



**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.

## TODAY'S SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

### WEEK 3

Key Question: **What is something that took longer than you wanted it to?** Joy is something that we choose every single day. And we can still choose joy even when the things we hope for end up taking longer than we would like or expect. As preteens think through this question, they can begin to see that no matter how long the journey might be, they can still choose joy along the way.

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

#### Come Rain or Come Shine

Be Joyful with Others  
Romans 12:15  
(Supporting: Acts 2:42-47)

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What are ways you can help others find joy?

### TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

You can help others find joy.

### MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!"  
Philippians 4:4, NIV

### MONTHLY VIRTUE

Joy—Choosing to celebrate what God is doing

### BASIC TRUTH

I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

### Host

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- Mic on a stand
- 4 Small Group Leader volunteers
- 4 Kid volunteers
- 4 chairs
- 1-2 tables
- 4 blindfolds
- 4 bibs
- 4 plates
- 4 spoons
- 4 bottles of water
- 1 cake
- Napkins

#### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Slide
- "Dish in the Dark" Title Slide

### 3. COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

#### WHAT YOU NEED:

- Communicator
- Bible
- 2 Index cards for each Small Group
- 1 Pen or pencil for each Small Group

#### MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS:

- Quiet Background Music
- Upbeat music to use as kids exit the room

#### LARGE GROUP VISUALS:

- Theme Background Slide
- Key Question Slide
- Theme

# Start the Party

Celebrate the Good News

WEEK  
**THREE**  
JULY 2024

LARGE GROUP  
**PRETEEN**

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

STORY

WORSHIP

GROUPS

HOME

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

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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 (Wimbledon, Summer Olympics), holiday (4th of July), movie opening (*Despicable Me 4*, *Mufasa: The Lion King*), 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:** "Whew! I am so excited to have you all here at [Name of Environment] today. Each time we get together here at [Name of Environment], we do important things like making insane faces at one another, hitting leaders with inflatable flamingos, or strapping squeaky chickens to our feet.

"Today will be no different, people. I am elevating our game by helping you survive an inevitable party disaster.

*Take center stage, behind a mic, and shut off the lights except for one that will be directly on you, spotlight.*

**LIGHTS: LIGHTS OFF EXCEPT FOR A SPOTLIGHT**

*(Solemn)* Hello. My name is [Name of Host]. I . . . am a party survival expert. Over the course of my life, I've faced an extensive list of party calamities no one should ever face. *(Overly dramatic)* I've seen a party run out of cake. I've been at a party where the balloon-twisting clown didn't show. I've seen a squirrel accidentally get inside a bounce house full of toddlers—don't test me, kids! Oh, the humanity of it all!!

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*Gather yourself and bring the lights back up.*

## LIGHTS: LIGHTS ON

"Sorry, I got a little carried away there.

"Today, I want to help you understand how to survive a very specific situation. I'm not sure anyone in this room will ever face this, but if you do, you will definitely be prepared.

"I feel that everyone needs to know how to survive a party if the power goes out.

"To practice this, we will be playing a game called 'Dish in the Dark!'

## SLIDE: "DISH IN THE DARK"

"Would anybody like to volunteer their amazing Small Group Leader to play this sweet and terrifying game?"

*Select four Small Group Leaders to join you on stage, along with one volunteer from each of their Small Groups.*

*Direct the leaders to sit in chairs at the table facing the crowd. Each kid should stand behind their Small Group Leader.*

"Perfect! All set up for a party! (Pause) Oh wait!

*Hand each leader a blindfold. Don't have them put them on quite yet.*

"Power outage, remember?"

"Now, the goal of 'Dish in the Dark' is to be the leader to eat the most cake in 60 seconds. Sounds easy enough, but this is designed to simulate an extreme party disaster. Our leaders will be unable to see—hence the blindfolds. Oh! And I almost forgot!

*Have the leaders clasp their hands behind them, around the backside of the chair.*

"You can't use your arms. Hence the kid volunteers. (To the kid volunteers) Kids, it's your job to feed your leader cake, one bite at a time, with a spoon. It only counts if it comes from your partner's spoon, and most cake eaten in 60 seconds wins. Got it? (Pause) Oh! One more thing—the blindfolds aren't for the adults. They're for the kids.

*Have the kids put on the blindfolds.*

"The table is set, the lights are out, and we're ready to 'Dish in the Dark!' Ready? Set? Go!

**AUDIO: UPBEAT GAME MUSIC**

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



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<b>PRELUDE</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>	<b>STORY</b>	<b>WORSHIP</b>	<b>GROUPS</b>	<b>HOME</b>
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25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

*Play the game! Blindfolded kids will have a heck of a time finding the cake and feeding the leaders—it should be a messy, fun time!*

*After the 60-second timer expires, have everyone take off blindfolds, see who ate the most cake, and declare the winner!*

“What a mess! I love it! Amazing job to all our participants. Let’s give it up for all our volunteers! (Allow response) Plus, we’ve got a couple of new ‘Dish in the Dark’ Champions!! Let them know how you feel about their success!

