

Today's Suggested Schedule—June 2024, Week 3

Today's Bible Story: Build Your Kingdom Here (Ezra and the Rebuilding of the Temple) • *Ezra* 3:10-13

Today's Bottom Line: Celebrate each step of the way.

Monthly Memory Verse: *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.* Proverbs 17:22 (ESV)

Monthly Virtue: Joy—Choosing to celebrate what God is doing

Basic Truth: I can trust God no matter what.

Before kids arrive, take a few moments to pray for them. Pray for those who might visit your group for the first time. Thank God for some of the things God has done in your life. Ask God to help the kids of your group to discover that God can help them keep going and be joyful all throughout their lives. Ask God to give you a posture of openness as you talk about their lives and struggles and help them see how God is moving in their lives and still giving them reasons to celebrate because of Jesus.

Check out our Pinterest page here <https://bit.ly/447HSZi> for a visual on some of the activities.

LARGE GROUP (35 minutes)

STORY: Communicating God's Truth in Engaging Ways

WORSHIP: Inviting People to Respond to God

Welcome/Opener

Worship

Bible Story

Bottom Line

Prayer

Closer

SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Bible Story Review: Pause to Celebrate

Application Activity: Celebration Shuffle

Memory Verse Activity: Verse Tap

Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience

Parent Cue Card (Print or Email)

Devotionals for Kids

Parent Cue App

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Use this if kids have questions about following Jesus.

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word gospel. Clarify that the word gospel means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

- **A – ADMIT** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin. (*Romans 3:23, Acts 3:19, 1 John 1:9*)
- **B – BELIEVE** that Jesus is God's son and receive God's gift of forgiveness from sin. (*Acts 16:31; Acts 4:12; John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8-9*)
- **C – CONFESS** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (*Romans 10:9-10,13*)

If a child has expressed interest in following Jesus, please let the parents know so they can be a part of the conversation that their child is having about faith.

What Now?

If you put your trust in Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the One who forgives your sins and makes it possible for you to know God, we are so proud of you! There is no greater single decision that you could make.

We believe that baptism is an important next step for you. Baptism is your way of telling your friends and family, “Hey, I'm a follower of Jesus!” If you're interested in learning more or participating in baptism, talk to a staff member about the next steps you should take.

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Story Exploration

Ezra 3:10-13 recounts the Israelites' celebration as they lay the foundation for the new Temple after returning from exile. This passage highlights the importance of recognizing and celebrating God's work in our lives.

- **Joy in God's Faithfulness (Verses 10-11)**
The Israelites were joyful because they saw God fulfilling His promises by allowing them to rebuild the Temple. Think about times when you have seen or felt God working in their lives. How did that make you feel? Discuss how they can celebrate and be thankful for God's ongoing work in their life. Why is it important to celebrate and thank God for what He does in our lives?
- **Expressing Joy through Worship (Verses 10-11)**
Music and praise were central to the Israelites' celebration, showing their joy and gratitude. Talk about different ways they can express joy and worship God, such as singing, playing an instrument, or dancing. How can we use our talents and interests to praise God and show our gratitude?
- **Celebrating Together as a Community (Verses 12-13)**
The community came together to celebrate, showing how joy can be amplified when shared with others. Discuss the importance of celebrating together as a family or a group. How does it make their joy even greater? Reflect on times when they celebrated something special with others and how it felt.

Encourage kids to find one thing to be thankful for each day and think of a small way to celebrate it, whether it's telling a friend, writing it in their journal, or saying a quick prayer of thanks.

When kids think about joy and celebrating God's work, they can learn to recognize and express their gratitude and happiness for what God is doing in their lives, both individually and as part of a faith community.

Discussion Questions

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

Ask:

- What's your favorite way to celebrate and worship God?
- What does it mean to worship God?
- Why is God worthy of worship?
- If someone said to you, "I don't have anything to be joyful about," what would you say to help them realize that they do?
- What is something that took longer than you wanted it to? How might it help in those situations to celebrate small steps of progress along the way and thank God for them?

