



*The Rock is a Youth
Ministry of Ascension
Lutheran Church*

God's Got Big Plans! **Based on Nehemiah 6:1-16**

Narrator:	Michael
Nehemiah:	Matt W. (Super Man Cape)
Artaxerxes (Art):	Matt S. (Godfather Hat, Suit, Tie, Cheeks)
Hanani (Hank):	Nate (Hank Williams)
Sanballat (Sanby):	Ryan
Tobiah (Toby):	Toby
Puppeteer:	Austin
Puppeteer:	Zachary
Hasse:	Joe (Nets & Fishing Hat)
Bernstein:	Johannes (Groucho Nose)
Muffy:	Allee (Valley Girl, Cell Phone)
Buffy:	Annee (Valley Girl, Cell Phone)
Veronica:	Lauren (Valley Girl, Cell Phone)
Biff:	Chandler (Hip Waders & Hard Hat)

Narrator: God had big plans. Around Thanksgiving time, in the year 446 B.C., Hanani—or Hank--a brother to Nehemiah, came from Judah, and Nehemiah—or Knee High--questioned him about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

Nehemiah: So, Hank, how's things in the old country?

Hanani: Knee High, you don't want to know.

Nehemiah: Hank, I want to know.

Hanani: I'm telling you, you don't want to know.

Nehemiah: Very well, Hank, I don't want to know.

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Hanani: I'll tell you. Those who survived the exile and are back in Judah are in great trouble and disgrace. Knee High, the wall of Jerusalem is in ruins, the gates of the city have been burned with fire, and both Duff Avenue and Lincoln Way are closed for construction.

Narrator: Yeah, it was bad, the kind of things you'd write a country song about. So Knee High mourned, fasted, and prayed...you know, basically a typical football season at Iowa State.

Nehemiah: O LORD, hear my prayer. I confess the sins we Israelites have committed against you. We have not obeyed your laws. You told us that if we were unfaithful, you'd scatter us among the nations. But you also promised that if we repented, you'd return us from exile. Hear my prayer and help me to approach my employer, King Art of Persia.

Narrator: Yes, Knee High was cupbearer to the King of Persia, King Artaxerxes, and about 3-4 months later Knee High approached the King about Jerusalem.

Art: *(To narrator.)* You can call me Art. It's simpler, and I'm a simple man. *(Sits down to drink from Hawkeye cup.)*

Nehemiah: Stop! Don't touch that cup! *(Removes Hawkeye cup, and hands him a Cyclone cup.)* Whew, that was a close one.

Art: Knee High, good and trusted cupbearer, once again, you've saved my life. On this, the day of my daughter's wedding, why do you look so downcast? Someone take your last bagel?

Nehemiah: It's my people. Some have returned to Jerusalem, but things are bad there. The people are impoverished, unprotected, and depressed.

Art: Like Chicago Cubs fans in September, huh?

Nehemiah: The walls of the city are in ruin, the gates burned

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down, the new water park isn't open.

Art: You want that I should fix these problems.

Nehemiah: Oh, I shouldn't trouble you, good king.

Art: Knee High! For you, I'd do anything...well, maybe not the water park. That's asking a bit much.

Nehemiah: Three things, good King: (1) grant me time off, (2) grant me safety on my travels, and (3) grant me materials for rebuilding the city gates.

Art: That's it? That's all? No problem.

Nehemiah: Really, you'd do that for me?

Art: Knee High, it's not like you're asking me to feed 5,000 people, sell an 80-year-old church building, or provide affordable health insurance. Only God can do those kinds of big things.

Narrator: So Knee High set off, and King Art provided him guards for his journey, commanded Asaph & Son's Lumber Liquidators to provide materials for rebuilding the city gates, and loaned him his Persian Express Card to cover incidental expenses. *(Pause & hold up Credit Card.)* Persian Express, don't return from exile without it. *(Pause.)* But then the plot thickened...

Toby: Plot thickened? What are we? Matza soup?

Narrator: Very well. Then entered Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite. *(The two appear in pulpit.)*

Sanby: You call this a skit?

Toby: Where's my agent? Who booked me in this production?

Narrator: Yes, they were critics. Scripture tells us they, quote, "were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites."

