



WEEK THREE – JULY 2024 – PRETEEN

Bible Story: *Be Joyful With Others | Romans 12:15; Acts 2:42-47*

Key Question: *What are ways you can help others find joy?*

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

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

Basic Truth: *I should treat others the way I want to be treated.*

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: **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

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: N/A

What You Do:

- Welcome kids by name as they arrive with a fist bump or high five
- Direct the kids to sit down in your group space so that everyone is facing the same direction.
- Ask for two volunteers; tell them to sit, facing each other, in front of the group.
- Assign them “Kid 1” and “Kid 2.”
- Explain that you are going to play a Try-Not-To-Laugh challenge!
 - Kid 1 will try their best to make Kid 2 laugh.
 - Kid 2 will try their best NOT to laugh and keep a straight face.
 - Kid 1 can make silly faces, noises, funny motions, etc. but cannot touch Kid 2.
- The game ends when Kid 2 laughs.
- Give other kids in the group a turn to play.
- Play until everyone who would like to play has had a turn or as time allows.
- After you’ve finished playing, ask:
 - Does anyone know what empathy is? (*Invite responses; being aware of how someone else is feeling, imagining what it might be like to be in their position.*)
 - Has anyone ever shown you empathy?

What You Say:

“I loved how you tried making each other laugh! We’ve all had times when we need a good friend to cheer us up. Making someone laugh and making them happy are great things! Do you think it’s always a good time to make someone else

laugh? (Invite responses). [Transition] Today, we will learn about empathy, and we'll see how it might look different, depending on the situation."

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

Large Group Overview: 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.

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

Bible Story Extension

[Talk About God | Bible Story Review]

Create: an activity that explores spiritual ideas through the process of drawing, building, and designing

What You Need: Colorful stationery paper, pens or pencils, and envelopes

What You Do:

- Review the Bible Story by asking the following questions and inviting responses:
 - What book of the Bible was today's story from? (*Romans*)
 - Who wrote the book of Romans, and who was it originally for? (*Paul wrote it as a letter to believers in Rome.*)
 - What was Paul known for? (*He traveled all over, telling others about the good news of Jesus.*)

- How would you say this part of Paul’s letter in your own words: *“Don’t live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed” (Romans 12:2, NIV). (Answers may vary.)*
- What does Paul’s letter have to say about joy? (*“Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad.” —Romans 12:15, NIV*)
- What was Paul trying to say when he wrote this to the Romans? (*Because of what Jesus has done for us, we can show God’s love to others with empathy.*)
- Give each kid a piece of stationary and a pen or pencil.
- Encourage the kids to think of someone in their life who either recently had a reason to celebrate *OR* has recently experienced a difficult time.
- Explain that they will have several minutes to write that person a letter as an opportunity to show empathy. Kids can either:
 - Write upbeat, encouraging words to celebrate with them.
 - Write understanding and loving words to let them know they care.
- Be sure to offer guidance for those who might be struggling to find the right words to say in their letters.
- After everyone has had plenty of time to write, explain that it is good to practice using our words to show empathy.
- Challenge kids to give their letters to the people they wrote to. They can either give them the letter in person or send it in the mail. Provide envelopes for anyone who wants one.
- ***[Make It Personal] Tell the kids a story about a time when you were the recipient of empathetic words. Share how that made you feel.***

Make It Personal With Prayer

[Pray To God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Need: “Empathy Prayer” Activity Page, pens or pencils, markers, stapler, scissors

What You Do:

- Set out the pens or pencils, markers, stapler, and scissors for the group to share.
- Give each kid an “Empathy Prayer” Activity Page.
- Explain that they will use the supplies to cut the pages apart and make their own prayer journals.
 - They can use the markers to decorate the front cover of their journal.
 - They can use the stapler to attach the pages together.
- After giving some time to staple and decorate their journals, encourage kids to write a prayer on one of the lined pages about someone they know who could use their empathy.
 - It could be someone experiencing joy that they can celebrate with, or it could be someone who is sad they could be present with.
- Explain that journaling can be a way to talk to God. When we write down our prayers, it can help us focus and organize our thoughts. It can also be a way to go back and see how God answered prayers from our past.
- Let kids know they can take their journals home and use them during their own prayer times.
- Say a prayer for the entire group.