



## WEEK FOUR – JUNE 2024 – PRETEEN

**Bible Story:** *Joy in the Psalms | Psalms 8/16/19*

**Key Question:** *When is it hard to find joy?*

**Memory Verse:** *“A cheerful heart makes you healthy. But a broken spirit dries you up.” – Proverbs 17:22*

**Virtue:** *Joy – Choosing to celebrate what God is doing*

**Basic Truth:** *I can trust God no matter what*

**Series Overview:** 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!

**Key Question: When is it hard to find joy?** Kids are facing a lot of hard things these days—so much so that it can be difficult for them to find joy. As our kids discover more about our true source of joy—our relationship with God—we hope that they’ll begin to discover different ways to look for joy in what they see and experience each day.

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**9:05 - 9:20 | 11:05 – 11:20 | EARLY ARRIVERS ACTIVITY**

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**Opening Small Group Activity**

*Play: an activity that encourages learning through following guidelines and working as a group*

**What You Need:** Plastic cups; prepared sandwich bags with wet cotton balls

**What You Do:**

- Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a fist bump or high five
- Direct each kid to pair up with a partner. (Form a team of 3 if needed.)
- Tell pairs to stand as far apart from each other as your group space allows.
- Give one kid from each pair an empty cup and direct them to hold it out in front of them with both hands, arms straight.
- Give the other kid from each pair a sandwich bag with five wet cotton balls.
- Challenge the partner with the cotton balls to toss (not throw) the cotton balls toward their partner in an effort to land them in the cup.
  - The kid with the cup can't use their hands or move their arms from the straight-out position but can move their body around to try to catch.
- The pair that catches the most cotton balls is the winner of that round.
- Switch roles and play again.
- Kids can pair up with new partners and repeat as time allows.

**What You Say:**

*“Getting hit with a cold, soggy cotton ball is probably not everyone’s idea of fun. And yet, you guys had a blast in the midst of flying blobs of water. Did you know that it’s possible to have joy even when life isn’t fun? Even when life is challenging? [Transition] Let’s go to Large Group and discover more about finding joy, even when it’s not easy to spot.”*

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**9:20 - 9:50 | 11:20 – 11:50 | LARGE GROUP**

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**Large Group Overview:** In Week 4, we take a look at some of David’s Psalms—specifically, Psalms 8, 16, and 19. David wrote a lot about the things he observed in nature and the world around him that God had created. Through creation, we notice how God is at work—even if sometimes we struggle to see God’s work in our own lives. Joy is all around us. We just have to look.

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**9:50 – 10:10 | 11:50 – 12:10 | SMALL GROUP**

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**Discussion Questions**

**[Talk About God | Bible Story Review]**

*Connect: an activity that invites kids to share with others and build on their understanding*

**What You Need:** N/A

**What You Do:**

- ASK:
  - What do you think are the main reasons people are not joyful?
  - Do you think we can be joyful even when we don’t *feel* happy? Why or why not?
  - What’s the best way to change an unhappy attitude to a joyful one?
  - If God had only given us one or two senses, which ones do you think are most helpful to finding joy? If someone doesn’t experience all five senses, can they still discover the evidence of God around them? How?

## **Take a Snapshot**

### **[Live for God | Application Activity]**

*Imagine: an activity that promotes empathy and facilitates biblical application through role-play and reenactment*

**What You Need:** “Find Joy” Activity Page; pens

### **What You Do:**

- Direct the kids to form a circle.
- Give each kid a “Find Joy” Activity Page and a pen.
- Read the first line and ask kids to fill in the rest with the description of a type of person, such as a teacher, dad, bus driver, farmer, etc.
- When kids have finished filling in their first line, tell everyone to fold down the page on the dotted line to cover up what they wrote then pass their paper to the kid on their right.
- Read the second line and ask kids to fill in the prompt, fold the page as shown, and pass to the right again.
- Continue until all the lines on the paper have been filled in.
- Collect the papers and unfold them.
- Remind kids that we all have days and times when joy seems far away and very hard to find. That’s when we need to open our eyes and look a little harder. There is plenty in the world around us that we can celebrate if we are looking.
- Give each kid one of the completed “Find Joy” Activity Pages.
- Let kids take turns reading the unusual scenarios.
- Remind kids that joy—choosing to celebrate what God is doing—is something that takes work. It doesn’t just happen. We might have to listen, smell, taste, touch, and look carefully around at God’s creation to find joy.
- Ask:
  - In what ways does your trust in God make a difference in the way you feel about the situations you go through?
  - Name times when it’s hard for you to be joyful. What can you do that will help get your thoughts and attitude focused on God?

- **[Make it Personal] Share about a time when you were struggling to find joy but then God showed up in a special way and gave you something to celebrate—even though the struggle didn't magically disappear.**

### **Make It Personal With Prayer**

#### **[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]**

*Reflect: an activity that creates space for personal understanding and application*

**What You Need:** N/A

#### **What You Do:**

- Review or teach kids the Five-Fingers-of-Joy to prompt a prayer of gratitude and praise for the ways God shows up all around them.
- Invite kids to hold up five fingers and look around them. (Alternatively, you might invite kids to close their eyes and picture themselves in one of their favorite places—not to suggest that their Small Group isn't their FAVORITE place.)
  - Think of FIVE things you can SEE.
  - Think of FOUR things you can HEAR.
  - Think of THREE things you can SMELL.
  - Think of TWO things you can TOUCH or FEEL.
  - Think of ONE thing you can taste.
- Challenge them to acknowledge ways the things they thought of bring them joy.
- Encourage kids to talk to God (silently or aloud) to say thank you for the evidence that God is at work all around them and uses it to bring joy.
- Close in prayer.