



**ELEMENTARY**

JUNE 2024

## FOR LEADERS ONLY

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### **GOD VIEW:** THE CONNECTION BETWEEN JOY AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

Choose joy! This may be a commonly used phrase you've heard, but what does it *actually* mean? Joy is more than being excited about the good things that happen to us. Joy is an attitude—a decision to trust God no matter what is going on in our lives. From the very beginning, God had a plan for the world. As we dive into the Bible, we'll discover God's plan for us and how God has been at work through it all. When we see and celebrate what God is doing, we can find true joy!

### **CORE INSIGHT:** The theological foundation for JOY

**Faith** in God's Son. I believe in Jesus and will continually trust Him even when life doesn't make sense.

Jesus never promises that life will be easy or perfect, even when we follow Him. Though we may experience hurt and see pain all around us, God is still at work. Because of Jesus, we can experience a relationship with God and learn how to trust God no matter what.

### **JOY is choosing to celebrate what God is doing.**

### **HEADS UP:** IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT JOY WITH KIDS

As you talk about joy this month, keep in mind that kids are concrete thinkers and need a solid starting point before they dive into bigger concepts and ideas. Kids may naturally equate joy with their circumstances or with their possessions . . . which can cause those who don't have as much to feel out of place or feel badly about themselves and their family. This is an opportunity to help kids see how joy is about more than the things we have. Explain how you can have joy whether you're having a good day or a bad day because God gave us Jesus. Guide the conversation to help kids find joy because of what God has done in their lives or in the life of someone they know.

Be sensitive to those kids or volunteers in your environment who may be experiencing more acute mental health-related illnesses. Clinical depression, anxiety, or PTSD will make it more difficult for people to experience joy or identify how God is at work. Enter those conversations with a posture of listening and encouragement. Don't rush in and try to fix anything with a quick answer or Bible verse. Connect with families impacted in this way and find out the best way you can help. And if your environment turns out to be the first point of contact for this family's experience, be sure to have a plan to connect that family to the help they need to ensure the child's safety.

### WEEK 3

For week 3, we head to **Ezra 3:10-13**. At the time, God’s people were living as captives in Persia, when the new king, Cyrus, allowed them to return home to Jerusalem. However, when they returned, everything was broken down and destroyed. The people got to work rebuilding the temple . . . but before they got far, they stopped to worship God and celebrate the ways that God had helped them.

Bottom Line: **Celebrate each step of the way.** Some tasks seem to take longer to complete than others. Whether kids are learning how to ride a bike, bake a cake, solve a math problem, or talk to new people, they learn that each step is important. The same thing is true about our relationship with God. We can choose to trust God and find joy, even when we can’t see the whole picture. We can celebrate how God is working in our lives with every step we take.

### TODAY’S BIBLE STORY

**Build Your Kingdom Here**  
Ezra and the Rebuilding  
of the Temple  
Ezra 3:10-13

### Host

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- Construction paper (one sheet per kid; see “What You Do”)
- Extra construction paper, in case you need to add to the circular path
- Permanent marker
- Masking tape (*optional*)
- Host’s phone, with an app or website that can generate a random number (for example, random.org)
- Box with various small, inexpensive prizes for kids who win

### TODAY’S BOTTOM LINE

Celebrate each step of the way.

#### MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

- Upbeat music to use as kids enter and exit the room
- Fun, instrumental music (suggestion: “Start the Party” instrumental)

### MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

**“A cheerful heart makes  
you healthy. But a broken  
spirit dries you up.”**  
Proverbs 17:22, NIV

#### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Slide
- Virtue Slide
- Bottom Line Slide

### 3. BIBLE STORY

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Storyteller
- Bible

#### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Background Slide
- Bottom Line Slide
- Story Images

### MONTHLY VIRTUE

**Joy—Choosing to celebrate  
what God is doing**

### BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

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### LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

**AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS KIDS ENTER.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP**

Host enters.

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME**

### OPENER

**HOST:** "Hi, friends! Today is a great day to be here at [name of your environment], because it's time to Start the Party! If you're excited to be here today, give a friend a high five like this. *(Demonstrate.)*

"This summer we're celebrating the good news about Jesus and talking about how we can find joy!

**SLIDE: VIRTUE**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME TRANSITION TO VIRTUE**

"Remember, **joy is about choosing to celebrate what God is doing.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): VIRTUE TRANSITION TO THEME**

"Joy is about more than just being happy because something good happened to us. We can have joy in the good times AND in the tough times too . . . because our joy is based on our relationship with God. We can find joy when we remember how much God loves us, and how God sent Jesus FOR us.

"That's definitely something to celebrate! And that's why we're having a party here at [name of your environment] all summer long.

"I've got another fun party game for us to play today.

