



PRETEEN

JUNE 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

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.



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GETTING READY

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

WEEK 2

Key Question: **How can you remember to be joyful?** There's nothing better than getting together with other people and celebrating everything that God has done—in your life and in the lives of the people around you. We hope this question allows kids to share ideas and think about ways they can make joy a part of their everyday lives.

In week 2, we see how God set aside times and rhythms for the Israelite people to reflect on and remember everything God had done for them. In **Deuteronomy**

16:13-17, we read about one celebration in particular called the Feast of Booths. We see in Scripture how God's people celebrated this feast on several important occasions throughout their history.

Bottom Line: **Make a habit of choosing joy.** Whether it's a birthday party, slumber party, or festive holiday, kids love celebrating with their family and friends! Just as those celebrations are a part of our everyday rhythm, we hope that kids will learn how to find moments of celebration throughout their lives that will help them remember what God has done for them.

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Over and Over
Feast of Booths Deuteronomy
16:13-17

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

How can you remember to be joyful?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Make a habit of choosing joy.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

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

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Joy—Choosing to celebrate what God is doing

BASIC TRUTH

I need to make the wise choice.

Host

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- 5-8 kid volunteers
- 1 sturdy chair

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

- Up-tempo music to use as kids enter and exit the room
- Up-tempo game music
- Upbeat dance music

LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Slide
- "The Party Chair of Disaster" Title Slide

3. COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Communicator
- Bible
- Table
- Large Prop Box
- Party supplies
 - Pizza boxes
 - Juice boxes
 - Paper plates
 - Cups
 - Balloons
 - Tablecloth
 - Party hats
 - Kazoos

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

- Upbeat music to use as kids exit the room



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PRELUDE SOCIAL STORY WORSHIP GROUPS HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Over and Over
Feast of Booths
Deuteronomy 16:13-17

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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), Father's Day, movie opening (*Inside Out 2*), 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: "Welcome one and all to the biggest party north of the equator! In [Name of Environment], we take parties pretty seriously. As you can see, I have combed my hair, put on my dancing pants, and even remembered my deodorant. My name is [Name of Host], and I can't help but tear up a tiny bit as I look out to see all the people who showed up to join us. Trust me when I say partying alone is completely overrated!

"Not only did you show up, but the aroma of body spray tells me you also prepared yourselves for a good time. To have a solid party, we need some people to show up—check. We need some good music . . .

AUDIO: UP-TEMPO GAME MUSIC ON LOW VOLUME

"Check. And lastly, we need a good game—check! Would anybody out there like to play a classic party game with a [Name of Environment] twist?

Choose between five to eight volunteers and invite them to the stage. Have the volunteers hold hands in a circle, surrounding a chair placed in the middle.



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"We will be playing (*dramatic pause, spoken over-the-top*) 'The Party Chair of Disaster!'

SLIDE: "The Party Chair of Disaster"

"Now, this is similar to the timeless game, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with . . . musical chairs. However, instead of using many chairs, we play (*dramatic pause, spoken over-the-top*) 'The Party Chair of Disaster' with a single chair.

"As the music plays, our brave and bold volunteers will take turns quickly sitting in the chair while still holding hands in the circle. The music will randomly stop, just like musical chairs, but *unlike* musical chairs, when the music stops the person who is *sitting in the chair* will be eliminated from the game.

"If nobody is sitting in the chair, the next person in line to sit in the chair will be eliminated from the game. The last person standing will be crowned (*dramatic pause, spoken over-the-top*) 'The Party Chair of Disaster' Champion. A title not to take lightly! It's very prestigious!

"Any questions about the game? (*Allow response*) Great! Let's play!

AUDIO: UP-TEMPO GAME MUSIC

Play the game. Keep the energy and tension up by commenting throughout, and do your best to get the volunteers to move quickly . . . and safely.

Each volunteer should fully sit on the chair before they move on from the chair, with no one skipping sitting. Anytime the music stops, eliminate one volunteer from the game.

When one volunteer remains, celebrate the winner!