“Now, let’s all get to our feet and get ready to worship our amazing God!”

*Host exits as Worship Leader enters.*



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10 MINUTES

## WORSHIP

*Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** "What an incredible day so far. I love our time together here at [name of your environment]. Each time we're together it feels like a party. It's time to move, sing, and worship our God with joy. Here we go!

**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! We can find joy when we stop to think about the ways God has been good to us. We can see God's goodness and faithfulness in our lives, and in the lives of the people around us. I have joy in my heart right now because we get to lift our voices to praise God together. Let's sing this!

**AUDIO:** "SING YOUR PRAISE" / TRACK 2 FROM MY LIFE FOR YOU

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

"We can put our trust in God and live each day with the joy God gives us. Listen to David's words to God in Psalm 30:11-12: 'You turned my loud crying into dancing. You removed my clothes of sadness and dressed me with joy. So my heart will sing your praises. I can't keep silent. LORD, my God, I will praise you forever.' (NirV) Don't let anything keep you from giving your worship to God right now. Sing this with me."

**AUDIO:** "TRUST YOU WITH MY HEART" / TRACK 9 FROM THIS LOVE

**OPTIONAL VIDEO:** "TRUST YOU WITH MY HEART" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

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## COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

*Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.*

### INTRODUCTION

**COMMUNICATOR:** “Welcome! I have to say, this is one of my favorite places with some of my favorite people. Take a look around this room. *(Pause)* Do you notice anyone awesome? Do you see anyone amazing? You are surrounded by awesomeness and amazing-ness! I think everybody needs good people in their lives to count on, to lift us up, and to help us experience all that life has to offer.

“Today I need your help. We’re about to take some time to talk about a couple of questions on the topic of friends. To do so, circle up with your Small Groups, and as you do, think about all the friends you’ve had in your life.

*Give the Small Groups two index cards and something to write with.*

“I imagine that you and your friends have had some incredible experiences. I know a lot of you personally, and you’re amazing, so I can imagine how amazing your friends are, too.

“Maybe they’ve made the club volleyball team. Maybe they consistently dominate in literally every video game they pick up. Maybe they ace every test, get the leads in all the musicals and plays, or edit some of the most hilarious videos you’ve ever seen!

“Share with your Small Group Leaders some of the good things that have happened to your friends—and leaders, write a few down on one of the notecards.

AUDIO: QUIET BACKGROUND MUSIC

*Take about three minutes for kids to share and leaders to write. Then, collect the cards and read a few out loud to the Large Group.*

*The other notecard should remain blank and with each Small Group.*

“These are awesome examples. Your friends have had some big-time goings-on in life! Now, what you shared was all pretty positive . . . so let’s flip the script.

“Although your friends have had many good things happen to them, I would assume a few of them have faced some difficulties as well. Some may be struggling at school and are stuck taking classes in the summer. Others might have been sick, or injured, or something similar.

“This time, share some not-so-great things that your friends have gone through. You don’t have to tell long stories or share all the details; just give a sentence or two to share the situation. Leaders, write these down as well.

AUDIO: QUIET BACKGROUND MUSIC



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25 MINUTES

*Take about three minutes for kids to share and leaders to write. Then, collect the cards, but don't read them out loud.*

"I have no doubt there are some really difficult situations friends could face on these cards. We'll talk about them in a moment, but first, let's chat for a minute."

**TENSION**

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Bad things happen. Hard times happen. Life happens. As much as we would like them to, good times don't last forever. Life is full of highs and lows. This is true for each one of you, me, your parents, your Small Group Leaders, your families, and your friends.

"Unfortunately, no one can escape bad experiences from time to time. Knowing your friends will experience plenty of hardship, here is another question I'd like you to think about: how can you be the sort of friend who stands by people no matter what? What would that look like? What would you say? How can you not feel awkward but strong and supportive?"

"Great questions. Tough ones, too. I'm excited you're here today because we're headed to the Bible to look for some answers. These are questions people have been asking for centuries. And the writers of the Bible have a lot to say about how we can be there for each other and help each other trust God no matter what! Let's take a look together."

**TRUTH**

**COMMUNICATOR:** "Today, we're headed to Romans. Not the people, but the letter. The apostle Paul wrote many letters to many churches, and this one is addressed specifically to the church in Rome.

"Once Paul became a follower of Jesus, he was focused on spreading the story of Jesus to any who would listen. He was really good at it, too; he reached a lot of people. More than just talking or writing, he started churches and encouraged the people who were a part of these churches to continue to live Christ-centered lives. Paul was on a mission, and his travels took him far and wide—through present-day Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Greece, and more. At the time when what we're going to read today was written, Paul had not yet visited Rome . . . but he was making plans to take a trip.

