



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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WEEK 5

Key Question: **What can you celebrate today?** This question can help preteens reframe their circumstances and look at their world a little differently. It can help them discover ways that God is working in their lives in ways they maybe hadn't noticed before. We hope that our kids will discover that they always have the best reason to celebrate because of their faith in God—even if nothing else in their lives seem to be going right.

We finish the month in **Habakkuk 3:17-18**. Habakkuk wrote these words as God's people were about to be taken captive. Everything was going wrong in Habakkuk's world . . . but still, he chose to trust God and choose joy. Habakkuk ultimately found joy because of God's faithfulness and love that nothing could take away.

Bottom Line: **There's always a reason to celebrate.** Even when we face tough challenges in life, we can celebrate because we know that God sent Jesus to be our Savior. That doesn't make our current troubles any less difficult. But it does mean that we can find peace and joy in the midst of them. We can find joy in knowing that God is ALWAYS up to something good—even when we can't see it.

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

Reason to Believe
God Will Give Us Joy
Habakkuk 3:17-18

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What can you celebrate today?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

There's always a reason to celebrate.

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 can trust God no matter what.

Host

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- 2 kazoo's
- 2 adult volunteers
- 2 kid volunteers
- Index Cards with song titles written out for Host

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

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

LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Slide
- Memory Verse Slide
- "Ka-Zune" Title Slide

3. COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Communicator
- Bible
- Large Bag or Box for the Party Supplies
- Party supply examples
 - Pizza boxes
 - Party hats
 - Glasses
 - Speaker/boom box
 - Juice box
 - Paper plates
 - Napkins
 - Cups
 - Balloons
 - Trash bags full of filler
 - Tablecloth
- Cleaning supplies: broom and dustpan, paper towels, trash bag



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

25 MINUTES 10 MINUTES

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

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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), Juneteenth, movie opening (*Despicable Me 4*), 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.

Host enters. Host keeps kazoos hidden until the reveal.

OPENER

HOST: "Good morning! Here's a giant welcome to each and every person sitting in [Name of Environment]! My name is [Name of Host], and today I am excited. Scratch that. I am VERY excited. For the last week, I've been planning a special surprise. Nobody—and I mean nobody—knows what is about to go down. In fact, I had to go all the way to [Name of Senior Pastor] to get special permission.

"And the money to pay for it.

"A party isn't a party without some jams. Not strawberry or grape, or even traffic . . . I'm talking music! Sometimes, I don't want to experience music digitally, like online, or Spotify, or something. Sometimes I want to hear it from live instruments. So, I went and bought a couple of the highest-quality instruments on the market. These bad boys are the top-of-the-line. Not only that, but I planned to hire professional musicians to bring these instruments to life!



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"Regrettably, I didn't get the needed approval to hire the musicians. But, as my father always said, 'When life hands you lemons, go eat something else.' So that's what I did!

"I changed my plans, and instead of professional musicians, I figured we could have our own musicians right here, in this room! Would anybody like to see their amazingly gifted Small Group Leader play an instrument in the form of a game called 'Ka-Zune'? And this time, it's the left side of the room versus the right side of the room!

SLIDE: "KA-ZUNE"

Choose two volunteers, one from each side of the room, to bring to the stage. In addition, select one Small Group Leader from each side of the room.

"Can you put your hands together for our two budding instrumentalists? (pause)

"Okay, 'Ka-Zune'—here's how we play. Each of you will get one of these.

Hand each volunteer a kazoo.

"I know I said these were high-quality instruments. We're on a budget, here.

Hold up the index cards.

"In my hand is a list of song titles. You musicians must play the song on your kazoos—at the same time—and your Small Group Leaders will try to guess. The crowd can also get involved . . . if you think you know the name of the song, shout it out! Points are given to the Small Group Leader who says the correct song title first—even if it's shouted out from the crowd.

"Most correct song titles wins, and dancing and hand motions are encouraged, so who's ready? Let's play . . . 'Ka-Zune'!

Play the game. Show each song title, one at a time, to the volunteers. Once they've got the song title in their heads, on your "Go," have them start playing on the kazoos.

If no one can guess the song title after 20 or so seconds, call time, reveal the right answer, and go to the next song title on the list.

Keep the energy up, interact with the large group, and crown a winner after all song titles have been played.

"Get someone on the phone. We've got some musicians who need to go on tour immediately. Let's give it up for our kazoo masters! (lead the group in applause as everyone returns to their seats)

"Who knew [Name of Environment] has such amazing kazoo-playing artists? But there can only be one 'Ka-Zune' Champion! And you know what happens when a new champion stands in our midst this month . . . I want everybody to stand up for a 15-second dance party! Let's go!

AUDIO: UPBEAT DANCE MUSIC



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25 MINUTES

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“Woo-hoo! Give it up for [Name of Champion]. Now, let’s keep it going as we get ready to worship and celebrate God together!”

