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REMEMBER & CELEBRATE

Remembering and Celebrating God's Gift of Freedom

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

Until several years ago, I was satisfied in my relationship with Jesus. And then I wasn't. As I began to pursue a deeper connection with Him, I became more aware of my sin and the things that entangled me. One day, God gave me the picture of a little bird. I realized I was the bird, living in a cage. My fears, anxieties, and insecurities formed the bars of the cage that held me.

Inside the cage, my life was small and manageable—but not free. Within the safety of the bars, I encountered God in real and tangible ways. He was present with me, and He loved me in spite of my sin and brokenness. However, God invited me into a new way of living with Him—a life of freedom. Slowly I began to realize that the door to my cage wasn't closed. The door had always been open.

God is faithful and won't allow me to retreat to my life of self-confinement. He stands with me and invites me into the life He's created for me. He lovingly reminds me I'm no longer captive to fear or anxiety. I've been set free from the constraints of sin. I stand securely in the freedom that is mine.

Kit Rae
ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

Festival of Jubilee: A Festival Celebrating God's Gift of Freedom

The Year of Jubilee occurred on the fiftieth year following every seven cycles of seven sabbatical years. This festival celebrated God's gift of freedom. It was a consecrated year set aside to proclaim liberty and restoration for all of the inhabitants of the land. Debts were forgiven, and those who had sold themselves to settle a debt were set free. Through this festival, God reminded His people that He would always provide for them and that He "held the deeds" to everything they held as possessions. Because of this, God commanded His people to provide for the redemption of land and housing lost due to poverty or other similar circumstances.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

We all have birdcages—figuratively speaking, of course. At one time or another, we lived there most of the time. Then, one day, jubilee! We were set free.

Scripture tells us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” (Hebrews 12:1). To “throw off” is a conscious and deliberate act. The door has been opened. But the choice to leave the cage behind and live in freedom is ours.

Stop for just a moment and allow yourself to be still before the Lord. Ask Him if anything is keeping you from living a life of freedom. If so, what’s holding you back?

Draw a birdcage and a bird or two. On each bar of the birdcage, write words or phrases that represent the things that make up your cage. Which bird represents you in your journey? Write your name on that bird. Consider using colored pencils to make designs that uniquely represent you today.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day’s biblical feast or festival.

Pass the Baton (for younger kids)

Lead children through an EXPLORE in which they experience property being returned to the owner, as the Israelites did in the Feast of Jubilee.

SUPPLIES

- Cardboard tubes (1 per child)
- Markers

SET UP

Have children spend a minute decorating their tubes, including putting their names on them. The tubes will be “batons” for the activity.

RELATE

Start with each child holding her tube. **During the Festival of Jubilee, all land that had been taken away was returned to the owner. On my signal, each of you will pass your “baton” to someone else in the group. We’ll continue passing batons from person to person as quickly as possible. When I say, “Jubilee!” look at the baton in your hands and return it to the person whose name is on it.** Repeat as time permits.

Go for the Gold (for older kids)

Lead children through an EXPLORE in which they experience being set free, as the Israelites did in the Feast of Jubilee.

SUPPLIES

- Masking tape
- Strips of fabric or colored paper (1 strip per child, 2 colors)
- Binder clips (1 per child)
- Gold-colored items (2)

SET UP

Have the strips of fabric or colored paper and binder clips available at check-in. Push any tables against the walls and use the tape to divide the room into four squares. You will have two teams, so assign each team two squares—one will be the team's "territory" and one will be the team's "jail." Place one gold item in the center of each team's territory.

RELATE

When the children arrive, encourage each one to join the game by taking a strip of fabric or colored paper (as a "flag"), which he will attach to his clothes by using the binder clips. Show the teams their territory, and explain that the object of the game is to steal the other team's gold or collect all of its flags.

To play, the kids walk on their knees and venture into the other team's territory to get its gold. When a child is in another team's territory, her flag can be taken. If this happens, she will be put in the opposing team's jail and can be released only by one of her team members who ventures into the opponent's jail and tags her. If he is tagged on the way, he is placed in the jail as well. If he tags her, both are granted a free walk back to their territory. When a team grabs the other team's gold or takes all of its members' flags, it wins.

For fun, call, "Jailbreak!" randomly throughout the game. "Jailbreak" releases everyone all the kids in jail back to their territories.

In Leviticus 25, God commanded His people to celebrate every 50 years with a special festival called Jubilee. During this special festival, debts were forgiven, land was returned, and slaves were set free. God required the Jews to celebrate this festival so that none of His people would be doomed to slavery forever. This meant that everyone had an opportunity to be free.

LARGE GROUP
SECTION

REMEMBER// 30 min.

Host/Storyteller

Through a sequence of traditions and play, children are given the opportunity to pause and remember who God is.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES



- Remember Verse 7–9 image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse 7–9 animation (see Resources)
- Remember Verse 10–12 image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse 10–12 animation (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

After everyone gathers as a large group, open with Traditions. During Traditions, you're helping the children work toward a common goal and giving them mementos to celebrate accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse, inviting friends to church, or bringing their Bibles. Once children receive their mementos, have them put the objects in the designated container. Once kids fill the container, hold a celebration.

If your kids fill a clear container or build a structure as part of a Tradition, give out simple foods (e.g., pretzels or animal crackers) if you eat together on Remember & Celebrate weekends. Save the more extensive party for when they complete their goal.

Recall the Remember Verses from the previous weeks. Lessons 7–9:

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” John 14:6–7

Lessons 10–12:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD'S FREEDOM

- What does the word *freedom* mean?
- How did God offer freedom to the Jewish people?
- How did Jesus offer us freedom through His death on the cross?

Remember and Play

SUPPLIES

- Images: ZONK! Questions, ZONK! Answers (see Resources)

Note: See the How It Works document for more information.

ZONK!

Questions and Answers

- 1) True or False: Antioch became one of the first church plants because the new believers had to flee



Jerusalem.

ANSWER: True. The believers in Jerusalem were being persecuted, so they fled to nearby cities.

2) Sent from Antioch, Paul was one of the first _____.

ANSWER: Missionaries. Ever since His church began, God has called missionaries to travel the world and tell people about Him.

3) God used an _____ to free Paul and Silas from jail.

ANSWER: Earthquake

4) After the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" what did Paul and Silas do?

- a. Preach to the jailer's whole household
- b. Baptize the jailer and his whole household
- c. Celebrate with the jailer and his whole household
- d. All of the above

ANSWER: D

5) True or False: Paul was run out of town for preaching about Jesus Christ.

ANSWER: True

6) When Paul spoke at the Areopagus, what did he say about the one true God?

- a. He told them God created everything
- b. He told them God doesn't need anyone or anything
- c. He told them the proof of this was that Christ died and rose again
- d. All of the above

ANSWER: D

7) True or False: Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesians to encourage them to remember that their true identity was found in Christ.

ANSWER: True

8) True or False: God called Paul to live a life that was easy.

ANSWER: False. God called Paul to a life that was difficult and different than he might have imagined.

9) On the way to Rome, Paul was:

- a. Sent back to Jerusalem
- b. Shipwrecked
- c. Told to sit in the corner
- d. Taken hostage by pirates

ANSWER: B

10) True or False: We know the day and the hour when Jesus will come back.

ANSWER: False. Only God the Father knows when Jesus will return.



BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

RELATE

As you bless your kids, tell them they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely share the joy and love they have received from God.

Invite the children to hold their hands in front of them, palms up, as you open a Bible and read 2 Corinthians 3:17:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

May God free you from worry and hardship. May you know that “in him and through faith in him [you] may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).

