

Alley SG—September 18th-20th, 2021

Today's Bible Story: Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now (Nehemiah and Sanballat) • *Nehemiah 2:19-20, 4, 6*

Today's Key Question: What distracts you from doing what needs to be done?

Today's Bottom Line: Stay focused on what needs to be done.

Monthly Memory Verse: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." (Colossians 3:23a NIV)

1. Opening Activity

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Ask kids if they are familiar with the following songs:
 - "Mary Had a Little Lamb"
 - "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"
 - "London Bridge"
- Review the words of the songs and the melody if kids need a refresher.
- Form three groups and assign each team one of the songs to sing.
- Signal all the kids to begin singing their song at the same time. They will likely have a hard time staying focused on their specific song without messing up.
- Repeat a few times or change the challenge by leading kids in singing consecutive rounds of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."
- Individually, or in pairs, kids begin a new round as soon as the previous kid sings, "Row, row, row your boat," and before they say, "gently down the stream."
- Each kid or pair of kids sings the full song three times and then waits as the remaining kids finish their rounds.
- If kids are not familiar with the song or how to sing in a round, demonstrate with the following video:
<https://bit.ly/3uiZyzL>

What You Say:

"You'd think singing a simple song you've known since you were a little kid wouldn't be that hard. It wasn't easy to stay focused on your own song and not be distracted by the ones the others were singing. Distractions are a problem and a frustration, especially when we have something important, we need to do. **[Transition] If you think it was hard to get through a simple song without being distracted, wait until you hear what Nehemiah faced.**"

2. Take a Snapshot

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Choose one kid to be the Captain and explain that the remaining kids are his crew.
- Set up the game by sharing the following scenario and rules.
 - The Captain and the crew are scheduled to launch into space today, but unfortunately the entire crew has come down with a case of "lame excuse-itis."
 - The Captain will leave the room as you give the crew their lame excuse for why they can't go into space today. All the crew has the same excuse. They can make sounds as they act, but can't actually say what their excuse is.
 - The Captain can return to room when they hear the crew say, "Captain, we can't go into space today!"
 - By watching the crew and asking only YES or NO questions, the Captain must try to figure out the "lame excuse" his crew is suffering from.

- After several guesses, if the Captain doesn't figure it out, let the Crew reveal their excuse.
- Choose another kid to be the Captain and play again as time allows.
- Here are a few ridiculous excuses you can suggest for kids to act out or let them come up with their own.
 - They think they are chickens
 - They are scared of space spiders
 - Their hair is on fire
 - The only word they know how to say is their name – spelled backwards
 - The lights are too bright
 - They are walking in their sleep
 - They can only say words that rhyme with “toast”
- Wrap up by transitioning from the ridiculous to the real. Ask:
 - What are some actual excuses or distractions that keep us from doing what needs to be done?
 - Which ones do you relate to the most?
 - What are some consequences you've faced for not being able to stay focused on what needs to be done?

NOTE: Be sensitive to kids who deal with Attention Deficit Disorder or other things that might complicate their ability to stay focused at times. Target the “distractions” that are within our ability to change or control.

3. Bible Story Extension

What You Need: Bible, Plastic Cups

What You Do:

- Invite kids to pair up.
- Ask one partner to sit on the floor as the other partner stands directly in front of them.
- Place a stack of **six plastic cups** on the left side of the seated partner.
- Explain that the seated kids will race to build a wall of cups (3-2-1 pyramid).
- The tricky part is that they must do so while constantly staring at their partner's feet.
- The standing kid can move his feet, jump, dance, tap or any other distracting movement but must remaining within a distance of three feet in front of the kid who is sitting. *(If you have kids who are willing to be extra silly, ask them to remove their shoes and socks and add some wiggling toe movements to the distractions.)*
- Continue until one team has successfully stacked all six cups.
- If time allows, let partners switch places and play another round.
- Bring kids together to debrief the game and discuss some of the distractions Nehemiah dealt with in today's story.
 - In our game, your partner's feet were a silly—possibly annoying—distraction. Feet weren't Nehemiah's biggest distraction and are rarely ours, either. What were some of the very real distractions Nehemiah faced as he led the people in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem? *Some of the ideas you're looking for are mocking, attacks, discouragement, tiredness, bullying, doubts, and questions. See Nehemiah 4:1-3, 7-12, 6:2.*
 - Share some situations in which these same types of distractions can get in your way and keep you from doing what is right or what needs to be done.
 - What helped you overcome the distractions in the game we played?
 - How did Nehemiah deal with each distraction? *Possible answers are that he prayed, encouraged others, came up with a plan to keep going in spite of the problems, didn't give up, wisely said, “no” to leaving the work he was doing, remembered God's truth and promises rather than believing his enemies' lies. See Nehemiah 4:4-6, 13-15, 6:3-9*
 - What can you learn from Nehemiah's example that will help you avoid letting distractions get the best of you?

- How can you know when something is just a distraction or when it is important enough to stop what you're doing to deal with it?
- Wrap up by challenging kids to follow Nehemiah's example when they are tempted to not do what needs to be done.
- Remind them that when Sanballat and his trouble-making friends were determined to distract Nehemiah from getting the job done, instead of focusing on their jeers and threats, Nehemiah prayed. God helped Nehemiah to not get distracted by fear, worry, or frustration. They, too, can stay focused on what needs to be done.

4. Discussion Questions

Ask:

- Give examples of ways you might get distracted when doing the following activities:
 - Listening in class
 - Reading a homework assignment
 - Telling someone about Jesus
 - Cleaning your room
 - Memorizing a Bible verse
 - Stepping out of your comfort zone and trying something new
 - Praying
 - Helping someone in your family
- What are some signals you can watch for that help you know when you are being distracted?
- If you know that you will be easily distracted by something, what can you do to remind yourself to stay focused?

5. Make it Personal with Prayer

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Refer back to some of the distractions kids mentioned earlier in discussions or during "Take a Snapshot."
- Encourage kids to share what distractions they find most difficult to avoid and why.
- Ask kids to pray for each other. If willing, let them pray out loud for the person next to them.

What You Say:

Dear God, even when others tried to distract Nehemiah or when those around him were discouraged, Nehemiah stayed focus on what You wanted him to do. Help us to follow Nehemiah's example this week. When we start to get distracted by fears, problems, or (name some distractions kids mentioned earlier), remind us to ask for Your help. Amen.