Host exits as Worship Leader enters the stage.



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WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: “Everybody get on your feet! I want you to think about a reason you have today to say ‘thank You’ to God. Have you thought of your reason? (*Get a reaction.*) All right! This song is a great way for us to thank God together. Let me hear you sing. Let’s go!

AUDIO: “THANK YOU GOD” / TRACK 1 FROM EVERYTHING TO ME

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “THANK YOU GOD” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“Oh, there is joy in this place. I have no doubt. I truly believe that thankful people have an extra dose of joy in their life. Let’s get ready to move as we worship God with this next song. It says, ‘Your love is movin’ me.’ Are you ready? Here we go!

AUDIO: “MOVIN’ ME” / TRACK 6 FROM READY, SET, MOVE!

OPTIONAL VIDEO: “MOVIN’ ME” LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

“God’s love fills us with joy. It fills us up so that we can share joy with others. As we read in Moses’ prayer from Psalm 90:14: ‘Satisfy us with your faithful love every morning. Then we can sing for joy and be glad all our days.’ (NirV) I want that kind of joy in my life. Let’s celebrate God’s amazing love that fills our hearts with praise. 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



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters with a ton of party supplies as Worship Leader exits.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: "Welcome, all! Thanks for being here today. I have to say it's great to see a bunch of my favorite people sitting in the same room. This room is just a party waiting to happen! And apparently, all you need are some kazoos.

"Speaking of which, I want your help thinking about parties. In your opinion, what are the best parts of a party? (Allow response)"

Call on kids to get a few responses. When applicable, pull specific party supplies out of a bag or box that correspond with their answer.

For example, if someone says "food," pull out pizza boxes and set them up on a table. If someone says "dressing up," pull out and put on a party hat and glasses. If someone says "the music," set up a speaker or a boom box.

"Great thoughts! Seems like you've been to a few parties in your day. There are so many exciting aspects to any party, aren't there? And from the looks of it, we have some of our favorite parts of any festivity here on stage. There is food, drinks, balloons, even party favors.

"Now, let's flip the question. What are the worst parts of a party? (Allow response)"

Again, call on kids to get responses. This time around, for each response, ruin something in the party scene.

Spill the food on the stage, knock over the cups, deflate balloons, wreck the piñata.

The scene should be a mess when you're finished.

"Yeah, sometimes parties aren't all they cracked up to be. If you look around the stage, you can probably guess my least favorite part of a party. It's the clean-up. Ugh. Not fun at all. And now the stage looks like a complete mess!

"Parties usually involve good people, good music, good company, and good times. When you're standing in a great party, it's easy to have a great time! But every great party must come to an end. In my opinion, the worst part of any party is cleaning up after everybody has left."

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: "If you're anything like me, I'll voluntarily sign up for fun, but I have little desire to clean up a mess. I was the kid that hid in the bathroom when my parents told me I had chores.

"All messes need to be cleaned up eventually, right? Well, what happens when *life* feels like a mess? How in the world do you clean that up?"



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“When you feel like your life is in disarray like this stage, what then? Your friend group has a bunch of bickering, and you’re struggling to avoid the drama. Your dad got a new job, and you have to move to a town you never knew existed. You had a couple of bad soccer games, and your coach is no longer starting you. Messy. What in the world do you do? How do you cope? And furthermore, when life gets like that, why on earth would you feel like celebrating anymore?”

“This is an important question to address. Nobody in this room is immune from hardships. Life stinks sometimes. For everyone. It might stink for some of you right now.

“Believe it or not, in the midst of all the mess, joy can be found. Even if your life looks like this stage behind me, there is a ray of sunshine. A silver lining. And we’re going to use this (*hold up Bible*) to help us find it. The people who God inspired to write the Bible experienced all sorts of times when life didn’t go as planned, when they were disappointed, when nothing felt worth celebrating. Thankfully, many of them included these sorts of moments in what they wrote to help us discover how to trust God and respond well in the face of a hard time in life. Let’s check out one of those writers right now.”

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “Near the end of the part of the Bible we call the Old Testament, we find a small book called Habakkuk, named after its author. Habakkuk was a man who served as one of Israel’s prophets. Throughout the history of God’s people, prophets listened to the words of God and communicated them to the Israelites. Of the 39 books in the Old Testament, a little over a third of them were written by prophets. Many of these prophets wrote during the final years of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, when foreign nations threatened to attack.

“Likewise, Habakkuk’s words were written during a difficult time in the history of God’s people.

Walk around the messy stage and use the mess to connect with the mess Habakkuk is witnessing.

