



INITIATIVE | WEEK 4 | SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

4th-5th Lesson

I Just Want to Celebrate

Life App: Initiative—Seeing what needs to be done and doing it.

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

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

Bottom Line: Look for ways to celebrate what God has done.

Basic Truth: I am loved by God no matter what so I can trust God to guide me.

Memory Verse: Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord.
Colossians 3:23a (NIRV)

**KID CONNECT:
10 MINUTES**

**LARGE GROUP:
30 MINUTES**

**SMALL GROUP:
20 MINUTES**

LEADER BIBLE STUDY

God took the initiative by sending Jesus to show us how much He loves us and fix the relationship between us. When we see a need and choose to do something about it, we reflect God's image in us. Through our initiative, others can see the reality of God's love for them. As kids discover more about how we can reflect God's character through taking initiative, they'll spend the month studying the life of Nehemiah. Nehemiah's life is a perfect example of someone who heard about a need, decided to check it out, trusted God, and dropped everything to finish the project. We can't wait to see how God helps your kids discover how they can show initiative in their lives.

Key Question: What is God doing in your life that you can celebrate? Taking the initiative can be fun. When we're aware that God is doing something in our lives, we can take initiative and make a big deal about it! But first, we have to see what God is doing. We want preteens to realize that all the good things happening in their life are from God. They can make a plan to celebrate them!

In our final week, we head to **Nehemiah 3–4, 6:15-16, and 8:1-17** and read that God helped Nehemiah and the people finish the wall in only 52 days! They celebrated what God had done for them, not only during those 52 days but throughout their history as His people. They heard God's word and remembered how God had been faithful to them. They had a lot to be thankful for!

Bottom Line: **Look for ways to celebrate what God has done.** When we realize that God is doing amazing things in our lives, we can't help but thank Him. We pray that throughout this month, looking at Nehemiah's story, kids will see how God helps them every day. We hope they learn to celebrate God's continued work in their lives.

KID CONNECT

WELCOME TIME

(VIDEO: INTRO MUSIC)

Play intro music and greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group.

OPENING ACTIVITY:

(No Supplies)

During this time, concentrate on getting to know your group and building a relationship between you all. Create a place where they feel like someone knows them and that they belong. A great way to do that is to pull them into an activity (coloring, LEGOs, etc.) and ask them questions. Here are some suggestions:

- What school do you go to?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- If you could ride on any animal, what would be the most fun/most difficult?
- Do you have any siblings/pets? What are their names?
- If you could build anything, what would you build?
- What is the worst smell in the world?

LARGE GROUP

COUNTDOWN AND WELCOME

(VIDEO: COUNTDOWN, SLIDE: KIDCITY EXPECTATIONS)

Show the countdown video as you transition to Large Group. Set it to end as the session begins.

*The Large Group Leader has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to KidCity. The LGL is relatable and inviting. LGLs can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game, movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, holiday, etc. The LGL tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening. **Baptisms are the fourth Sunday of the month. Take a minute on that Sunday to ask if anyone is getting baptized and celebrate with them if they are.***

HOST: Welcome everyone! I'm so glad you are able to come hang out with us in KidCity today. My name is [INSERT NAME]. We are going to have a lot of fun today by playing a game, singing some incredible songs that worship God, and then we are going to hear an amazing true story from God's Word, the Bible.

But first, let's quickly go over our KidCity Expectations (rules) so we can make sure that we make the most of our time today: *(Don't dwell on these too long, but make sure you review them briefly so we can set everyone up for success.)*

1. Be Kind – We need to be kind with our words and actions to our friends, leaders, and the space that we are using.
2. Be Safe – Make wise choices with your actions and words.
3. Have Fun – Participate in what we are doing! It's no fun just sitting there...

Let's kick off today by playing a game!

LARGE GROUP GAME

METEOR SHOWER

(Velcro Balls, 3+ Velcro Target Discs, Strong Tape)

I bet you're noticing something different about me."

Turn side to side.

"Yep. Got a haircut. (Pause.) Oh! You were thinking it was the thing I'm wearing! Well, yeah, that too. I was told it's all the rage, and all of the kids are wearing it these days. It's fuzzy, comfortable, and best of all—"

Turn around to show Velcro Target Disc taped to LGL's back.

