

# Restoring the City

## *Bricks, building & big hearts*

An activity to encourage participants to connect issues facing them or their community with the story of Nehemiah by reflecting on a series of questions as they build a wall using card bricks they have made themselves.



# Restoring the City

## *Bricks, building & big hearts*

### **Origins**

This idea was developed between the Unlock workers in Glasgow and those in the UK for a variety of events in the spring of 2009, including the Unlock London walk as a workshop to introduce people to Unlock's way of engaging with the Bible. Unlike some of our resources the intended participants were mostly literate church goers and the activity is most suited for use with people that will be comfortable reading and writing.

### **Unlock's Methodology**

Our approach to engaging with the Bible starts from a person's own experience. We often express the need for a facilitator to be flexible and listen to people's stories before they make a rigid decision about what Bible passage to focus on. In this instance the materials are very firmly linked to Nehemiah however the reflective process is still at the heart of how the activity works and encourages participants to think about their own situation, explore the Bible story and make connections between the two. Participants are then challenged to look at what difference they can make in the light of those reflections.

### **Focus**

Nehemiah was faced with the bad news that the city's walls were falling apart, he prayed, sought a solution and when the opportunity came, acted and motivated others to join him. Our wall building activity encourages participants to do the same, identify what is 'falling apart' in their own community, what is needed to help and how they can be part of the answer. Whilst it is a useful reflective exercise in any circumstances, it would be particularly useful as part of a process to identify ways in which a group can serve the community around them.

### **How it works**

Participants work together to build a wall made of paper bricks that they form themselves. Each participant is given a sheet with the outline of a brick for them to cut out. On the brick there are a series of questions that challenge the participant to relate the situation in their own community with the situation that faced Nehemiah. Once they have reflected and responded to those questions they stick their brick together and add it to the wall.

We made the story of Nehemiah available in different ways at the different events. At the London walk there were contemporary photo stories depicting the events of Nehemiah both on the walls and standing on the tables where participants made their bricks. In Glasgow the bricks were used as a small part in a day long event where the story of Nehemiah and the questions on the brick were explored in greater detail. There are sufficient instructions on the brick that it could work as a stand alone fixture at a public venue for people to pick up and do as they visit without a facilitator present.

### **These Materials**

This pack includes an A4 version of the handout for making a brick that was used at both workshops. We used them printed on A3 card in order to make a stronger bigger wall. The remaining pages are 3 different versions of a photo story of Nehemiah which can be used to stand on tables where people are making their bricks. In addition to these materials you will need scissors, paper glue, pens and space to build your wall.

### **Over to You**

We hope that this resource is useful to you, please feel free to adapt it to your needs but we would be grateful if you acknowledge Unlock when you use it. If you have any suggestions for other resources or improvements we would love to hear from you.



# Restoring the City

Bricks, building & big hearts



Unlock aims to give a helping hand to the church to relate the gospel to all people around them by:

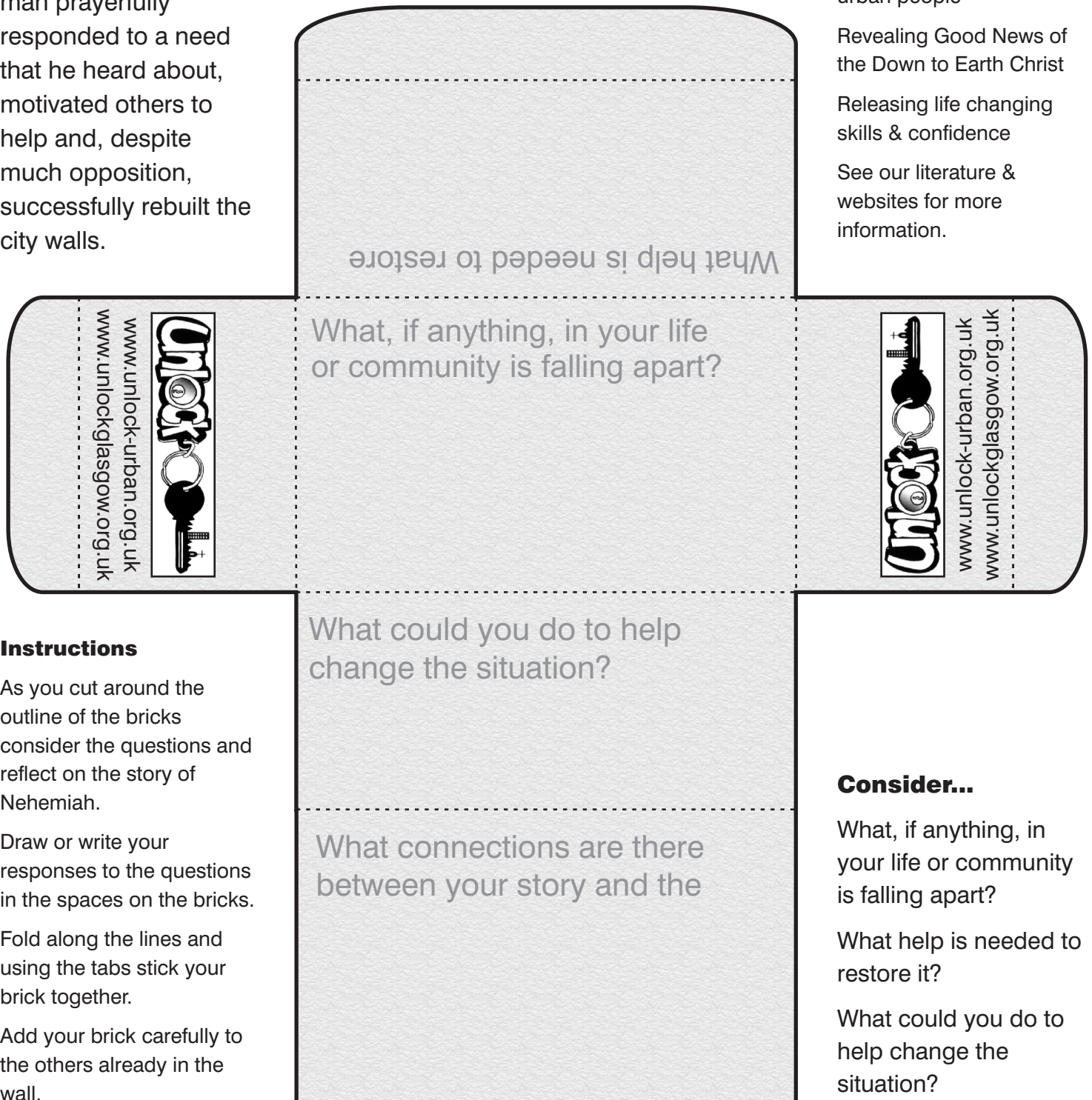
Unlocking real life stories of urban people

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Releasing life changing skills & confidence

See our literature & websites for more information.

The book of Nehemiah gives a wonderful account of how one man prayerfully responded to a need that he heard about, motivated others to help and, despite much opposition, successfully rebuilt the city walls.



## Instructions

As you cut around the outline of the bricks consider the questions and reflect on the story of Nehemiah.

Draw or write your responses to the questions in the spaces on the bricks.

Fold along the lines and using the tabs stick your brick together.

Add your brick carefully to the others already in the wall.

Put this credit card sized brick in your purse, wallet or somewhere you will see it so it can remind you of what your reflections today have inspired you to do.



"Let's rebuild the city walls."  
And I told them how God had been with me & helped me. They responded, "Let's start rebuilding!"  
And they got ready to start the work.  
Neh 2:17&18  
**What I can do to help change a situation...**  
www.unlock-urban.org.uk  
www.unlockglasgow.org.uk



Your brick to take home

## Consider...

What, if anything, in your life or community is falling apart?