“Although Habakkuk didn’t have to contend with pizza boxes, plastic cups, and sticky tables, he did face a difficult mess to clean up. The northern territory of Israel had already been conquered by an enemy nation. Although the southern kingdom of Judah was still free, the enemies were closing in on all sides. Everything Habakkuk saw was troubling. Food was scarce. Clothing was hard to come by. Everything was a struggle, and violence was the norm. The last kings to rule Judah were wicked and rejected God. Habakkuk was surrounded by viciousness and corruption. The Babylonians were growing in power and threatening Judah.

“Fortunately for Habakkuk, there was a way he could get help. Habakkuk turned to God. Habakkuk cried out to God and said:

Open the Bible to Habakkuk 3:2 (NIRV) and read.

“LORD, I know how famous you are.
I have great respect for you
because of your mighty acts.
Do them again for us.
Make them known in our time.

“Habakkuk knew the situation was hopeless and could not be cleaned up without God’s help.



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“Ultimately, God promised change and justice would come. Things would be made right. The mess would be cleaned up. But God didn’t share that that was going to happen immediately. God didn’t promise to protect all of Judah from the evil Babylonians quickly encroaching. Immediate relief and protection weren’t coming.

“If Habakkuk was anything like us, he might’ve been a bit impatient and frustrated. Sometimes we want God to move a bit quicker, don’t we?

“Habakkuk could have completely panicked at the messy situation. Yet, he opted for something different. Habakkuk decided to do something much more difficult than fear.

Open the Bible to Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NIRV, emphasis added) and read.

“The fig trees might not bud.

The vines might not produce any grapes.

The olive crop might fail.

The fields might not produce any food.

There might not be any sheep in the pens.

There might not be any cattle in the barns.

But I will still be glad

because of what the LORD has done.

God my Savior fills me with joy.

“Hang on a second. You’re telling me that Habakkuk, living under the eventual siege from an invading army, without food, without a way to fight back, and without hope . . . *was still glad?* How was that even possible?

“The answer is right there. Look.

“Habakkuk said that he would still be glad, despite (*kick some of the mess around*) the mess and the destruction and the situation—*because of what the LORD has done*. Has done. Past tense. The Lord has done great things, and Habakkuk was saying that because of God’s track record, because of all the amazing things God has done for him, for his people, he would choose to believe that God would continue to do great things.

“For Habakkuk, joy was a choice. Instead of keeping his eyes on (*pick up some of the mess and let it drop*) all of this, he chose to fix his eyes on God. And he chose to believe that no matter the mess, God would come through.”

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: “The story and words of Habakkuk are an encouragement for me. Habakkuk’s whole world was collapsing. Nothing was going right. He had absolutely nothing to celebrate. Knowing some of his situation, it is safe to say he was sad and worried. Despite everything going on, Habakkuk *chose joy*. That’s crazy, because ‘joy’ is not an emotion I associate with any mess.

“But Habakkuk did something that I think we can all do. He looked back at all the times God showed up and remembered all the times when things were good. Those memories helped him recall how God was and still is in control. When this is true, there is always hope in every situation. Habakkuk trusted God’s promise to bring good out of hard things and right all wrongs.



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“Now, there’s a solid chance you are not facing a fierce Babylonian army or a failed fig crop. Nevertheless, there are lots of things in our lives that can go wrong in a big way. You might receive word that a family member is really sick. There’s a chance you could get placed in class with that one person you rarely get along with. Your dad could lose his job. You could get cut from a team. You could fail a test or a class. Sometimes you can’t control the bad things that happen, but you *can* control how you respond.

“If you focus on what’s wrong, you will feel hopeless and overwhelmed every time.

Begin to clean up the mess on the stage.

“For example, if I focus only on the fact that this stage is an absolute mess, I could start to feel defeated and upset. But everything changes if I consider the ways God has used this stage and will continue to use this stage once I pick up the trash. God can help me find joy even while I pick up the mess and organize the chaos.

“When you choose to take your focus off your problems and look to God, you can find joy. Joy doesn’t always look like big smiles and laughter. In hard situations, it is okay to feel sad or even cry. But even through the sadness or tears, there’s a potential to find joy. Joy is that thing that lets you know deep down in your heart that God can still do great things and that God can make something good come from what is hard now.

“Centuries after Habakkuk, Jesus would show us this kind of joy. He faced many difficulties, but Jesus was still able to find joy in knowing God is always up to something good—even when we can’t see it.

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: “Friends, don’t forget you can look at what God has done for you in the past. If you sit and think for a moment, you can consider the ways God has worked in your life. When you look at what God has done, is doing, and will do, you can always find a reason to celebrate.

“I realize some people are facing various difficulties in this room. Despite your circumstances, I want you to consider this question:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

“What can you celebrate today?” It could be something small or big God has done in your life. Maybe it is something God is doing in your life right now! Where have you seen God do something awesome that is a reason to celebrate? Think about it, and you’ll get to share your thoughts with your Small Groups in just a moment. Before we discuss your answers, let’s pray together. I want us to ask God to help all of us to find joy even when times are difficult!”

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