*Walk over to where you have the walking path(s) set up.*

"Raise your hand if you've ever done a cake walk. *(Pause for response.)* You walk around in a circle while music plays, stepping on different numbered



squares as you go. (*Demonstrate.*) When the music stops, the leader calls out a number, and whoever is standing on that number wins a cake! Now, we don't have cakes to give away today, but we do have some fun other prizes. (*Hold up the box of prizes.*)

"Everybody go ahead and stand on a square.

*Pause while the kids get in place. Add or remove pieces of paper from your path(s) if needed. (You want to have the same number of pieces of paper as kids.)*

*If you add any pages, make them above the highest number. For example, if you have 1 through 30 in your circle, add pages numbered 31, 32, etc. Adjust the spacing of the circle as needed.*

*If you remove any pages, take them from the highest numbers so that you keep the pages in numerical order. (For example, instead of 1 through 30, go from 1 through 25.) Adjust the spacing of the circle as needed.*

"When the music starts, we'll all walk in a circle. The pieces of paper might move a little bit under your feet, but try to keep them in place as you walk. When the music stops, just stand on the closest empty square, and I'll call out a number, and we'll find out who wins!

**AUDIO: FUN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC (SUGGESTION: "START THE PARTY" INSTRUMENTAL), FOR EACH ROUND**

*Play the music as everybody walks.*

**AUDIO: STOP MUSIC (RANDOMLY)**

*When the music stops, use an app to choose a random number between one and your highest number. Then call out the winning number. If anyone is standing on that number, they win a prize. (If you have multiple circles, you'll have multiple winners.)*

*Play as many rounds of the game as time allows. If someone wins more than once, encourage them to choose a friend to give the prize to.*

*When the game is over, get the kids to help you stack up and collect the pieces of paper.*

"Great job, everyone! That was really fun. In today's story, we'll look at an example of how God's people found joy every STEP of the way. (*Take a step.*) But before we get to that, it's time for us to stand and sing and worship God!"



10 MINUTES

## WORSHIP

*Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** "I am so excited to praise God with all of you! Get ready to dance and sing with us. God's love MOVES us and makes us want to share our joy with others. This song says, 'Your love is movin' me, movin' me.' Let's sing it!"

**AUDIO:** "MOVIN' ME" / TRACK 6 FROM READY, SET, MOVE!

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** "MOVIN' ME" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"Listen to David's words from Psalm 145:3: 'Lord, you are great. You are really worthy of praise. No one can completely understand how great you are.' (NirV) I love that! God is greater than we can imagine. God LOVES us more than we can imagine. Let's take some time to thank God for loving us. Sing this with me."

**AUDIO:** "YOUR LOVE" / TRACK 7 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** "YOUR LOVE" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO



25 MINUTES

## BIBLE STORY

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Storyteller enters as Worship Leaders exit.*

### SETTING UP THE STORY

**STORYTELLER:** "Hi, everyone! It's great to be here to tell you about a joyful time in God's story. *(Hold up Bible.)*

"When we look back at the beginning of the Bible, we see how God created an amazing world, including people. When people turned away from God, the world was broken. Still, God had a plan to bring us back into relationship. God chose a man named Abraham and promised to bless the entire world through Abraham's family line.

"Abraham's family became known as the Israelites, or the Jewish people. Over time, they grew in number and became a great nation. But over and over again, they turned away from God and tried to do things their own way. Eventually, they were captured and taken away to other lands. Some of them ended up being taken captive by the Babylonian Empire.

"Even then, God promised, through the prophet Jeremiah, that after 70 years, the Jewish people who had been taken captive by the Babylonians would be able to come home again.

### HOMeward BOUND

**STORYTELLER:** "At this point, Babylon had been conquered and was now part of Persia. The new Persian king was named Cyrus. Many of God's people who were living there in Persia had never even seen their homeland of Judah.

"Let's see if you can guess what happened next. Hold up your fingers to show me what you think the answer is. Did King Cyrus:

SLIDE: STORY IMAGE A1 (KING CYRUS GIVING HIS BLESSING)

1) Give his blessing for God's people to travel to Judah, or . . .

SLIDE: STORY IMAGE A2 (KING CYRUS WATER BALLOONS)

2) Dress like a chicken and throw water balloons at them?

"If you guessed number 1, you're right. God moved King Cyrus's heart to be kind to the Jewish people.

SLIDE: STORY IMAGE A1 (KING CYRUS GIVING HIS BLESSING)

"Cyrus sent this message throughout the kingdom:

*Open the Bible to 2 Chronicles 36:23 (NirV) and read.*

*"The Lord is the God of heaven. He has given me all the kingdoms on earth. He has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem. And may the Lord their God be with them." (NirV)*



25 MINUTES

“Not only did King Cyrus give permission for the Jewish people to return home, but he also gave back thousands of gold and silver dishes that had been taken from God’s temple 70 years before.

**SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND**

### GETTING TO WORK

**STORYTELLER:** “And so, more than 40,000 Jewish people traveled home to Jerusalem. This was a journey that would have taken months!

“Quick—let’s use our hands to make footstep sounds. Let me hear what it might have sounded like for God’s people to travel all that way.

*Pause for the kids to make footstep sounds with their hands.*

“Good job! *(Cue them to stop.)* When the people got to Jerusalem, they could see that the situation was not good. The walls of the city were broken down, and God’s temple had been completely destroyed.

“What do you think happened next?

“Did God’s people:

**SLIDE: STORY IMAGE B1 (RUNNING AROUND IN CIRCLES)**

1) Run around in circles, or . . .

**SLIDE: STORY IMAGE B2 (REBUILDING THE ALTAR)**

2) Work on rebuilding the altar?

“If you’re holding up two fingers, you’re right.

“The people settled in their own towns. The leaders of the people, including a man named Zerubbabel, knew that the most important thing was to rebuild the temple since it was where people would come to worship and honor God.

“Zerubbabel led the people to build the altar first. This was one of the most important parts of the temple. It was where the people could make offerings to God. Once it was complete, they could begin celebrating the feasts and festivals that God had given to Moses hundreds of years before.

**SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND**

### PRAISING GOD

**STORYTELLER:** “The people started to build a strong foundation for the temple.

“What do you think happened next? Did God’s people:

**SLIDE: STORY IMAGE C1 (NAP)**



25 MINUTES

1) Take a nap because they were SO exhausted, or

SLIDE: STORY IMAGE C2 (PARTY)

2) Throw a party to celebrate how God had provided for them?

“What do you think—one or two? I mean, honestly, they might have done both! But we know from what we read in the Bible that the people took time to celebrate what God had done. As we read in the book of Ezra:

Open the Bible to Ezra 3:10-11 (NirV) and read.

The builders laid the foundation of the Lord’s temple. Then the priests came. They were wearing their special clothes. They brought their trumpets with them. The Levites who belonged to the family line of Asaph also came. They brought their cymbals with them. The priests and Levites took their places to praise the Lord. They did everything just as King David had required them to. They sang to the Lord. They praised him. They gave thanks to him. They said,

“The Lord is good. His faithful love to Israel continues forever.”

All the people gave a loud shout. They praised the Lord. They were glad because the foundation of the Lord’s temple had been laid. (NirV)

“Let me hear you shout with joy like God’s people did that day.

“The Lord is good!”

AUDIENCE: “The Lord is good!”

STORYTELLER: “His love continues forever!”

AUDIENCE: “His love continues forever!”

STORYTELLER: “Good job! God’s people celebrated because God had been there with them every step of the way. God had brought them back to Jerusalem . . . God had helped them build the altar and the foundation for the temple . . . and soon, God would help them rebuild the entire temple and the city walls as well.

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

WRAPPING UP THE STORY

STORYTELLER: “The foundation of the new temple in Jerusalem wasn’t as impressive as the first one had been. But it was clear that it meant a LOT to the people who were there to rebuild it. God’s people had only built the foundation of the temple, and there was so much more to go. But they were filled with joy to know that they’d completed one big step along the way.

“This story reminds us that we should also celebrate what God has done in our lives. We should stop and pay attention to all the ways God is working in the world around us.





PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

**SLIDE: BOTTOM LINE**

"We should **celebrate each step of the way.**

"Let's pray and talk to God about that now."

**SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND**

**PRAY**

**STORYTELLER:** "God, You are so good and so faithful! You provided for Your people and helped them rebuild the temple foundation and then the temple in Jerusalem. Help us to remember and celebrate all that You've done for Your people throughout history, and all that You've done for us today. Please remind us to stop and say thank You . . . and to celebrate the ways that You're always working in our lives. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."



25 MINUTES

## CLOSER

*Host enters as Storyteller exits.*

**HOST:** “When God’s people got to Jerusalem, there was a LOT of work to do. But the people were full of joy as they built the altar and then the foundation of the temple. They worked on this big project, one step at a time . . . and they did it all to honor God! They celebrated each step of the way.

“That’s what we need to remember:

**SLIDE: BOTTOM LINE**

**“Celebrate each step of the way.**

“When we decide to follow Jesus, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit fills us with joy so we can celebrate when we see how God is working in all kinds of different ways.

“We just need to pay attention and choose to live each day with a joyful attitude. We know that God loves us and is always with us. So when things are good in our lives . . . or even when we face tough challenges . . . we can STILL find joy because of the way God is working all around us. **[Basic Truth] We can trust God no matter what** and believe that God is always there to help us!

“You can head to Small Group now and talk some more about what it means to **celebrate each step of the way**. I’ll see you later, okay?”

*Dismiss kids to their small groups.*

**AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP**