



**PRETEEN**

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  
**ONE**  
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LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

## GETTING READY

HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET READY FOR THIS WEEK

### WEEK 1

Key Question: **What does joy mean to you?** Preteens have greater access to technology than ever before. Because of this, they're often bombarded with negative messages, and joy can seem hard to find. That's why we're starting the month by helping our preteens think about what joy is . . . and where true, lasting joy really comes from.

We start the month with **Luke 15:1-7**, where we find Jesus telling a parable about a shepherd who goes to find his lost sheep. Jesus explains that the shepherd cares so much about the missing sheep that he leaves the other 99 sheep to go look for it. After the shepherd finds his sheep, he invites his friends to help him celebrate!

Bottom Line: **We can have joy because of Jesus.** In Jesus' story, the shepherd is full of joy when he finds his lost sheep. He rejoices with his friends. When we recognize that we are like the lost sheep, we can have joy because we know that God sent Jesus to rescue us! And this joy isn't just something we keep to ourselves. We can share the good news about Jesus and celebrate when others put their faith in Him too.

### TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

**Lost and Found**  
The Story of the Lost Sheep Luke 15:1-7

### Host

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- 5 kid volunteers
- 5 large bags or pillowcases
- 10-15 objects in each bag (each bag should have the same or similar objects as the other bags)
  - Could include party hat, small squishmallow, marble, kazoo, jellybean, dice, party whistle, paper clip, spoon, stress ball, ping pong ball, fruit: orange, marker, small pompom, etc.
- 5 blindfolds

#### MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

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

#### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Slide
- "Party Favors . . . FAST!" Title Slide

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What does joy mean to you?

### TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

We can have joy because of Jesus.

### MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"A cheerful heart makes you healthy. But a broken spirit dries you up."  
Proverbs 17:22, NIRV

### MONTHLY VIRTUE

Joy—Choosing to celebrate what God is doing

### COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Communicator
- Bible
- Large marker
- 8-12 medium-sized boxes
- Large, black marker
- Small table

#### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Background Slide
- Key Question Slide
- Theme Slide

### BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.



WEEK  
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**PRELUDE**      **SOCIAL**      **STORY**      **WORSHIP**      **GROUPS**      **HOME**

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

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### BASIC TRUTH

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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 STUDENTS ENTER.**

**SLIDE: THEME**

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

Host enters . . .

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

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

## WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports game (US Open, NBA Finals, Stanley Cup Finals), movie opening, 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:** "What's up, party people? As the official start of summer quickly approaches, I realize there are plenty of gatherings, galas, and banquets to attend—each celebrating something awesome. BUT there won't be any shindig like the one [Name of Environment] is hosting for the next two months!

"Today is a big day. Nay. Today is a monumental day. NAY! TODAY IS A HISTORIC MOMENT IN TIME that should not be skipped over! Why is today consequential? Because today is the day I, [First and Last Name of Host], get to kick off the party! This will be the *biggest* party in the history of [Name of Environment]!

"To start off with a bang, I'll need help with a game called 'Party Favors . . . FAST!' Anybody want to give me a hand?"

**SLIDE: "PARTY FAVORS . . . FAST!"**

Choose five volunteers and line them up across the stage. Hand each of the volunteers a large bag full of random objects. Each bag will contain the same objects.



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"Everybody knows the best parties give out party favors! Even though you're celebrating someone else's birthday, sometimes everyone gets a gift bag filled with all kinds of fun stuff! As a young whippersnapper, I loved to show my younger siblings all the goodies I got for attending someone's party.

"Take a good look in the bag, volunteers. Don't pull anything out, just take a peek.

"In this game, we want you to show the audience some of the objects within your party favor bag. In our game, I will call out one object. You need to find the object, pull it out, and hold it up as quickly as you can! The last person to hold up the object will be eliminated from the game. Make sense? *(Allow response)* Great!

"Oh! I almost forgot.

*Hand each volunteer a blindfold.*

"Yep. You'll have to do it without seeing what you're grabbing. Get those blindfolds on, and let's play 'Party Favors . . . Fast!'

**AUDIO: UPBEAT GAME MUSIC**

*Play the game. Call out objects one at a time. After an object is called, eliminate the last person to pull out the correct object. If kids pull out the incorrect object, tell them to keep digging!*

*The last volunteer remaining in the game is crowned the winner.*

"And THAT is how it's done! Friends, I've never seen anyone rummage through their party favor bags as quickly as these volunteers. However, there is only one who can claim to have the fastest hands on this party scene! To honor our Party Favors . . . Fast Champion, I need everybody to lace up their dance shoes and rise to their feet for a speedy, 15-second dance party!

**AUDIO: UPBEAT DANCE MUSIC**

*Lead the crazy dance for about 15 seconds. At the end of the 15 seconds, cut the music abruptly and have everyone remain standing.*

"Again, congrats to our winner! While we are all standing, let's give our Worship Leader, [Name of Worship Leader], a loud welcome! Let's get ready to sing some songs to worship our amazing God!"

*Host exits as Worship Leader enters.*



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## WORSHIP

*Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** "Oh yes, I'm here for this moment. Get on your feet and get ready to sing with us. Joy isn't based on what happens to us. Joy is an attitude. The joy God gives us helps us on the good days and the hard ones. We can have joy because we know we've been forgiven. Let's sing and thank God now."

**AUDIO:** "I'M SO GRATEFUL" / TRACK 3 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** "I'M SO GRATEFUL" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"Yeah, there is joy in this place! So good. Before we continue in worship, let's watch this."

**OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE):** LIVE LOUD VIDEO FROM GET REEL

"We have a new song to sing today. It's called 'Start the Party,' and let me tell you, it's a FUN one. Parties are always a celebration. They are full of joy, just like our life with Jesus. As we read in Psalm 106:47: 'Lord our God, save us. Bring us back from among the nations. Then we will give thanks to you, because your name is holy. We will celebrate by praising you.' (NIRV) That's what we are here to do. Let's get this party started!"

**AUDIO:** "START THE PARTY" / TRACK 1 FROM START THE PARTY

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** "START THE PARTY" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"So much fun! I love it. Our worship is something that we can give to God. I want all the things I do and say to bring honor to God and help me know God more. I want to live my life for God, in every way. Let's sing this together!"

**AUDIO:** "MY LIFE FOR YOU" / TRACK 9 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** "MY LIFE FOR YOU" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO



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## COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Communicator enters with a huge stack of boxes as Worship Leader exits.*

### INTRODUCTION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Good morning! It's good to see everybody—like *really* good. I experience more joy on days like today because I'm with you doing something I love. Plus, you're all so fun to be around. Thank you for being people in my life who put a smile on my face.

"When you consider your life and all the people in it, who are the people who bring you joy? It could be a baby cousin who has the chubbiest cheeks in the Midwest; maybe it's a coach who knows exactly how to encourage you after a tough game. Or you may have a friend who is always a party waiting to happen. If you have someone who brings you joy and you're willing to share it with the group, raise your hand.

*Ask a few to share about who gives them joy. As kids respond, write down examples given on individual boxes—written with a large marker with a large, easy-to-read font.*

*Examples could include coach, teacher, uncle, grandmother, baby sister, art teacher, etc. One name or example per box.*

*Stack boxes into a large tower with the names facing the crowd.*

"This tower of boxes has names of people in your lives who bring you joy! Seeing all these names gives me a huge smile knowing these individuals mean so much to some of you."

### TENSION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "I think we can all agree that life is better because we're surrounded by awesome people who encourage us, laugh with us, and are just plain fun to be around. We love playing on their teams, sitting in their classrooms, hanging out with them after school, or receiving their hugs after a long week. I want you to consider a question concerning all the people who put a smile on your face.

"What happens when they aren't around?"

*Communicator turns the stack of boxes around where the names are facing backstage.*

"Like, what about those times when we're by ourselves, in a hard situation, or faced with a tough decision or circumstance and those people are nowhere to be found?"

"After all, we can't bring an entourage of joy-giving people with us everywhere we go! You might face seasons in life when your favorite people are hard to come by. What happens then?"

"When your encouraging coach is out for the week and you're really unhappy with the game you just played, you could feel a little lost. Some of you love art, but when your art teacher isn't around this summer and you take on an ambitious art project, you may feel a little lost without their direction. When your parents tell you it's a 'no technology day' and your favorite uncle or your friends aren't around to play catch, you could feel a little lost, bored, lonely, or all three.



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25 MINUTES

“What happens when your friends become a bit less friendly? What do you do then? Where do you go to find joy?”

“These are great questions that we get to explore today. Fortunately for us, the Bible spells out the source of our joy! The great news is joy can still be found even when our favorite people aren’t around and we feel a little lost.”

**TRUTH**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “In the New Testament, the book of Luke was written by a doctor and historian coincidentally named . . . Luke. Luke shares all about the life and ministry of Jesus. Throughout Luke, we can read about how Jesus loved and cared for everyone—including those who were far from perfect.

“Let’s use these boxes to highlight a few examples of people Jesus loved. Can anyone name a few?”

*Write down examples that the kids give you of those Jesus loved on individual boxes. Examples should be written on the opposite side of the boxes that were used during the intro section. Examples should be written with a large marker with a large, easy-to-read font.*

*Examples could include sinners, the sick, the impaired, the tax collectors, kids, etc. One name or example per box.*

*Keep the boxes in a stacked tower with these new examples facing the crowd.*

“Time and time again, Jesus demonstrated kindness and compassion to those in need, the outcast, the young, the old, the sick, the healthy, and the not-so-powerful. This tower shows a lot of the people who were loved by Jesus.

“As Jesus traveled, He earned a reputation as Someone who taught God’s truths effectively and healed people who were sick. Large and diverse crowds often surrounded Him as a result.

“At the time of our story, Jesus was in town with an interesting mix of people around Him.