"Even though Paul had never met the Christians in Rome, he loved them and prayed for them often. He wanted to prepare the Christians there for his arrival. So, while staying in Corinth, he wrote a letter to the Romans introducing himself.

*Open the Bible to Romans 1:1 and read.*

"The letter started with:

*"I, Paul, am writing this letter. I serve Christ Jesus. I have been appointed to be an apostle. God set me apart to tell others his good news.*

"Not a bad resume. Paul wanted all the Christians to know who he was and what he did as an apostle. Because honestly, they might not know. This Christianity thing was all pretty new.





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25 MINUTES

“When you read even the second sentence of this letter to the Romans, you quickly realize it’s much more than just an introduction. Paul was using this writing to encourage these new Christians as well.

“He implored them to set themselves apart—mentally, spiritually, and physically. ‘Don’t do the same things as everyone around you. You’re different now. You’re a Christ-follower,’ Paul seemed to say.

“He wrote:

*Open the Bible to Romans 12:2 and read.*

*“Don’t live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.”*

“Now that these Romans were followers of Jesus, Paul encouraged them to act like it. When people pursue Jesus and learn about His way of doing things and treating people, their thoughts begin to change, and it affects how they treat the people around them.

“Paul pointed this out to the Romans when he wrote:

*Open the Bible to Read Romans 12:10 and read.*

*“Love one another deeply. Honor others more than yourselves.”*

“Then Paul shared what ‘loving’ others can look like. It’s more than just a pat on the back or a smile. In his letter, Paul wrote:

*Open the Bible to Romans 12:15 and read.*

*“Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad.”*

“Paul was encouraging the Romans to show empathy. That might be a new word for some of you. *Empathy* is where you imagine what someone else is feeling. Maybe you’ve heard a phrase like, ‘putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.’ Empathy is like that. It’s taking time to feel someone else’s experience—like their fear, joy, or sadness. Empathy is not always easy, but it can help you be a really good friend. Not only that, but it can also help you follow Jesus.

“Let’s take a look at some of the situations you all shared earlier.

*Take out the index cards that you haven’t read yet. Using the suggestions on the cards, create a scenario, a setting, a scene, or a story for each.*

*For example, if a card reads “broke a bone,” maybe create a scenario where it was an unfortunate sports injury, and the person has to miss the rest of the season.*

*Another example: if a card reads “family member is really sick,” maybe create a scenario where he had to go visit them in a hospital, and it was really hard to see.*

*Be sensitive and creative, and set up the Small Groups for discussions after each one.*



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25 MINUTES

*After three or so examples, continue.*

“These are tough situations. Sometimes it’s difficult to know what to do or how to help. From what I overheard in your Small Groups, it sounds like you’ve got some really great ideas.”

**APPLICATION**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “Friends, when Paul wrote those words to the people in Rome, he was encouraging them to use their imaginations to put themselves in someone else’s place. Remember what Paul said:

*Open the Bible to Romans 12:15 and read.*

*“Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad.*

“Why is this important? Why should Christians feel what others feel? Well, when you take time to understand the feelings of others, it’s a way to love them and show you care. After all, isn’t that what you want? Someone else to understand what you’re going through when life stinks?

“The more we can empathize with others, the more we’ll be able to show people God’s love.

“For many, empathy doesn’t come easily. If someone is mad, we want to leave the situation or tell them to get over it without trying to understand. We’re not very patient sometimes. If someone is crying, we will watch them in their sadness and pat them on the back, but sometimes, we walk away. To sit with someone in their emotions takes time and understanding.

“Empathy is a skill we can learn. Practice celebrating when you know a friend is excited. Work on listening and being present when they’re sad. When we sit with others in their emotions, we can actually help them find joy—even if it’s not right away.

“And keep in mind, we don’t have to do this alone. Every difficult situation is an opportunity to turn to God and ask for God’s help! To do this, ask God to help give you the discernment, or understanding, to see the emotions of others. We can even ask God to help our friends find joy when it seems to be gone.”

**LANDING**

**COMMUNICATOR:** “You know what’s great? We don’t have to wait for tomorrow to put this into practice! We can start today. We can pay attention. We can listen. We can be ready to stand or sit with a friend or family member—even if it’s hard or difficult. When someone cries over an argument or is upset over a sports injury, God can use us to help someone else find joy!

“As we prepare to head to Small Groups, consider this:

**SLIDE: KEY QUESTION**

**“What are ways you can help others find joy?** Maybe you can tell them a joke. Maybe you can invite them to your house for video games. When you think of ways to bring others joy, it can bring you joy, too! Before you continue the conversation, let’s pray together to ask God for direction as we work on being empathetic and helping others find joy.



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25 MINUTES

*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**