20 that God would help him and the citizens of Jerusalem succeed?
• When have you felt the kind of confidence in God each day that Nehemiah had when he talked about the rebuilding project?
• Where do you need that level of confidence in your life right now?
• Read James 2:14-17. James encourages us to live out our faith in tangible, practical ways. Why is your faith “dead and useless” if it isn’t put into action?

APPLICATION
ASK:

• How might your world be different if you turned your compassion into action?
During our last lesson, we began a conversation on the problems and needs in the world around us. The goal for this series is to give you an opportunity to put these teachings and truths into practice by addressing real-life issues. Let’s talk about the ideas that have been growing inside of you since our previous lesson. What problem or need has emerged through this week of praying and thinking?

[NOTE: Your students may easily choose issues or needs, particularly if they already had solid ideas during the previous lesson. If they need some help with ideas, suggest such topics as teenage pregnancy, homelessness, community violence, or abuse against women. They also may feel drawn toward such global issues as poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS, or human trafficking. We’d encourage you to remain flexible as your students have their discussion, because your group may decide to address one issue together or several issues as individuals. Let them “lead the way” and give them the freedom and encouragement to follow God’s direction.]

After your students have chosen either a team focus or individual topics, divide them into pairs for these questions.

**ASK:**

- How is this problem (or these problems) evident in our community? What is the evidence that it exists, and what are the effects it has on people’s lives?

- How is this problem (or these problems) a spiritual issue?

- What are some ways you and I can address this problem?

- How might we inspire and motivate our friends, family, small group, youth ministry, or church to get involved, too?

Bring everyone back together to discuss these questions, especially if the entire group is going to address one single problem.
SUMMARY

End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

But now I said to them, “You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!” (Nehemiah 2:17).