



Date: _____

Series: Signs on Believers Hwy
Winter Year 4, Lesson 34

God Throws A Party

Primary Scripture: Revelation 21:1-7; Luke 15:21-24

Key Verse: Matthew 5:12, "Rejoice and be glad because you have a great reward in heaven!"

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Children often have the perception of heaven as a cloudy and mystical place where people play harps, enter through golden gates, live in a sterile environment and don't have much fun at all. This is not the picture of heaven painted for us in the Bible. God describes heaven as a party... a homecoming party. What is celebrated is the victory of Jesus and what he has done for us. It is celebrated in the activity of all of God's creatures, human and angels, enjoying God's presence. Heaven is a party. The party begins here as we remember that all of heaven rejoices when one sinner turns back to the Heavenly Father through Christ.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Through the finished work of Christ on the cross, we have the assurance of eternal life through him, now and in heaven.

Jesus in us: Joy and happiness are characteristics of those who have the presence of Jesus in their lives.

Jesus through us: Jesus uses us to extend the party invitation to others.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies: several party noisemakers, party hats, party toys and other party paraphernalia in a paper bag

In a quiet and reverent tone, say:

Let's prepare for worship. Did you know that what happens in worship is very similar to what happens in heaven? So what are some things that happen in worship? *(Take suggestions like: singing, lifting hands, kneeling, praying, bowing heads, folding hands, etc. Some kids might suggest quiet worship.)*

Worship is reverent as we enter into the awesome and mysterious presence of God himself. Psalm 100:4 says, "Enter his gates with a song of thanksgiving. Come into his courtyards with a song of praise. Give thanks to him; praise his name."

When we worship, we celebrate the victory of Jesus and the presence of God.

Once you have established a reverent, even quiet tone, surprise kids with the following:

Here are some worship supplies. Maybe I should pass them out.

Reach into the paper bag and throw them out into the audience while shouting,

Let's have a party!

Allow the kids a minute of noisemaking and general bedlam.

Now, wait a minute. Do you think this is appropriate for church?

Take answers, as some say "yes," some say, "no."

Although we don't act like this all the time, this atmosphere can be appropriate for church because God describes heaven as a party! In worship, we celebrate the victory of Jesus and our wonderful friendship with God. We celebrate because on earth we rejoice in God's presence, but in heaven, we get to see God face to face. So, a good way to think about heaven is a party. And a good way to think about worship is a party.

Make some noise as I read to you (loudly) Psalm 100:1-2, "*Shout happily to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord cheerfully. Come into his presence with a joyful song.*"

Now let's put aside the party supplies and sing songs of praise to God for the victory he has given us in his Son Jesus.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Use the outlined storytelling format to briefly tell the parable of the Prodigal Son based on Luke 15. As you read, call on kids from the audience to help fill in the story blanks since many kids already know it.

Introduction

During his earthly ministry, Jesus taught his disciples and often spoke about the Kingdom of God. He said it was like a party. Here is one story he told about it. We know it as the story of The Prodigal Son. But, you could also call it the story of The Happy Father. I'll tell you part of the story now.

Greedy Son

There once was a rich man who had a son. Unfortunately, his son decided that he no longer wanted to be around his father. So, he said to his father, "Give me my share of the money that I will receive after you die." And the man gave it to his son, who immediately packed up his things and went on a long trip.

Party Hardy

While he was gone, he spent his money quickly and freely. He wasted most of it on parties. He was Mr. Party Hardy. He held party after party and certainly made a lot of friends. But these were not the kind of parties that his father would like.

Famine

When all this money was finally spent, a famine came across the land and food was scarce for everyone. The son was close to starving so he got a job feeding _____. Feeding what? (*Pigs.*)

It was a terrible job. But he was so poor and hungry that he thought about eating the pigs' food.

Return Home

Then, one day he decided that in order to save himself, something had to change. He thought, "Maybe I should go _____." Go where? (*Home.*)

"Maybe my father would hire me as a servant," he thought. So, he took the long trip home and worried the whole way about whether or not his father would take him back. But when his father saw him, he ran to him and gave him a big _____. A big what? (*Hug.*)

The boy said, “I don’t deserve to be called your son. I have sinned against you and against God!”

Homecoming Party

But regardless of this fact, his father said, “Quick, let’s have a _____!” A What? (Party.)

“My son, whom I thought was lost, is now found,” he exclaimed. “I thought he was dead, but now he has returned to me and is _____!” Is what? (Alive.)

Teaching Point

What do you think our Heavenly Father thinks about us when we wander far away from him?

Sometimes when we disobey God, and want to do things our own way, it’s like walking away from him. But when we come to our senses, come back to him, and ask for his forgiveness, how do you think he feels? (Happy.)

It’s just like a party. All of heaven rejoices even when one sinner turns back to God.

