

**KEY VERSE:** The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve." (Nehemiah 8:11)

# Obey and Rejoice

**Lesson Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:2-3, 5-6, 9-12

## God's Word

**2** So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. **3** He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

**5** Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. **6** Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

**9** Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. **10** Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." **11** The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve." **12** Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.



# Bible Story

## Obey and Rejoice

**Nehemiah 8:2-3, 5-6, 9-12**

After the people of Israel had settled in their towns, there was an assembly of the people in the area before what was called the Water Gate.

The people then told Ezra—who was the priest and a *scribe* (one who wrote down the laws of God)—to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses. The Book of the Law of Moses was the first five books of the Bible.

Ezra then read aloud from the Book of the Law to all the people gathered before him. The people listened attentively to the reading. When Ezra opened the Book of the Law, all the people stood up in reverence to the Word of God. Ezra then led the people in a period of praise and worship. The people lifted their hands in response to Ezra's praise to God and they shouted, "Amen! Amen!"

After the reading from the Book of the Law, Nehemiah the governor, Ezra, and the other worship leaders told the people that the day was sacred to the Lord and that they were not to mourn or weep. Instead, they were to enjoy their food and sweet drinks and send food and drinks to those who had none. As they celebrated, they were to remember that the joy of the Lord is their strength.

After listening to the instructions from Nehemiah and the other leaders, the people went to their homes to eat, drink, share with others, and—most of all—to celebrate because they now understood God's Word.

## Celebrate Good Times

(Part 1)

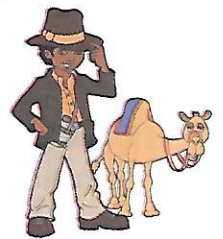
Mrs. Brown, the fifth-grade teacher at MLK Elementary School, told her class that a very important announcement was going to be made tomorrow by the school principal. Tests had been done on the school's water supply and a high level of lead was discovered in the water. This made the water unsafe to drink. So, over the past several weeks bottled water was brought in for the students while a new school was being built.

When Jaynika and her brother, Jaylon, got home that afternoon, Jaynika said, "Mom, I wonder what the principal is going to tell us tomorrow? Mrs. Brown said that the principal has a very important announcement to make."

"I wonder if it's good or bad?" Jaylon commented.

What do you think the announcement is about? Would it drive you crazy to know you would be receiving information but had to wait for it?

## Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius



**Nicholas:** Hi, there! Nicholas and Cornelius are in the house! In the lesson today, the work on the walls of Jerusalem had been completed, and the city was now safe.

**Cornelius:** And Nehemiah and the people had worked really hard!

**Nicholas:** That's right! And now the people gathered together and wanted to hear information from the Book of the Law. So, the people asked Ezra the priest to read God's Word to them.

**Cornelius:** Why did they want to hear what the Book of the Law had to say?



## Celebrate Good Times

### (Part 2)

As the students walked to the auditorium to hear the principal's announcement, they were filled with curiosity. Jaynika and Jaylon were walking with their friends and they were all trying to guess what Principal Aubrey was going to say.

After all the classes were assembled in the auditorium, Mr. Aubrey walked onto the platform and said, "Good morning, students. As you all know, the water in this building has been contaminated and has not been fit to drink. We will have to move out of this building and join in temporarily with another school until our new school building is finished."

When Mr. Aubrey said that they would have to move, many of the students started to cry because they had come to love their school building. Many good memories were in their school.

Mr. Aubrey said, "Students, I know how many of you feel, but don't be sad. We will have a new school building soon and you will have new memories to make. I want each of you to celebrate the good times you had in this building and for what is to come!"

## Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius

**Nicholas:** God's Word gives us instructions on how we are to live and treat each other and how we are to relate to God.



**Cornelius:** That is true! When Ezra began to read, all the people stood up on their feet to show respect and reverence for God's Word. So, Nicholas, what happened next?

**Nicholas:** As the people heard what was in the Book of the Law they started weeping. Both Ezra and Nehemiah told the people that it was a special day in honor of God—so the people celebrated good times!

## Select the Right Answer

Finish each sentence by selecting the answer on the right that correctly completes the statement. Write the answer on the line.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ read the Book of the Law.

2. When Ezra opened the Book, the people \_\_\_\_\_ up.

3. When Ezra praised the Lord, the people said, "\_\_\_\_\_."

4. Nehemiah told the people that "this day is \_\_\_\_\_."

5. The people were told not to mourn or \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. woke
- b. Amen! Amen!
- c. sacred
- d. Ezra
- e. stood
- f. holy
- g. Moses
- h. special
- i. dance
- j. weep