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- Sanby: It's welfare, I tell you!
- Toby: They got themselves into this mess. They can get themselves out of it.
- Narrator: *(Knee High flips to map of city walls and gates.)* But our hero, Knee High—cupbearer turned civil engineer--went right to work, assessing the condition of the city walls & gates and the resources available to him: 40 leaders, 45 sections of wall, and ten gates.
- Nehemiah: *(Speaking like a football coach drawing up a play with x's & o's.)* Hasse & Sons, you take the Fish Gate. Shep, you take the Sheep Gate.
- Hasse: Pardon me, sir, but how are we gonna' train the fish to use a gate?
- Nehemiah: *(To Audience.)* Fishermen? Who, but God alone, could complete a project using fishermen? *(Pause.)* Harry, you've got the Horse Gate. E. Howard & G. Gordon, you and the plumbers work on the Water Gate.
- Bernstein: What about me and Woody?
- Nehemiah: You two follow them, Bernstein. *(Pause.)* Pete, Fountain Gate. And bring three coins with you. Biff, you get the Dung Gate.
- Biff: Why do I always get the Dung Gate?
- Nehemiah: No one else has hip-waders.
- Muffy: Like, barf me out!
- Buffy: Grody to the max!
- Veronica: Like, gag me with a spoon!
- Nehemiah: Oh, yes! Muffy, Buffy, and Veronica; you three get the Valley Gate.

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- Buffy: Hold it, like you totally want us to build something?
- Veronica: Muffy, Hello? Like, who else are they gonna get to build the Valley Gate?
- Buffy: Like we could build a mall, and call it "The Hinnom Valley Mall."
- Veronica: "The Mall of Judah."
- Muffy: I'm kind of partial to "The Jordan River Mall."
- Veronica: Knee High, like this is so, like, totally awesome.
- Buffy: Tubular! Yeah, and like we can totally catch some, like, totally awesome UV's.
- Muffy: *(Hands on the hips, eyebrows raised and a shocked facial expression)*. Are you serious? UV's? I'm SO sure!
- Buffy: Muffy, it's an outside job, duh?
- Muffy: As if!
- Veronica: For sure!
- Buffy: Whatever!
- Nehemiah: Hmm...come to think of it, maybe fishermen aren't so bad after all. *(To audience.)* And you wonder why I pray all the time? *(To Team.)* All right, now let's win one for Yom Kipper. Ready, break *(all Clap)*.
- Toby: What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall and offer their sacrifices?
- Sandby: Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble?
- Toby: Why their walls won't even stand the weight of a small fox, let alone enemy combatants.

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- Narrator: Further, Knee High's critics urged people to come out and vandalize the project, so the workers had to split their time between building and standing guard against vandals. But still, Knee High's work force was committed, staying on the job day and night, which led to some labor unrest, and even a mortgage and loan crisis, recorded in Nehemiah 5.
- Nehemiah: *(Hank, Hasse, Bernstein, Biff & Veronica approach Nehemiah.)* Good people of Jerusalem, we're progressing so well, aren't we?
- Hank: Oh, Knee High, far be it from us Israelites as a people to complain, but in order for us stay alive, we must have food to eat. Only we have nothing, having to spend all our time working on the wall.
- Hasse: We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get food during the famine.
- Bernstein: We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards.
- Biff: Some of us have had to mortgage our fields and vineyards.
- Hank: And some of us have even had to sell our sons and daughters into slavery as collateral because our fields and our vineyards already belong to others.
- Nehemiah: And you?
- Veronica: Duh, like I totally broke a nail!
- Narrator: When Knee High heard their outcry he went to the creditors and lenders to arrange for cancellation of their debt and made corrections to ease the mortgage crisis, took a cut in his own pay, and even bought some new nail polish for Veronica. But having failed at stopping the progress on the wall, Knee High's critics tried to distract Knee High from the task at hand, as recorded in chapter 7.
- Sanby: Toby, take another letter to Knee High. The wall is

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done and only the gates remain. We have to get him away from the project before it's completed.

- Toby: We've sent Knee High four letters already. Any ordinary slouch would jump at a chance to ditch a project like that for a little rest and relaxation.
- Sanby: I guess he really isn't interested in a time share in Branson. I think it's time for a more direct threat.
- Toby: Something like: "Dear Mr. Nehemiah, you'll be swimming the Euphrates in concrete water shoes if you don't come see us. Warmest regards, Sanballat & Associates."
- Sanby: Real subtle, Toby.
- Toby: Okay, how about this: Dear Mr. Nehemiah, the word on the streets is that you are about done with the wall, you are ready to declare yourself King of Judah, and you've even arranged for Billy Graham to come pray at your inauguration. You wouldn't want this word to reach King Art, if you know what we mean. Yours Truly, Sanballat & Associates.
- Narrator: They delivered the letter, and even had another associate contact Knee High to imply that he was in grave danger of being seized for his acts of treason. Still, Knee High remained faithful, and the wall-- which had sat in ruins for nearly half a century--was completely rebuilt by by October 445 B.C., in only fifty-two days. God has Big Plans, and he completes them.
- Nehemiah: Even in the unlikeliest of circumstances, in the unlikeliest time frame, using the unlikeliest cast of Characters.
- Art: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, Amen!
- Entire Cast: Amen.