"What an amazing finish! Great job to all our volunteers, let's give them a hand! (*Allow response*) And for our winner of (*dramatic pause, spoken over-the-top*) 'The Party Chair of Disaster,' there is only one way to celebrate the win like this. Everybody, stand up on your feet for a 15-second dance party! HERE WE GO!

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.

"Whew! Nothing like working up that 15-second sweat. Since we are already on our feet, it would be great to welcome [Name of Worship Leader] to lead us. Let's do that now and get into some amazing worship to celebrate our great God!

Host exits as Worship Leader enters.



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WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: “Yes, God is the reason we are here. Let’s jump straight into this time of worship together. I love the words of this first song: ‘I’ll give my all to You, whatever You choose for me to do.’ Every day, we can follow God with joy because we know that God is with us. Come on, friends. Let’s give this all we’ve got!

AUDIO: “ALL TO YOU” / TRACK 1 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “ALL TO YOU” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Yes! Every single thing we do is for God. Before we continue in worship, let’s watch this.

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

“Last week we taught you a new song called ‘Start the Party.’ This one really puts a smile on my face! If you’re having a party, you’re having a celebration. That really is what praise is all about. It’s about remembering Who God is and what God has done by sending Jesus for us. Let’s sing this song with a joyful heart. Let’s start the party!

AUDIO: “START THE PARTY” / TRACK 1 FROM START THE PARTY

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “START THE PARTY” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“God is always there for us—when everything is going fine . . . when we’re going through something difficult . . . and even when we’re waiting and hoping for something to happen. We can trust that God has a good plan for our lives. As David wrote in Psalm 16:11: ‘You always show me the path of life. You will fill me with joy when I am with you. You will make me happy forever at your right hand!’ (NIV) I’m thankful that God is always with me . . . even when I’m waiting. Let’s choose joy as we sing this together.”

AUDIO: “KEEP ON WAITING” / TRACK 4 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “KEEP ON WAITING” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters with the large prop box as Worship Leader exits.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: "Hey, hey everyone! (Modify to match your audience's school calendar) It's great to see so many smiling faces. I'm going to make an assumption—the reason there are so many happy kids today is because school is officially out . . . or really close to it!

"Long-gone are the days of complicated math, group projects, and reading long chapter-books. Here to stay are lazy days by the pool, playing ball at the park, late bedtimes, and movie nights. Summer break gives us all kinds of reasons to celebrate!

Tell a personal story of a time you celebrated a milestone like a birthday, the start of summer, etc. Use the following as a guide or share it as a hypothetical situation.

"Like many of you, I loved summer break as a kid. As soon as school let out, my friends and their families celebrated the end of school in different ways. Some of my friends would go immediately to the shaved ice stand and order a large drink with the cream on top. Usually, a group of kids from my class would head to a matinee movie. There's nothing like seeing a movie in the middle of the day!

"My parents had an odd way of celebrating the start of summer. By the time we got off the bus, both of my parents would be hiding outside my house with a large stash of water balloons. When my siblings and I approached the front porch, they would surprise us and begin to launch water balloons at us. They usually stored additional water balloons all around the house, which gave us the chance to fill our arms with balloons and return the love to our parents. The water balloon fight lasted until everyone was properly soaked! At that point, the entire family made their way to the pool where we all jumped into the pool together—while wearing our last-day-of-school clothes!

"I'm curious. What does your family do to celebrate different milestones and holidays? Maybe you celebrate another year older by drinking a giant birthday milkshake with sprinkles and sparklers instead of a birthday cake with frosting and candles. For another holiday, some of you might celebrate the day by going to your town's parade or watching fireworks.

"Take a minute to share with your small group a unique way your family celebrates milestones or holidays."

Have kids briefly gather with their Small Groups to share unique ways they celebrate milestones. After a moment, call on a couple of kids to share their stories.

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: "Nice! I love each of the ways your families celebrate! When your great-grandmother turns 90 years old, you commemorate the day—hopefully not by skydiving or running with the bulls in Pamplona. Maybe you play Bingo.

"When you ace a difficult science test, you might get rewarded with extra screen time given by your parents. Parties and celebrations give us space to remember significant moments. It's an opportunity to experience joy!