What help is needed to restore it?

What could you do to help change the situation?

What connections are there between your story and the story of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls?

## A story from the book about Nehemiah -adapted from the Good News Bible



### What, if anything, in your life or community is falling apart?

Hanani, arrived from Judah, & told me that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down & that the gates had not been restored since the time they were burnt. When I heard all this, I sat down & wept. I prayed to God, LORD, hear my prayer, as I pray day & night.



### What help is needed to restore it?

I was the emperor's wine steward. He asked, "Why are you looking so sad? I answered, " How can I help looking sad when the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins & its gates have been destroyed by fire?If Your Majesty is willing, let me go to rebuild the city." The emperor gave me all I asked for, because God was with me.



### What could you do to help change the situation?

I went to Jerusalem, and for three days, I inspected the broken walls. I had not said anything to any of my fellow-Jews. But now I said to them, "See what trouble we are in! Let's rebuild the city walls." I told them God had been with me. They responded, "Let's start rebuilding!" They got ready to start the work.



### What connections are there between your story & rebuilding the walls?

Sanballat heard we had begun rebuilding the wall, he ridiculed us. We were making progress & they were very angry. So they all plotted to attack. We prayed to our God & kept men on guard against them.

After 52 days of work the wall was finished. Everyone knew the work had been done with God's help.

# A story from the book about Nehemiah

-adapted from the Good News Bible



## What, if anything, in your life or community is falling apart?

Hanani, arrived from Judah, & told me that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down & that the gates had not been restored since the time they were burnt. When I heard all this, I sat down & wept. I prayed to God, LORD, hear my prayer, as I pray day & night.



## What help is needed to restore it?

I was the emperor's wine steward. He asked, "Why are you looking so sad? I answered, " How can I help looking sad when the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins & its gates have been destroyed by fire? If Your Majesty is willing, let me go to rebuild the city." The emperor gave me all I asked for, because God was with me.



## What could you do to help change the situation?

I went to Jerusalem, and for three days, I inspected the broken walls. I had not said anything to any of my fellow-Jews. But now I said to them, "See what trouble we are in! Let's rebuild the city walls." I told them God had been with me. They responded, "Let's start rebuilding!" They got ready to start the work.



## What connections are there between your story & rebuilding the walls?

Sanballat heard we had begun rebuilding the wall, he ridiculed us. We were making progress & they were very angry. So they all plotted to attack. We prayed to our God & kept men on guard against them. After 52 days of work the wall was finished. Everyone knew the work had been done with God's help.

## A story from the book about Nehemiah -adapted from the Good News Bible



**What, if anything, in your life or community is falling apart?**

Hanani, arrived from Judah, & told me that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down & that the gates had not been restored since the time they were burnt. When I heard all this, I sat down & wept. I prayed to God, LORD, hear my prayer, as I pray day & night.



**What help is needed to restore it?**

I was the emperor's wine steward. He asked, "Why are you looking so sad? I answered, " How can I help looking sad when the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins & its gates have been destroyed by fire?If Your Majesty is willing, let me go to rebuild the city." The emperor gave me all I asked for, because God was with me.



**What could you do to help change the situation?**

I went to Jerusalem, and for three days, I inspected the broken walls. I had not said anything to any of my fellow-Jews. But now I said to them, "See what trouble we are in! Let's rebuild the city walls." I told them God had been with me. They responded, "Let's start rebuilding!" They got ready to start the work.



**What connections are there between your story & the story of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls?**

When Sanballat heard that we Jews had begun rebuilding the wall, he was furious & began to ridicule us. "What do these miserable Jews think they're doing? Can they make building stones out of heaps of burnt rubble?" They heard that we were making progress & they were very angry. So they all plotted together to come & attack Jerusalem & create confusion. We prayed to our God & kept men on guard against them day & night. After 52 days of work the entire wall was finished. Everyone knew that the work had been done with God's help.