

Alley SG—September 25th-27th, 2021

Today's Bible Story: I Just Want to Celebrate (The Wall Is Rebuilt) • *Nehemiah 3–4, 6:15-16, 8:1-17*

Today's Key Question: What is God doing in your life that you can celebrate?

Today's Bottom Line: Look for ways to celebrate what God has 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: Craft sticks (10 per group)

What You Do:

NOTE: *The secret to this game has nothing to do with the pattern or the 10 craft sticks that are used. The clue is the number of outstretched fingers you are showing. As you explain the game, don't reveal this secret. Keep your hands visible, but don't make the number of fingers you're holding out too obvious.*

- Ask kids to kneel in a circle with their hands on the floor.
- Place 10 craft sticks in a random pattern in the middle of the circle on the floor.
- Tell kids that the craft stick pattern represents the number of friends you have invited to a party.
- Challenge kids to look at the formation of the craft sticks, then go around the circle giving their guess as to what number it is.
- When everyone has shared their guess, congratulate the kids who guessed correctly. Unless they know the secret of the game, it's most likely just a lucky guess.
- Rearrange the craft sticks and repeat with a different number.
- Ask kids who think they know the secret not to say what it is but to keep making correct guesses until everyone catches on or time runs out.
- Before moving on, share the secret of the game if kids were not able to figure it out on their own.

What You Say:

"Many families celebrate special days together—birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and other special events. The next time you're at a family gathering or a party, you might have fun playing this game together. If you don't have craft sticks, you can use spoons or coins or 10 small objects of any kind." **[Transition] So, today we wrapped up our story of Nehemiah. There was a happy ending and a celebration. No party tricks."**

2. Take a Snapshot

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Ask kids if they know what a Time Capsule is and clarify if any kids are unsure.
 - *(A time capsule is a container that holds present-day items, such as photos, letters, or any items that are a reminder of what is happening in our life or in the world right now. It's typically hidden away for our future self or someone of our choosing to find and open.)*
- Invite kids to brainstorm what they would put in a Time Capsule that, if discovered in a year or so, would reveal what God is doing in their life right now. Something that they can praise and celebrate.
- If kids need a few ideas to get them started, share what you would put in your Time Capsule and stir their imagination with the prompts below.
 - What is important to you right now? How is that a gift or blessing from God? What could you put in your Time Capsule to remind you of that?
 - What's a favorite Bible verse you have? What could you put in your Time Capsule to remind you of it?
 - What would you write in a THANK YOU letter to Jesus today?

- What people in your life are you most grateful for? What's something you could put in your Time Capsule that represents those people?
- What trips, activities, events, or experiences has God allowed you to have recently? What could you put in your Time Capsule to remind you of those?
- How has God answered a prayer, provided, cared for, encouraged, or helped you in some way? What could you put in your Time Capsule to remind you of that?
- Challenge kids to consider creating an actual Time Capsule this week by using a shoe box or other container.
 - They might hide it in the back of their closet, garage, or other place where it might not be found for a while.
 - Tell them to be sure to include a note with the date and purpose of the Time Capsule. When someone finds it or they rediscover it, they can celebrate what God has done in their lives.

3. Bible Story Extension

What You Need: Bible, toothpicks, marshmallows

What You Do:

- Remind kids that when the wall was completed, the people celebrated by reading God's Word and thinking back on all of the ways God had been there for them.
- Ask someone to read Nehemiah 8:18.
- Give a brief recap of the Feast of Booths. (*Everyone came together and lived in hut-type shelters for an entire week while they remembered and celebrated what God had done for them.*)
- Form two teams.
- Name one team the Wall Builders and the other the Hut Makers.
- Set out the "building supplies" where both teams can see them.
- Explain that the items on the floor are what they will use to build their wall or make their tents. They can "buy" the supplies from you by answering a question about the story of Nehemiah.
- Give teams a couple of minutes to discuss their building strategy so that they choose their supplies wisely.
- The Wall Builders should plan supplies for an 8-inch square, and the Hut Makers need to build 6 tent-like structures.
- When ready, invite teams to take turns giving repeated (but different) answers to the following questions in order to "buy" the supplies they need. (They can look up the story in the book of Nehemiah if/when they start to run out of answers and still need more supplies.)
 - For 10 toothpicks, name one problem Nehemiah ran into while building the wall.
 - For 5 marshmallows, name one reason Nehemiah and the Jewish people could praise God.
- Let kids build and answer questions simultaneously.
- Once they've sufficiently reviewed the story, if teams discover that they need more supplies, they can borrow from the other team or they can say "Feast of Booths" as fast as they can for every toothpick or marshmallow they want to purchase.
- Close by reminding kids that a great way to grow or strengthen our trust in God is to remember times in our lives He has provided for us.
 - Ask kids to name some ways they can identify with the praises the Jewish people gave to God during the Feast of Booths.
 - How has God provided for the Jewish people in the past that is similar to ways He is providing for us today?

4. Discussion Questions

Ask:

- What are some things you know about God's character that you can praise or celebrate right now?
- If we want to make a point of noticing what God has done in our life and remembering to thank Him, what might help us do that?
- When things don't turn out as we had hoped, why can we still celebrate?
- (Brainstorm some creative ways we can celebrate what God has done in our lives.)

5. Make it Personal with Prayer

What You Say:

"Dear God, You deserve our praises every day. You care for us, help us make wise choices, answer our prayers, and remind us of Your amazing power as we look at all You have created. Best of all, You love us and gave us Jesus, Your one and only Son, who took the penalty we deserve for sin. Thank You for making a way for us to be forgiven and to know You forever. Remind us often of the things we have learned this month from the life of Nehemiah. Give us the help we need to take initiative by seeing what needs to be done and doing it. In Jesus' name amen."