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25 MINUTES

“The doses of joy we receive from milestones and holiday parties are not daily occurrences, unfortunately. They happen only a few times a year. For many in this room, difficult life experiences happen more frequently than these celebrations. Our siblings get on our nerves because they never share the TV remote. In class, we get in trouble for talking too much. At home, we lose tech privileges because we mess up. We learn quickly life isn’t always a party.

“This reality does make me wonder if it is possible to have joy even when we aren’t celebrating a milestone. Or if it’s possible to have joy for no reason at all. Is there something we can be reminded of that will help us to have joy even when we are facing frustration in life? Can we turn joy into a habit or regular experience?

“I love good questions, and these are some doozies. More than good questions, I love good answers—and we can start digging to find those answers in the Bible. Remember, the Bible is basically a library filled with all sorts of writings: history, biography, poems, letters, and wise teachings. Everything was written by real people who experienced God—God’s goodness, love, and power—in their lives. God inspired them to write about what they experienced so other people like us could experience God for ourselves! Let’s head there now!”

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “In the part of the Bible we refer to as the Old Testament, we discover that long ago, the Israelites were in the habit of celebrating milestones. But God also gave a huge reason to have joy every single day. Today, we get to go back in time to discover how we can have joy. When God first created everything, it was good, and that was reason alone to celebrate!

Pull out a large box full of party props.

“But that goodness did not last. The world became broken when people turned from God and started living by their own rules rather than God’s. People became separated from God and needed a way to fix that broken relationship. Thankfully, God had a plan to fix all of it! Yet another reason to celebrate.

Pull out one party prop—a tablecloth—and lay it out on the table.

“After many, many years, God chose to bless the entire world through a man named Abraham and his family who would eventually be called . . . the Israelites. Tragically, the family became enslaved in Egypt, where they grew in number. Eventually, God freed the Israelites from Pharaoh and led them to freedom in the wilderness.

Pull out another party prop—like party hats—and place them around the table.

“After leaving Egypt, God’s people traveled through the wilderness. Through Moses, God gave laws to the Israelites to keep them safe. After some unwise choices and many years wandering through the wilderness, the Israelites finally made it. They were ready to enter the land God had promised long before to Abraham. But, before the Israelites finally entered the land, their leader, Moses, stood on the east bank of the Jordan River for an important speech.

“In this new land, God’s people would be surrounded by nations that did not worship the one, true God. In fact, they’d be surrounded by people who were completely different from them. Moses’ big speech was intended to remind them of everything God had done and had spoken. It takes up most of the book of Deuteronomy, which is where our story takes place.



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“And this story involves a party.

Pulls out another party prop—like kazoos—and place them around the table.

“God instructed the Israelites to host events throughout the year to remind them of their story and what God had done for them. Some of these events were somber. But some were huge celebrations! Food, families, fun, songs, dancing . . . the works! How fantastic was that? God told the Israelites to have parties! One such party, called the Feast of Booths, was hosted at harvest time each year.

Reveal another party prop—like cups—and place them around the table.

“Moses stood before the people and said:

Open the Bible to Deuteronomy 16:13-14a (NirV) and read.

“Gather the grain from your threshing floors. Take the fresh wine from your winepresses. Then celebrate the Feast of Booths for seven days. Be filled with joy at your feast.

“Most birthday parties last a couple of hours. However, God wanted this party to last for seven days! A whole week! Can you imagine? Plus, God didn’t want it to be drab. All should be full of joy!

Take out one party prop—like plates—and place them around the table.

“God wanted this annual party to serve as a reminder for the Israelites to pause to look around, see God’s goodness, and share it with others. In other words, celebrate the amazing things God had done and make it a priority above everything else that was happening at the time.

“As we read through God’s Story in the Bible, we discover the Israelites didn’t always keep celebrating these festivals. Sometimes they skipped them. Sometimes they were unable to. But every time they did celebrate, it helped them remember what God had done.

Reveal another party prop—like pizza boxes—and place them on the table.

“When the wise King Solomon ruled Israel, the entire nation gathered for the Feast of Booths, which included taking the ark of the covenant into the newly built temple. With a huge, captive audience, Solomon spread his hands towards heaven and said:

Open the Bible to 1 Kings 8:23 (NirV) and read.

