



GETTING READY

1. Welcome/Opener

What You Need:

- Dirty Jobs themed decorations
- Random garbage—empty pizza boxes, butcher paper, computer paper wadded up, colorful pit balls, caution tape, moving boxes, etc.
- Host
- Trash bags
- Painter's tape

Music and Sound Effects (SFX):

- Upbeat music to use as kids enter the room
- Upbeat music to use during the game

Large Group Visuals:

- Theme Slide
- Blank Theme Slide
- Blank Memory Verse Slide
- Memory Verse Slide

What You Do:

- Using painter's tape, divide the room into two sides. This will help Host split kids into two teams.

- Dirty Jobs Theme Decorations: Even if you don't decorate for the theme this month, you will need a mess on the stage and where the kids sit. The game depends on a mess that the kids will be cleaning up. To make the game stretch for 60 seconds, add small objects like colorful pit balls and wads of paper. The back of the stage needs to have a mess that the communicator will use throughout the Bible story as well. See "What You Do" under Communicator Script for more details.

2. Communicator Script

What You Need:

- Communicator
- Bible
- Stage mess: empty pizza boxes, butcher paper, computer paper wadded up, colorful pit balls, caution tape, moving boxes, etc.
- Hard hat
- Goblet
- Crown
- Box of tissues
- Giant inflatable hammer
- Brick or large stone
- Sealed envelope
- Household dishes – plate and/or cup
- Empty chip bag and soda bottle
- Jar of baby food

Music and Sound Effects (SFX):

- Upbeat music to use as kids exit the room

Large Group Visuals:

- Blank Key Question Slide
- Key Question Slide

What You Do:

- There needs to be a mess along the back focal wall of the stage. Hidden in the mess and out of plain sight need to be the props used to tell Nehemiah's story. Consider hiding them all over the stage instead of putting them all in the same hiding spot. Run through this with the Communicator so she knows where the props are.

3. Worship

What You Need:

- We Are Royals
- Through It All

If I Had a Hammer

Bible Story: If I Had a Hammer (Nehemiah Hears about the Wall) • *Nehemiah 1:1–2:9*

Key Question: What around you needs to be done?

Bottom Line: Be on the lookout for what needs to be done.

Memory Verse: “Work at everything you do with all your heart. Work as if you were working for the Lord.” *Colossians 3:23a, NIV*

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

Basic Truth: I need to make the wise choice.

Story: Communicating God’s Truth in Engaging Ways (Large Group, 35 minutes)

Engage kids’ hearts through a dynamic and interactive Bible story, worship, and prayer experience in a Large Group setting.

SFX: Play high-energy music as kids enter.

CG: Theme Slide

Optional CG (Media Package): Theme Loop Video

Host enters.

Optional CG (Media Package): Countdown Video

CG: Blank Theme Slide

Optional CG (Media Package): Theme Loop Video

Welcome

*Kids enter to a common area and stage filled with random garbage—pizza boxes, big wads of butcher paper, colorful pit balls, caution tape, etc. There is a line down the center of the room (common area only) made with painter’s tape. Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host discusses recent/upcoming events: College Football Season Kickoff, NFL Season Kickoff, Labor Day, National Blueberry Popsicle Day, National Cheese Pizza Day, movie opening (*Small Foot*), a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host 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.*

Opener

HOST: “I want to take a second to thank the people in society who take care of our messes. Let’s be honest—you and I, we’re some dirty, messy people. Can I get an ‘amen’? (*Pause for response.*)”

“Think with me. Ever eaten a big, honking plate of ribs smothered in BBQ sauce? What do you use to wipe your face when napkins aren’t available? (*Pause for response.*) YOUR CLOTHES! You know your momma loves you when she works to take out those stains.”

“And how many of you have been to the movie theater lately? Where do people put their paper cups, empty nacho containers, and popcorn? (*Pause for response.*) THE FLOOR! THEIR SEATS!”

ANYWHERE BUT THE TRASH! Definitely need to give a shout out to the theater ushers who take care of the mess with brooms and mops in hand.”

“I could go on and on about the dirty jobs we leave for people. I’m so thankful for sanitation engineers, busboys, janitorial workers, handymen, and responsible parents . . . they’ve got a dirty job to do and aren’t scared to do it. They understand someone’s gotta do it!”

“And I don’t know if you’ve taken a look around the room yet, but . . . uh, something definitely needs to be done in here. It’s a hot mess, and I don’t see any movie theater ushers volunteering to clean it up either . . . *(beat)* how about we turn it into a game?”

“Anybody want to play quite possibly the biggest mess of a game [*Name of Environment*] has ever seen? *(Pause for response.)* Awesome!”

“I’m going to split the room right down the middle into two teams. Each side of the room has an equal amount of mess on it. I’ve given each of your Small Group Leaders a heavy-duty, industrial-grade trash bag. With sixty seconds on the clock, you need to work together with your team to get your side of the room SPOTLESS. I need as much of that trash as possible to go into those trash bags! Whichever team’s side of the room is CLEANER once the countdown ends is the WINNER. Let’s keep it clean . . . no dirty play! Clear as mud? Good! Let’s get to cleanin’! GO!”