*Open the Bible to Luke 15:1 (NirV) and read.*

*“The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.*

“Nearby, some teachers of the law and Pharisees, who were religious leaders, were bothered by this crowd. Seems like the Pharisees were always bothered by something Jesus was doing. Jesus would talk with anyone regardless of their reputation, status, race, or sinful nature—but the religious leaders were very, very different.

“Pharisees were careful to stay ‘clean,’ according to Old Testament law. They studied the Old Testament law, and they avoided anyone who would make them unclean. If someone had a sickness or health problem that would make a Pharisee ‘unclean,’ Pharisees avoided them and showed them less care.

*Remove the boxes from tower that have examples like ‘the sick,’ or ‘impaired.’ Toss these boxes on the ground around the stage in different areas.*

“Pharisees didn’t share a table with notorious sinners because Pharisees didn’t want to appear to accept their behavior.



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*In the same way, remove the boxes from tower that have examples like 'sinners,' or 'tax collectors.' Toss them on the ground, but leave the remaining boxes stacked in the tower.*

"Seeing the Pharisees' upturned noses and scowling faces, Jesus told a parable, which is a story used to explain something about God's kingdom. Jesus used parables all the time, and if He was starting a story, or a parable, you know a truth was about to be taught.

"In the parable, Jesus described a scene involving a shepherd and a herd of sheep. Jesus said:

*Open the Bible to Luke 15:4-6 (NirV) and read.*

*"Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them. Won't he leave the 99 in the open country? Won't he go and look for the one lost sheep until he finds it? When he finds it, he will joyfully put it on his shoulders and go home. Then he will call his friends and neighbors together. He will say, "Be joyful with me. I have found my lost sheep."*

"Sheep were valuable to a shepherd—so much so that the shepherd would go after the sheep that had gone away from the group. The shepherd really cared about the sheep that had gone astray.

"And look. *(Point to boxes on the ground)* There are some who have lost their way.

*Move around the stage and pick up the boxes. After each box is picked up, restack it in the tower of boxes.*

*Continue to talk about the parable while picking them all up.*

"After hearing this parable, the crowd would have understood this truth about shepherds searching for lost sheep. It was something they were familiar with, and it could have been that some of them were shepherds themselves. Jesus finished by making the meaning of His story completely clear to the religious leaders. Jesus said:

*Open the Bible to Luke 15:7 (NirV) and read.*

*"I tell you, it will be the same in heaven. There will be great joy when one sinner turns away from sin. Yes, there will be more joy than for 99 godly people who do not need to turn away from their sins.*

"The Pharisees built their lives around staying away from outcasts and people who did wrong things. And they spent their lives trying to be as spiritually perfect as they could. Jesus was very aware of His audience as He told this parable and made sure to point out that the shepherd cared deeply about the lost sheep who didn't have it all together. Jesus was saying that God loves those people who are *far* from perfect! Like a lost sheep, God would go to great lengths to find and rescue them."

## APPLICATION

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Jesus had a way to make everyone pause and think. I love this parable because it speaks of God's great love for all. Each one of us is like the lost sheep sometimes, right? When we believe we can take on life without God, we end up lost and in a hot mess. All of us are guilty of being separated from God because of sin. On our own, we can't fix this sin problem. We are like the helpless sheep without a shepherd.





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“Thankfully, there is hope for all of us found in this parable. God will look for you and won’t stop until you’re found! God will be with you and will walk with you through every hard thing to get back to the flock, back to the lush fields, and back to safety. God will do this regardless of your past, present, or future. There is no mess or trouble we can get into that’s too big or awful for Jesus. His love for you is unconditional and never-ending.

“How awesome is that? Thinking about this can help us find joy no matter what is happening in our lives.

“Joy can be found in remembering and thanking Jesus for the times He rescued us and for the times He will rescue us again. For many in this room, you’ve already decided to follow Jesus for the rest of your life, and we think that is awesome! If you’ve never told Jesus you want to follow Him—that you want Jesus to be like your shepherd—and you want to talk with someone, let your Small Group Leader know today. We’d love to set aside some time to talk with you about what it looks like to be sought after and cared for by a fantastic shepherd, Jesus.

“In the parable, Jesus pointed out that the neighbors and friends celebrated the return of the lost sheep. Likewise, we get to celebrate the ways God is at work in the world and in the lives of those around us! Joy can also be found when we see our friends and family are found by God’s love and grace.”

## LANDING

*Carefully turn the tower of boxes around to display the people who bring the kids joy.*

**COMMUNICATOR:** “God’s love for us is huge. Bigger than you can even imagine. When you pause to think about how great God’s love is for us, you can’t help but feel joy. This joy can be found even when we are not surrounded by those who give us a big smile. When all these folks are gone, joy is still possible because of God!”

“We want you to spend more time discussing joy with your Small Groups. As we wrap up, think about this one question:

### SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

“**What does joy mean to you?** Some might describe it as happiness, but it is so much more, isn’t it? It’s being able to celebrate all the incredible things God is doing in your life. Consider the question, and you’ll have a chance to share your thoughts with your Small Groups. Before that, let’s pray together to thank God for loving us and for seeking us out when we are lost.”

### SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.*

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

**SLIDE: THEME**

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