

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C– Third Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**  
**RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1-10**

**Background:** In the Sundays after Epiphany, we will hear from a variety of prophets, each speaking to God’s relationship with the people. Although these prophets were speaking to a particular circumstance in a specific time and place, their words are helpful reminders to us today about our own relationship with God. Prophets seek to change the minds and behaviors of their audience.

**A Notation for This Week:** Ezra and Nehemiah are really one story told in many forms. We hear history, biography, lament, praise, instruction, poetry and celebration. In today’s passage, the people are back in Jerusalem and trying to figure out how to live faithfully as God’s people again. Ezra proclaims and interprets the Law for the people. It takes many hours but they stay and listen. Nehemiah encourages them to feast and give thanks.

**Theme: The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength**

**Before Class:** You will need copies of the reading from the Common English Bible. Gather lots of children’s bible storybooks. Gather party decorations and music supplies.

**Beginning:** Welcome the children and let them know that today you will remember favorite bible stories and have a celebration. Invite them to share something good in their life they want to celebrate.

**Opening Prayer:** Loving God, we thank you for all the blessings of this life. Help us to listen to your Word, praise your name, and to celebrate your love. Amen.

**Sing:** I’ve Got Peace Like a River” (LEVAS) or Siyahamba (Wonder, Love and Praise)

**The Story: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10**

Read the lesson from the Common English Bible (CEB) You can look up the passage here:  
<http://www.commonenglishbible.com>.

**Reflection Questions:**

- I wonder why the people were so eager to hear the scripture read out loud?
- I wonder how they felt as Ezra read it?
- I wonder why they wept?
- I wonder why Nehemiah told them to eat rich foods and celebrate?
- I wonder what your favorite Bible story is?
- I wonder how we celebrate at church? At home? In our community?

**Group Preparation:** Spend some time helping the class prepare for a class celebration. Perhaps decorations could be made and hung. Maybe a special snack can be prepared? Music can be chosen and rhythm instruments located or made.

**Choose a Bible Story:** The other part of preparing for today's celebration is for each person to choose a bible story to share with the class. Have plenty of children's bible storybooks available and help children find the story they want to share.

**Celebration:** Then come together for your celebration. Have each person share his/her favorite bible story. Enjoy the decorations, music and food. Most of all, enjoy each other's company and offer praise to God. Consider playing upbeat music during your party, such as "Thy Word" by Amy Grant, or Spring from Vivaldi's Four Seasons, or Ode to Joy by Beethoven.

**Challenge for the Week:** Invite the children to ask their family members to share their favorite bible stories over the course of the week.

**Closing Prayer:** Loving God, we thank you for the gift of your word in the Bible and for the many reasons to celebrate. Help us to remember sing your praises every day. Amen.

**Sing:**

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit (LEVAS)  
Marching to Zion (LEVAS)

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*Published by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

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