SFX: High-energy game music

Cleaning chaos ensues. Make sure kids do not attempt to clean up mess on stage. After approximately 60 seconds, host freezes everyone’s cleaning efforts and wraps up game.

“And that’s time! A noble sanitation effort from both teams, but there can be only one winner—and that’s [*Name of Winning Team*]! Great job, one and all! I knew you could do it if you put some elbow grease into it!

Announcements

Use this as an example of what to say. Make it your own and help the kids feel welcomed. Then take a moment to share any/all announcements.

HOST: “I’m so excited to be here with all of you today and get a little crazy! If it’s your first time here, I want to welcome you and I would love to have a chance to meet you, get a high five and show you around. Here at Mission, we believe that this is a place for you and you belong here no matter who you are or what you believe. Mission is for YOU!

I have just a few announcements for you all today...

Share any/all announcements.

Now let’s all stand up, get close, give someone a high five and let’s sing and worship together!

Host exits and Worship Leader enters.

Worship

WORSHIP LEADER: “Thank you, *[Name of Host]*. Let’s get up and get loud as we sing and dance for who God is and what he’s done for us!

We are Royals

WORSHIP LEADER: “That was amazing! (*Take a moment to say something about the next song*). So let’s give everything we have and worship God together!

Through It All

Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.

CG: Blank Key Question Slide

COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT

INTRODUCTION

Communicator enters to a really messy stage.

COMMUNICATOR: “Wow! This place is in shambles! It’s an absolute PIGSTY! I mean, look at the stage! There’re random scraps of paper everywhere—it’s like someone was trying to make it rain printer paper! And all this caution tape everywhere. I’m having flashbacks to when *[Name of Host]* was a police mummy for Halloween last year! And what’s with all the boxes?”

Communicator picks up examples of the mess while speaking of it and tosses the trash.

“This is absolute insanity. How did it get this BAD? (*Drop arms.*) And you know the worst part of it all? I know that I’m going to have to be the one to clean it up because there’s no way that *[Name of Host]* is going to help me.”

“Be honest with me: did anybody NOT notice this mess when you walked in? (*Pause for response.*) How many of you looked at the mess and thought, somebody should clean this mess up?” (*Pause for response.*)

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: “But I guess if I’m being completely honest, every single day I’m guilty of seeing messes and doing nothing about them. Like when I was a kid, my little brother would dump his giant toy box in the middle of the living room. It would sit there for days. I’d see the mess, but I didn’t do anything about it because it was HIS mess. Or in the backyard, our beloved dog would drop giant doggie presents all over the grass. They were nasty little bombs just waiting to be stepped in. I would see the mess, but since they weren’t mine, why should I do anything about it?”

“I’m fairly confident I’m not alone in this room guilty of skipping out on messes. In all fairness, maybe you don’t really notice what needs to be done. It’s possible your sports equipment and big pile of your favorite books have been dumped all over your room so long you don’t even see them as being out of place. It’s normal. You hear your mom say, *(best mom voice)* ‘YOUR ROOM IS DISGUSTING! CLEAN IT UP! AND WHAT IS THAT SMELL?’ but you look around to see nothing wrong . . . and nothing smelling funny.”

“If you’re feeling guilty this morning about the mess in your room or for looking past the stacks of dishes in the sink, worry not! Today we have a great story for you. We’re going to talk about a dude named Nehemiah who saw a mess . . . a really big mess. And instead of ignoring it, he did something about it! Let’s check it out.”

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “Our story takes place in the Old Testament during a time in history when Jerusalem, the Israelites’ Holy City, had been destroyed, scattering God’s chosen people in all directions. After a few decades, God’s people began to return to their home. Slowly, they attempted to put the city back together. However, the city was far from being fully restored.”

Communicator pulls out a hard hat from the mess on stage.

“While this was happening, Nehemiah was living far from Jerusalem in Susa, working as a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes.”

Communicator pulls goblet out of the mess on stage.

“As the cupbearer, Nehemiah had it pretty easy—his primary job was to bring the king his drinks! Well, and to take the first sip to make sure nobody had poisoned it, but hey—every job has its down sides. Anyway, Nehemiah’s family was from Judah, where Jerusalem was the capital city. Exile had landed him this job working for the King of the Persian Empire.”

Communicator pulls a crown out of the mess on stage.