"There's a target on my back! Ok, I need someone to help me test this out.

LGL chooses a kid, hands them a Velcro Ball and has them stand from them a good ten feet.

"Now. Chuck it."

Have the volunteer whip the Velcro ball at the Target, and it should stick. Move if needed to "catch" it.

"Bullseye! Fun, right? And we've made a super fun game that teams can try! We call this game Meteor Shower, and we'll need Small Groups to compete against one another. Who's ready?"

Choose as many Small Groups as supplies will allow.

"In your hands you have some meteors. Your job is to launch your meteors to crash land on the planet...aka targets. But we need planets. Small Group Leaders, come up here and let's put some targets on YOUR backs!

"We'll let teams go one at a time, rack up as many points as you can, we'll tally them up at the end, high score is the winner! Here's the only rule—the balls must stick. They can't just hit and fall off; we'll only count the ones that stick to the targets. Let's play!"

Play the game, count up the points, and declare a winner.

"Way to go, teams! Let's keep that energy going and launch into some worship! Let's get loud and sing to God!"

WORSHIP

(VIDEO: GOD IS ON THE MOVE, LET IT BE KNOWN)

INTRODUCE THE SESSION

(SLIDE: LIFE APP)

(No Supplies)

This is our last week talking about initiative. I hope you all have learned as much as I have! Let's all say the definition together one last time.

(SLIDE: LIFE APP) **"Initiative is seeing what needs to be done and doing it."**

"We are closing out the month of September with Nehemiah finishing the wall! If I were him, I'd be pretty happy with myself."

"Is there anything you've done that makes you 'happy with yourself'? Maybe some accomplishment of yours? Okay, I see some hands out there."

"Sure, maybe we all have stories to share about times we got the right answer, scored the big goal, or sang our hearts out for a standing ovation."

"But think about something for a moment. Were those things all you or were there other people who helped you with it? There's a good chance you had someone who helped you understand how to arrive at the answer, a teammate who passed you the ball, or a music teacher who taught you how to sing. Most of our personal accomplishments can be tied to the help of others, so why do we take most or all of the credit?"

"I'll cut right to the chase.

"Sometimes we're humble braggers, aren't we? Have you heard that term before? It's pretending to be super humble about something, but the humility is really just hidden in a total brag. Maybe you've heard something like that from influencers on YouTube, people who think they're super important."

"They'll use words that both make them seem humble while bragging about what they have or something they get to do. Like, 'I'm so blessed and humbled to be able to get my first ever Lamborghini because of YOUR support.' Riiiiight . . ."

"Maybe you've heard of the phrase 'Give credit where credit is due.' In most of the humblebrag situations, the goal is to give credit to yourself while making it sound like the credit goes to someone else. But think about this. Do we ever humblebrag on God?"

"'I'm so blessed to be able to be the captain of this team.' or 'I'm so thankful I'm so smart and don't have to study to get really great grades.' Sure, they might sound like giving God credit, but the goal is really to make yourself look good."

"Why do you think we do that? What can we do about it? How can we remember to give God the credit when something great happens to us? Great questions!"

“Remember where we turn first when we have big questions? That’s right, the Bible. We get to read about all sorts of people who learned from their encounters with God, who inspired them to write them down so we could learn from them all of these years later.”

“All month, we’ve focused on one man and his story, Nehemiah. Let’s pick up his story where we left off last week!”

BIBLE STORY

(VIDEO: SO & SO SHOW; SLIDES: KEY QUESTION, BASIC TRUTH)

(VIDEO: SO & SO SHOW)

“The people were happy, filled with joy. They got their lives back where they needed to be, and that was in direct connection with God. They had strayed from that path, but through building the wall, hearing God’s Word, and giving God praise, they found joy once again.”

“There’s a lesson here, guys, and it’s a straightforward one. Take time to remind yourself what God has done for you every day. Be grateful. Be thoughtful. Be kind. God is always there to help us. God is always working through us to make things right in the world around us.”

“God answers our prayers, helps us figure out what’s right and what’s wrong, and gives us courage when we have to own up and apologize. God is with us every step of the way.”

“When we look back at God’s Story in the Bible (*hold up Bible*), we can see all the amazing things God has done in the past. We can see how God led His people through all kinds of challenges. We can see how He made each person in His image and how He has an important purpose for each and every one of us. We can see how God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus to be our Savior! Like our Basic Truth says,

(SLIDE: BASIC TRUTH) “I am loved by God no matter what so I can belong in God’s family forever.”

You can have a friendship with God—not just right now, but FOREVER. When you believe in Jesus and believe that He died to pay the price for your sins, God gives you life forever with Him! All you have to do is pray and ask God to be your friend forever and tell Him truthfully that you want to follow Him with your whole life. **If you want to make that decision, talk to your Small Group Leader about it when you go to small groups.**

“When we think of all that God has done, it makes us want to celebrate. We can take the initiative to do that, any time! It doesn’t have to be a holiday, like Christmas or Easter. Every day, we can choose to be grateful and tell God how thankful we are for His love.

Ask yourself,

(SLIDE: KEY QUESTION) “What is God doing in your life that you can celebrate?”

What things can you point to and say, ‘That’s totally God!’? If you’re having trouble thinking of something, don’t worry. You’ll have a chance to talk more about it with your Small Group. I have a feeling they’ll be able to help you see the moments in your life where God has played a part.

“Before you head to small groups, let’s go over our monthly verse one more time.”

MEMORY VERSE

(SLIDE: MEMORY VERSE)

Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord. (Colossians 3:23a, NIV)

PRAYER

“Dear God, thank You for being so good to us. You’re always there to help us—just like You were with Nehemiah and the people as they rebuilt the city of Jerusalem. Help us take the initiative to celebrate all the things You’ve done in our lives AND all the things You’re doing in our lives, right now! Help us remember to thank You and give You the honor You deserve. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Direct kids who may want to accept Jesus as their friend and Savior to talk to their small group leader.

DISMISS TO SMALL GROUPS

SMALL GROUP

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If you have a kid in your group who decided to follow Jesus, awesome! Be sure to loop their parents and your coach/coordinator into the conversation. Also, baptisms are this week. Take a minute to go over the Baptism Conversation Guide with your group.

BIBLE STORY EXTENSION

(Bibles, Lots of toothpicks and 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?

VERSES TO TAKE WITH YOU

(Bibles, cardstock, art supplies)

What You Do:

- Invite one of the kids who enjoys reading aloud to look up and read Psalm 19 to everyone.
- Ask kids what the writer of this Psalm was celebrating and praising God for.
- Remind kids that celebrating God is something we should do all year long, not just on Christmas or Easter.
- Set out the supplies.
- Challenge kids to create a Praise Poster that represents their own personal celebration of God.
 - It can be a collage of words or drawing, or the kids could also cut letter shapes out of the magazine pages (like ransom notes) to make their posters look interesting.
- Get them started with a few ideas if needed.
 - What praises did the author of Psalm 19 write about that you can identify with?
 - What events can you look back on in your life or the life of others and see how God has helped in some way?
 - How has God answered prayer?
 - How has God helped you make wise choices?
 - What has God provided for your family?
 - What friends has God given you?
 - In what unique ways has God created and gifted you?
 - What part of creation do you find most awesome?
 - What has Jesus done for you that no one else could ever do?
- Bring kids together and let them share their posters.

- If possible, consider having each kid record a 15-second video explaining their poster and what they are celebrating. With parental permission, post on your kid’s ministry website or on a social media group.

DISCUSSION

Ask the following questions and lead the group to discuss:

- 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.)

PRAY AND DISMISS

(Preteen GodTime Card - 1 per kid)

What You Say:

“Dear God, today we don’t want to ask You for anything. We just want to celebrate who You are and what You have done! Not only did You send Jesus so we can have a relationship with You, but You continue to work in our lives each and every day. There are not enough words, songs, balloons, or streamers to celebrate all You have done! Because we know You are always at work, this week we will continue to **[Bottom Line] look for ways to celebrate what God has done.** We love You! And we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen!”

Pass out the GodTime Cards to each kid. If there’s spare time, encourage kids to start looking over their GodTime card and point out how it relates to today’s lesson.