

# Start the Party

Celebrate the Good News

PRETEEN

JULY 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.

# Start the Party

Celebrate the Good News

PRETEEN

JULY 2024

## FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

### WEEK 1

Key Question: **Who do you know who could use some joy?** When you think of summer, maybe you think of ice cream, pool parties, sunshine, and friendships, and it leaves you feeling joyful inside. However, not everyone may feel this way. As preteens think through this question, we hope it gives them a baseline to have meaningful conversations with one another and share the joy that they have.

We start the month in **Luke 2:8-20**. While shepherds were watching over their flock, an angel suddenly appeared, bringing great news: Jesus was born! The shepherds rushed off to see Him, telling everyone about Him afterward. Everyone who heard the news was amazed and filled with joy!

Bottom Line: **Jesus brings joy to the world.** We kick off the month with a Christmas party! Christmas may feel like the most natural time of year to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but we can celebrate Jesus any time of the year! Jesus was a gift that brought joy to everyone who heard the news and can still bring us joy even today.

### WEEK 2

Key Question: **Who are the people who help you find joy?** Whether you enjoy spending time with friends, family, or even your Small Group, finding people you connect with and who bring you joy can help to make the harder moments easier. Our hope is that preteens will begin to see that they aren't alone. When they might be having a hard time finding joy, they can look to others who've found joy through their faith in Jesus and learn from their example.

In week 2, we see Jesus' first recorded miracle found in **John 2:1-11**. Everyone was laughing, talking, and having a good time until...the wine ran out! Jesus knew the importance of celebrating and how it would impact that family to run out of wine when the celebrations weren't done yet. So Jesus did something about it, which allowed the party to keep going.

Bottom Line: **Jesus showed us how to have joy.** Not only did Jesus heal and teach crowds of people, but he also knew how to celebrate! We hope that kids will remember that when it comes to joy, they can look to Jesus for the best example.

# Start the Party

Celebrate the Good News

PRETEEN

JULY 2024

## FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

### WEEK 3

Key Question: **What are ways you can help others find joy?** Joy is sometimes easy to find and other times not so much. Sometimes we may need to look closer or in different ways, and other times, we may have to help someone else to do the same. We hope this question allows kids to share ideas and think about ways they can help bring joy to those around them.

For week 3, we head to **Romans 12:15**. Paul wrote to the church in Rome about what true love looked like. Part of sharing the love of Jesus means showing empathy and being sad with others who were sad or joyful with others who were joyful. When we do that, we can help others to see not only our love, but the love of Jesus too.

Bottom Line: **You can help others find joy.** Can you think of a time when you went through something difficult, but someone was there for you during that? What about when you received the best news ever? During the ups and downs, knowing someone was there for you helped to make that situation so much better. The same is true the other way around. We have a chance to be there for others and help them experience joy too.

### WEEK 4

Key Question: **What's the best party you can imagine?** Think back to the first time you got a good grade on a project you had been working on for months or getting your first car or even turning the next big significant age. Each of those times probably felt really good, maybe even better than the last! Yet even then, this question allows preteens to begin to think about Heaven and how much more amazing it will be.

We wrap up the month with the biggest celebration ever in **Revelation 21, 22:1-5**. John received visions from God about all the things that would one day come, some of which was easier to understand than others. However, John did write that one day there will be no more pain and sadness, and that God will live with us forever.

Bottom Line: **Celebrate what God will do.** When you look at life through current situations, it may be harder to find joy and celebrate, especially if you don't see a way out. Whenever we focus on the things that God has already done for us however, it can help us remember all that God can do and will do in our lives. Now that's something to celebrate!