“Regardless, Nehemiah couldn’t wait for news from his homeland or fellow exiles. He must have been excited when one of his brothers, Hanani, came to visit from Judah. Nehemiah asked Hanani what the deal was with his homeland: what was happening with the people who had moved back? How were they doing? What was the state of Jerusalem? Hanani, unfortunately, had only sad news. Hanani said to Nehemiah (*Open Bible and read Nehemiah 1:3.*), “*Some of the people who returned are still alive. They are back in the land of Judah. But they are having a hard time. They are ashamed. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down. Its gates have been burned with fire, (NIRV).*” It’s important to remember that Jerusalem was a symbol of national identity and pride for God’s chosen people. To hear that the city was in great trouble and disgrace would have caused immense concern for any Jew, including Nehemiah. To make matters worse, the city walls remained unrepaired. During ancient times, walls were essential to providing safety from raids and attacks. A thick, intimidating wall represented power and strength. Upon hearing this, anybody want to guess how Nehemiah responded?”

Communicator pulls a box of tissues out of the mess on stage.

“He got really, REALLY upset. In fact, the Bible says (*Open Bible and read Nehemiah 1:4.*), “*When I heard about these things, I sat down and wept. For several days I was very sad. I didn’t eat any food. And I prayed to the God of heaven, (NirV).*” Nehemiah was completely beside himself. He cried and lost his appetite. His homeland, his family, his fellow Israelites—they were in a vulnerable, dangerous place, and it made Nehemiah heartbroken!”

“In this time of need, he turned to God asking for forgiveness, unity, and success for the Israelites. For days and weeks Nehemiah continued to call out to God for help. As he prayed and meditated, an amazing, outrageous, and difficult plan began to form in his mind. What if Nehemiah did something about the mess he heard about? So he asked God to help him talk to King Artaxerxes. To help with the situation, it required permission from the Persian King for safe passage and resources.”

“Later, Nehemiah went to the king to bring him his wine, and the king noticed right away that Nehemiah was upset. This was sort of a big deal. If anyone did anything that displeased the king, he could straight up take you out. Even by simply looking sad in his presence, the king could throw you to the lions! He could dangle you off the roof of the palace! He could . . .”

Communicator pulls giant inflatable hammer out of the mess on stage.

“. . . Well, he probably wouldn’t bop you over the head with a giant hammer. BUT HE COULD IF HE WANTED TO! Surprisingly, the king did none of these things. Instead, he simply asked Nehemiah what was wrong. Nehemiah explained to the king that Jerusalem lay in ruins and that all of his friends—the exiled Jews—were in serious trouble. Then, summoning all of his courage, Nehemiah asked the king what he wanted to ask all along. (*Open Bible and read Nehemiah 2:5b.*) “*If it pleases you, send me to Judah. Let me go to the city of Jerusalem. That’s where my people are buried. I want to rebuild it, (NirV).*””

Communicator pulls a brick out of the mess on stage.

“With a surge of audacity, Nehemiah asked King Artaxerxes for letters granting not only safe passage to Jerusalem but also timber from the king’s forest. Artaxerxes considered Nehemiah’s proposal . . . and after what must have felt like eons of waiting on Nehemiah’s part, the king agreed to let Nehemiah return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls.”

Communicator pulls sealed envelope out of mess on stage.

“The king even included the letters granting safe passage and timber they’d need for the project! And on top of that, the king sent Nehemiah off with an escort of army officers and cavalry for added safety. After months of prayer, Nehemiah was ready to tackle the biggest job of his life.”

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: “Nehemiah heard about this big mess. The Holy City of Jerusalem’s walls were destroyed, and its gates had been burned down to the ground. The city was vulnerable to attacks. It

troubled Nehemiah so much that it couldn't be ignored. This is what's most notable about Nehemiah. The walls had been in ruin for over a century. And God's people had been allowed to return back to Jerusalem for decades. Countless Israelites walked past the broken walls thinking, 'Somebody should fix that' or 'What a mess' but did NOTHING about it. Nehemiah simply HEARD about the mess and said it must change."

"Too many times in life we are similar to the numerous people who walked past the vulnerable city recognizing a problem but then do nothing about it."

Communicator pulls dishes out of the mess on stage.

"We see the dishes piled in the sink but think it's Mom's problem."

Communicator pulls an empty chip bag and empty soda bottle out of the mess on stage.

"Trash is in the church parking lot but think it's the pastor's problem."

Communicator pulls a baby food jar out of the mess on stage.

"The floor under your baby sister's highchair is getting sticky from food and drool, but we are perfectly content walking around the sticky area."

"This is what happens when we focus on ourselves. We miss opportunities to serve others around us and neglect what needs to be done."

"But what would our actions look like if we took on the attitude of Nehemiah? This requires us to LOOK and LISTEN for things to be done—even if the mess is not one we created. Is this easy? Nope. It's hard to think less of ourselves and more of others! But Nehemiah sets a great example of going to God when he first heard of the problem."

"Likewise, we can go to God to ask for help because God can give you and me the courage we need to do what needs to be done."

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "Having heard this story, we'd love for you to consider this question."

CG: Key Question Slide

"**What around you needs to be done?** Maybe it's something at school or home or at a friend's house. It requires us to look and listen. Let's pray."

CG: Blank Key Question Slide

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard then dismisses them to small group.

SFX: Play high-energy music as the kids exit.
CG: Theme Slide