“LORD, you are the God of Israel. There is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below. You keep the covenant you made with us. You show us your love. You do that when we follow you with all our hearts.

Following this reminder of all God had done, the whole community of Israel celebrated for two whole weeks! Fourteen days of fun, praise, amazing food, and even more amazing music and dancing. I wonder if they had these . . . if they did, it would’ve totally been a party.



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Pull out another party prop—like juice boxes—and place them on the table.

“Unfortunately, God’s people split into two nations: Israel and Judah. Both were led by many kings over the years, but few of these kings actually listened to God and made wise decisions on behalf of God’s people. Many rulers completely forgot about God. As a result, the kingdoms were attacked by other nations, and God’s people were scattered or conquered.

“Not exactly the best time to be having a week-long party.

“Fortunately, God’s people were allowed to return to their homeland. Nehemiah and others worked hard to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. After their work was complete, the people gathered to hear Ezra, the priest, read aloud from God’s laws for the first time in many years. They were so moved that they began to weep!

“Nehemiah spoke up and said:

Open the Bible to Nehemiah 8:10 (NIRV) and read.

“Go and enjoy some good food and sweet drinks. Send some of it to people who don’t have any. This day is holy to our Lord. So don’t be sad. The joy of the LORD makes you strong.”

“Back to the days-long partying! The Israelites went on to celebrate for a whole week!

Take out balloons and hand them out to a few volunteers. Have them blow the balloons up and tie them off, placing them around the table/stage.

“Although many of our celebrations look like the scene on the stage, God wanted the Israelites to celebrate this festival a little differently. One of the unique ways they celebrated the Feast of Booths was by building temporary dwellings just as their ancestors had done in the wilderness. Moveable huts, tents, and temporary houses. Within these shelters, the people shared meals, swapped stories, and found joy together!

“Hundreds of years later, Jesus arrived on earth, and the people were still celebrating the Feast of Booths. On one occasion, on the last day of the celebrations, Jesus went up to the temple courtyard and began to teach.

Open the Bible to John 7:37-38 (NIRV) and read.

“He said, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Does anyone believe in me? Then, just as Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from inside them.’”

“The Feast of Booths had always been a joyful reminder of how God protected and guided the Israelites in the desert. But Jesus took it one step further: just as God had provided food and water in the wilderness, now God had sent Jesus to offer ‘living water’—a way to live forever with God. No news could be better!”

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: “Today, we still celebrate the joyful news that Jesus came to earth for us! And when we look back at the history of Israel, we can see how God wanted them to spend time celebrating—not just what God is doing presently but also what God has done leading up to now. The parties not only served as an opportunity to reflect on all God had done but also the opportunity to fill their lives with joy. These celebrations were to be done regularly so the people would be in the *habit* of looking for joy.



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“Likewise, God’s love for us is deep, and God longs for our lives to be filled with joy regardless of the circumstances we face. Mowing the yard, going to the doctor or dentist, washing the dishes, or cleaning the bathroom are all not-so-fun things to do. However, if we spend time thinking about joyful times, times when God was amazing, those not-so-great times won’t seem so not-so-great.

“God wants us to get in the habit of pausing to look for joy.

“Even though a lot of our everyday experiences will not look like a pizza party (*reference the stage*), there are still plenty of reasons to have joy! God has done so *much* for each of us. Although we don’t need to build a booth or take seven days to celebrate, it is important to look for places in our everyday lives to celebrate and find joy!”

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: “Developing habits is hard work. It takes time, patience, and practice. The Israelites went through seasons when they failed to set aside time to celebrate God—but over time, God reminded them repeatedly to celebrate. In the process, they found joy despite their difficulties.

“It’s possible for all of us to get in the habit of finding joy! This may look different for each person. As we wrap up our time, I want you to consider this question:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

“How can you remember to be joyful?” We can find a joyous occasion to celebrate every day. But don’t worry. If you’re struggling to figure out how you might begin answering that question, you’ll have a chance in Small Group to chat all about it! Before we head to groups, let’s pray together and thank God for giving us the best reason to celebrate: Jesus! Let’s pray.”

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