Prayer

Dear God, sometimes when we disobey you, it’s like we wander away from you like this lost son in Jesus’ story. But we thank you we can turn back and ask for forgiveness. Thank you for calling us your sons and daughters and giving us Jesus who takes away our sin. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Arrange party supplies around the offering plate. As kids come forward, explain that their offering is used to help invite others into God’s family. Because of that, there will be a bigger party in heaven.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

This section of the lesson will go extra long because we will use the games to teach about heaven. Heaven is an active and fun place. After all, God throws a party for all his children.

Game #1 - Elbow Tag

Round One

Get kids into pairs with elbows linked. Choose one pair of kids and separate their linked arms. Assign and announce one of them to be a chaser (or "it") and the other to be the one chased. The chaser tries to tag his original partner who runs to a safe place, which is another pair of kids. Tell the rest of the kids, still in partners, that they are the home base and that the "chasee" is only safe from being tagged when he/she links elbows with a home base pair. But, there can never be three people linked. So, that means that the person on the opposite end of the home base must be released immediately and run from the person who is "it."

Round Two

Have each pair link up with another pair to form a foursome. Now, instead of one person being "it" and chasing another, a pair is "it" and chases another pair. When the "chasee" pair attaches to a foursome home base group, the pair on the other end releases and tries to get away.

Teaching Point

In this game, it is important to connect to each other with elbows. In heaven, will we be connected to other people? Maybe not by connecting with each other's elbows, but we will feel very close to many people because heaven is a place of perfect respect and love for one another. There will be no arguments, fighting, jealousy,

anger, or hurt feelings. Best of all, we will feel close to Jesus and close enough to touch him, just like we connected to each other in Elbow Tag.

Game #2 – Steal the Bacon

Supplies: a flag, glove, or other soft, easy to grab object to represent the “bacon” (A dishtowel tied in a knot also works well.)

The challenge... Get the “bacon” back to your own team’s side without getting tagged.

Have kids form two base lines on opposite sides of the room. They should number off from one to X. (*X being the total number of kids in the line*).

Assign a student as a referee (or an adult if you prefer), who places the “bacon” midway between the two opposing lines. When the referee calls out a number to begin each “round,” the player from each side (*as the number is called*) will run out and attempt to “steal the bacon.” Example: The referee calls out “five.” Team A’s player #5 and Team B’s player #5 leave their base line and go out to the middle to attempt to “steal the bacon.”

No player is allowed to touch another player until one of them picks up the “bacon.” Once a player grabs the bacon, the other player may tag him/her. Then that player wins a point for his/her team. But if either player is able to grab the bacon and carry it back to his/her own side, without being tagged, that team scores a point.

Keep track of which numbers haven’t been called as the rounds progress, to ensure that all kids get a chance to play. After each round, call out the score.

NOTE: *Often the two opponents run out and hover over the bacon, waiting for a window of opportunity to grab it and run back before the other player has time to react. If the players for a given round are too tentative, speed play along by counting down from 5 to 1. If neither player has grabbed the bacon by the time you get to “1,” either send them back to their bases and call out another number, or call out another number while the first pair is still out there, so there are four kids hovering and darting. It might be helpful for leaders to announce at some point the number of points scored to “call” the game or to do it once all kids have had a turn.*

Teaching Point

Trying to “steal the bacon” is fun, and especially exciting when you are waiting for your number to be called. How is this like heaven?
(Heaven will be fun. It’s like a prize worth risking everything for. When people arrive in heaven, there is a great celebration.)

It's exciting to know that someday we will go to heaven. We want to be able to live as long as we can here, because God has important things he wants us to do. But when he calls us home to heaven, we are assured that there is a wonderful homecoming party waiting for us. This is something to be excited about happening in the future, even if we don't know *when* it will happen.

Game #3 – Balloon Hand Hockey

Supplies: two chairs and masking tape to mark a field of play on the floor

Divide kids into two teams and have kids spread out, mingling throughout a square field in the room. Have each team face their goal on opposite sides of the playing field. (The goal is represented with chairs on both sides of the field.) Each team will have a “goalie” sitting in the chair.

The object of the game is to score points with floating hockey pucks (balloons). Kids must remain seated at all times (bottoms on the ground) and use their two hockey sticks (their hands) to bat the “pucks” toward their goal. When one of the balloons comes close enough to the chair that the goalie can catch it, he/she pops the balloon by sitting on it. Popping the balloon scores a point for that team.

Adult assistants toss balloons onto the playing field and retrieve balloons that kids cannot reach. Toss out many balloons at the same time for a high level of excitement.

Teaching Point

Do you think heaven is a loud place or a quiet place?

It probably does have times of quiet, but the Bible most often describes it as a place that is filled with loud noises, loud music and singing praises to God. It might have the same excitement that this game has.

Bible Presentation:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Ask the kids to be quiet while you read to them and create this picture of heaven. Have them lie down, close their eyes and imagine.

In Matthew 5:12, Jesus says this, “*Rejoice and be glad because you have a great reward in heaven!*”

He says this even when people go through hard times here on earth. Even if people persecute you, treat you unkindly, or lie about you or say evil things to you because you believe in Jesus, you can still rejoice. You can still be glad because there is a party waiting for you in heaven. In the book of Revelation, it describes that party.

