



WEEK ONE – JULY 2024 – SECOND/THIRD

Bible Story: *Shepherds + Angels / Luke 2:8-20*

Bottom Line: *Jesus brings joy to the world*

Memory Verse: “Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!” – *Philippians 4:4 (NIrV)*

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!

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.

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

Opening Small Group Activity

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

What You Need: Noisemakers; permanent markers

What You Do:

- Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a fist bump or high five
- Give each kid a noisemaker and use a permanent marker to write each kid's name on their noisemaker
- Divide the group into teams of 2-3.
- Direct each team to sit together in different parts of your group space, if possible.
- Challenge the teams to work together to choose a song and sound their noisemakers to the tune of that song. (This can be a Christmas song or any song.)
- Once each team has selected a song and practiced, invite each team to take a turn “performing” their song in front of the group!

What You Say:

“I don't know how you use a noisemaker and not experience joy! They're basically just instruments that bring joy. *[Transition]* **Today in Large Group, we're going to be hearing about another group who brought joy. They actually brought the best news ever!**”

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

Large Group Overview: 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!

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

Sleeping Sheep

[Talk About God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: N/A

What You Do:

- Designate two kids in the group to be shepherds.
- Instruct the rest of the group to be sheep.
- Direct the sheep to lay on the ground and pretend like they're sleeping.
- Instruct the shepherds to walk around trying to “wake” the sleeping sheep by making them laugh.
- Encourage the shepherds to walk around the sleeping sheep while making silly faces, singing silly songs, or doing anything else safely to make the rest of the kids laugh.
- When a sleeping sheep “wakes” (or laughs), pause to ask them a Review Question from below.
- After the sheep has answered a Review Question, invite them to join the shepherd in trying to wake the other sheep.

- *Note: If the shepherds are having no trouble waking the sheep, only allow 1-2 shepherds in play at a time.*
- The last sleepy sheep left is the winner!
- Questions:
 - Where did Mary and Joseph have to travel to and why? (*Bethlehem, to be counted*)
 - Since Bethlehem was crowded, where did Mary have to give birth to Jesus? (*in a place where the animals stayed*)
 - What kind of people were outside the town of Bethlehem and what kind of animals were they taking care of? (*shepherds and sheep*)
 - What surprising thing happened to those shepherds out in the field after Jesus was born? (*an angel appeared to them*)
 - What did the angel say to the shepherds? (*“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. . . . Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord!” —Luke 2:10-11, NIrV*)
 - How did the angel describe Baby Jesus so the shepherds would know what to look for? (*He would be wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.*)
 - What did the shepherds do after their angel visit? (*They visited Baby Jesus, and were filled with so much joy they told everyone about Him.*)
 - How can you share God’s joy with others? (*Answers will vary. Repeat this question as needed.*)

What You Say:

*“Maybe you have heard this story before—around Christmas time. It’s normally when we talk about it, right? But we shouldn’t sleep on this good news the rest of the year. The story of Jesus being born and the good news that **[Bottom Line]** **Jesus brings joy to the world** is something worth celebrating every day. Just like the shepherds were filled with joy when they heard about Jesus, we too can be filled with this same kind of joy everyday—even in the ordinary moments!” **[Make It Personal]** (*Share a story about how the joy of Jesus has changed you.*)*

Pray + Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Need: Party Noisemakers; Ribbon; Hole Punch; “Bottom Line Tag” Activity Page

What You Do:

- Give kids their noisemakers from the Early Arriver and Opening Activity.
- Give each kid one strip from the “Bottom Line Tag” Activity Page and a piece of ribbon or string.
- Show kids how to punch a hole at the end of their “Bottom Line Tag” Activity Page strip, then pass the hole punch around for them to use.
- Direct kids to loop the ribbon or string through the hole on their “Bottom Line Tag” Activity Page strip and tie it around their noisemaker.
- Say: “No matter what you face this week, you can find something to celebrate.”
- When the kids find something to celebrate, encourage them to sound off their noisemaker and remember the joy Jesus brings.
- Close your group time in prayer.

What You Say:

*“God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus. Because **[Bottom Line] Jesus brings joy to the world**, we know that no matter what, we can choose to celebrate what You are doing in the midst of our every day. We are thankful that we can bring our everyday moments to You—our sadness, our frustrations, our anger, our happiness, our laughter, and even our hurt. We trust that no matter what our days look like, You are working out something good. And because of this truth, we can choose joy. We can choose to celebrate knowing You are always doing something good behind the scenes. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”*

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to sound off their noisemakers one last time! Ask the question: “Who brings joy to the world?” After they share their answer, encourage kids to look for moments this week to share God’s love and spread joy.