



WEEK ONE – JULY 2024 – KINDER/FIRST

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: Party Hats; Cotton Balls

What You Do:

- Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a fist bump or high five
- Instruct kids to sit in a circle.
- Give each kid a party hat to wear.
- Lead the group in a variation of “Doggie, Doggie Where’s Your Bone?”
- Pick one kid to be the “shepherd.”
- Instruct the “shepherd” to sit facing away from the rest of the kids.
- Sing “Shepherd, Shepherd, Where’s Your Sheep?” to the tune of “Doggie, Doggie, Where’s Your Bone?”
Shepherd, shepherd,
Where’s your sheep?
Someone stole it from your keep.
- As you sing, hand the “sheep” (cotton ball) to a kid to hide under their party hat. (Help with placement, as needed.)
- Repeat the song until the “sheep” is successfully hidden.
- Direct the other kids to pretend to hide sheep too.
- Invite the “shepherd” to turn around and guess who has the sheep.
 - Depending on the size of your group, give the shepherd one, two, or three guesses to find the cotton ball.
- Whether the “shepherd” guesses correctly or not, pick a new “shepherd” and a different kid to hide the “sheep” for the next round.
- Play as time allows.

What You Say:

“Great job, everyone! What is a shepherd? (*Invite responses, like: someone who watches sheep, someone who takes care of sheep.*) Yes! Shepherds care for sheep. In Bible times, shepherds stayed in the fields with their sheep all day and all night! **[Transition] Let’s go to Large Group where we’ll hear about something AMAZING that happened to a group of shepherds one night.**”

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

Good News of Great Joy

[Talk About God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: “Good News of Great Joy” Activity Page; a variety of party items

What You Do:

- Open the Bible to Luke 2, or invite a volunteer to open it for you.
- Ask open-ended questions to help the kids recall as much of the Bible Story as possible. For example:
 - What do you remember most about today’s Bible Story?
 - What happened first? (*Pause.*) What happened next? etc.

- How did the shepherds feel when they saw the angel?
- How do you think the shepherds felt after they saw Baby Jesus?
(Pause.) What makes you think that?
- Say: “We’re going to act out the Bible Story we heard today!”
- Assign kids to play the different parts: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the angels, and sheep.
- Distribute the props and help kids put on the “costumes.” Possible uses for the items include:
 - Napkins as the shepherds’ headdresses
 - Plates as additional “sheep”
 - Party hats for angels to wear
 - Party glasses for Mary and Joseph
 - Be creative with the supplies. The random (even humorous) costumes and props will engage the kids’ brains and enhance their memory of the story!
- Position the shepherds, sheep, and angels on one side of your group area and “Mary” and “Joseph” on the other side of your group area.
- Read the “Good News of Great Joy” Activity Page and use it as a guide to help kids reenact the key events.
- If time allows, let the kids switch roles and dramatize the story again.

What You Say:

“God chose ordinary, everyday shepherds to share the most important message. EVER! What was that message? (Invite responses like: that Baby Jesus was born, that God sent Jesus to be our Savior.) Yes! The angels told the shepherds that God had sent the Savior! Wow! And after the shepherds saw Baby Jesus, they were SO filled with JOY that they shared the good news about Jesus with EVERYONE they met! Who can YOU share the good news about Jesus with? (Invite responses.)”

[Make It Personal] (Tell kids who YOU’LL share the good news about Jesus with.) “Just like the shepherds, you can share the good news of God’s love. Even in your ordinary, everyday lives, you can be joyful because [Bottom Line] Jesus brings joy to the world!”

Pray + Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Need: Party Noisemakers

What You Do:

- Lead kids to use their noisemakers as you sing “Joy to the World” to the group.
 - It might work best to repeat just the opening lines a couple of times:
“Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King!”
- After the mayhem and joy, encourage the kids to share God’s love and spread joy!
- Close the group time in prayer.

What You Say:

“Dear God, thank You SO MUCH for sending Jesus to be our Savior. Help us always choose to focus on the joyful news that You sent Jesus. Whether it’s an exciting or ordinary day, help us always celebrate the truth that [Bottom Line] Jesus brings joy to the world! We love You and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to tell one way they’ll share joy with others. Provide prompts if a kid is stuck for an idea.