Revelation 21:2 says,

“Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband.”

This is the Apostle John having a dream. In this dream, he sees pictures of what happens in heaven and what happens on earth in the future. At the end of the book of Revelation, he writes about when this world passes away, and those who trust in Jesus as Savior have been brought to heaven, there is a new place made for them there. This is what he said,

Revelation 21:1

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth had disappeared, and the sea was gone.”

That means that this world has passed away and all those who believe in Jesus are now going to be with him in heaven.

Revelation 21:2

“Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband.”

This looked like a city to him, but it reminds us of all the people who have trusted Jesus and are now being brought to him. It reminds him of a bride who is going to be in a wedding ceremony with her new husband. When John wrote this, the biggest parties they had were when someone got married. So he is saying this is just like a wedding party. One of the happiest times you will ever have is when you get to meet Jesus face to face.

Revelation 21:3

“I heard a loud voice from the throne say, ‘God lives with humans! God will make his home with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won’t be any more death. There won’t be any grief, crying, or pain, because the first things have disappeared.’”

What will it be like in heaven? Who can remember some of the things listed in this verse?

Take answers from the audience. *(No more crying, sighing or dying.)*

In the next section, we see God sitting on a throne and listen to what he says:

Revelation 21:5-7

“The one sitting on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new... I will give a drink from the fountain filled with the water of life to anyone who is thirsty. It won’t cost anything. Everyone who wins the victory will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my children.’”

Do you think you will be able to see God face to face? He will know you as a father knows his child and you will know him like a good father. A few verses later, it describes God’s Son, Jesus, who is called the Lamb of God, sitting next to his father.

In another place in the Bible (*Revelation 5:11-13*), millions and millions of heavenly creatures are described around the throne shouting with very loud voices and a wonderful song. They are all singing to the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, Jesus... “be praise, honor, glory, and power forever and ever. Amen!”

Application Story:

Invite kids to sit up and open their eyes as they listen to a true, modern story...

Benjamin is eight years old when he finally gets the chance to visit Disney World. It’s a place he has always wanted to go. However, it had been so difficult for his mom to take him there, because his brother had special needs. After waiting for years and years, finally the day arrived when he could go there.

However, shortly after arriving, something very sad happened. While he was visiting, he and his mom received a message that his brother, who had been sick for a very long time, had unexpectedly died back home. Benjamin was disappointed that he had to leave Disney World, but more importantly, he was sad that his brother had died.

Upon returning home, Benjamin talked to his pastor about where his brother really was now. He knew his brother was in heaven with Jesus, but he wondered what it was like there. He remembered the fun rides in Disney World so he asked his pastor, “Do you think they have roller coasters in heaven?”

How do you think the pastor answered that?

Take answers from the audience.

The pastor answered, “I don’t see why they couldn’t have roller coasters in heaven, but I don’t know for sure. I do know one thing for sure. Heaven is much more fun than Disney World.”

“What?” said Benjamin.

“Sure,” replied the pastor. “It’s like a big party because we are celebrating the best thing that has ever happened, and that is that God loves us and gave his own Son for us. Everyone will feel God’s love and it will make us so happy. We’ll be able to be as close to Jesus as you and I sitting right here.”

“That’s wonderful,” said Benjamin. “But what about the roller coasters?”

“Who knows,” said the pastor. “Maybe we won’t need roller coasters. Maybe we can just fly if we want to.”

Benjamin exclaimed, “Wow! I can hardly imagine!”

“Me, too,” said the pastor. “But right now, I can be happy in my heart, even when I miss someone who has already gone home to Jesus. I know I’ll see him again someday and then there will be no special needs or illnesses and everyone will be perfect and happy.”



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Let kids tell about the most fun parties that they have ever been to and how those parties might be like heaven.

Conclude with:

All of those activities become fun when you enjoy the people you are doing them with. In heaven, we can enjoy doing things with Jesus himself.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Safety and Security: Safety and security procedures are important for each church to carefully define and implement according to their unique needs. The security, safety, illness and accident procedures described in this curriculum are provided for example purposes only and may not be appropriate, applicable or adequate for every situation. Each church is responsible for determining whether any security, safety, illness and accident procedures contained in the curriculum are appropriate, applicable or adequate for its unique situation. The activities described in this curriculum require adult supervision and may not be suitable for each child and each situation. Each church is responsible for ensuring that adequate adult supervision is provided for all activities and for determining whether an activity is appropriate for each child and each situation. Kids Kount Publishing disclaims all liability for the implementation of any procedures or the performance of any activities described in this curriculum.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- several party noisemakers, party hats, party toys and other party paraphernalia in a paper bag

Learning Games:

- a flag, glove, or other soft, easy to grab object to represent the “bacon” (A dishtowel tied in a knot also works well.)
- two chairs and masking tape to mark a field of play on the floor