1. Pause to Celebrate

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need: “Hidden” Activity Page, “Hidden” Activity Page Key, “Script” Activity Page, streamers, markers, and a device for playing high-energy music

What You Do:

- Give each kid a “Hidden” Activity Page and two long pieces of streamers.
- Instruct the kids to use the key at the bottom of the “Hidden” Activity Page to color each box to reveal a picture.
- Say: “As you color, I’m going to review the Bible Story and randomly play music. When you hear the music, stop coloring, stand up, and dance/wave your streamers to celebrate!”
- Set out the markers.
- Instruct the group to color in the squares using the color code on the “Hidden” Activity Page.
- As the kids color, review the Bible Story using the “Script” Activity Page, playing music when it’s time to celebrate, and asking the kids to pause and join in on the celebration.
- Invite kids to share what picture they have revealed after completing the “Hidden” Activity Page.
 - Reference the “Hidden” Activity Page Key for additional guidance if needed.

What You Say:

“Great job celebrating, everyone! How did it feel to stop what you were working on and dance around? (*Invite responses.*) Celebrating isn’t just about having a good time—it energizes us! It’s like giving ourselves a high five for all the awesome things we’re doing with God.

“Can you remember why the Israelites were taken away to Babylon? (*Invite responses, like: they turned away from God, they were taken captive.*) The amazing part is that 70 years later, God kept the promise to bring them back home. Was everything perfect when they got back? (*Invite responses.*) What was wrong? (*Invite responses, like: the city walls and the temple were in ruins*) But they didn’t give up!

“They had a whole temple and city to rebuild! They started by building the altar of the temple and then the temple’s foundation. The new temple’s foundation wasn’t as impressive as the first one. God’s people still had a long way to go to build the temple—it would take them a couple more decades to finish the temple. But they were filled with joy that they’d completed one big step along the way. They praised God with shouts of joy because they knew they worked to honor God and **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way.**”

* 2. Celebration Shuffle

[Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need: “Signs” Activity Page, “Skills” Activity Page, and painter’s tape

What You Do:

- Use the tape to hang the three signs from the “Signs” Activity Page in different areas of the group area.
 - If hanging the signs up is not possible in your group space, spread the signs out on the floor instead.
- Direct the kids to gather in the middle of the group space.
- Review the three different areas—the words on the signs—with the kids:
 - “I am still learning how to do this.”
 - “I know how to do this.”
 - “I have never tried this.”
- One by one, read a statement from the “Skills” Activity Page.
- Instruct the kids to move to the sign that best describes their familiarity with that skill, to stand near that sign, then to celebrate with the other kids near them before returning to the middle for the next statement.
 - Encourage kids by explaining we all learn different things at different times, and it’s okay for them to choose any sign for each statement.
- After kids have arrived at their chosen signs, lead them into a celebration, regardless of the area they chose; kids can dance, high-five each other, etc.
- Direct kids to return to the middle of the space.
- Repeat for each statement.
- Encourage positive interactions and celebration dances throughout the game.

What You Say:

“It was so interesting to see all the different skills we have learned, are still leaning, or are waiting to learn! We’re all on this amazing journey of learning and growing, and it’s totally okay to be at different levels. Whether you landed in the ‘still learning’ zone, the ‘got this’ zone, or the ‘never tried this’ zone, you all were able to celebrate because, guess what? The truth is, we’ll never be completely finished in this lifetime with all the things we need and want to do. That’s why it’s so important to celebrate the baby steps along the way.

“Best of all, God is right there with us every step of the way. So, when we give thanks for all God has done and follow Jesus, God gives us joy through the Holy Spirit so we can **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way.**”

[Make It Personal] (Share with the group any steps you have taken to improve or learn a new skill. Perhaps you’ve learned to play a new instrument or fix a car. Or maybe you’re trying to be a better listener. How does remembering how God has helped with the things you’ve learned so far give you the strength to take steps toward improving or learning something new?)

3. Verse Tap

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need: Bibles

What You Do:

- Make sure each kid has a Bible.
- Together, look up Proverbs 17:22 using the Bible Navigation Tips below.

Finding verses with 2nd and 3rd graders: Guide them to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. (Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.) When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find Proverbs in the list under “Old Testament.” When the kids find Proverbs, lead them to look at the page number beside the word. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find Proverbs. Help the kids find the page. When they find Proverbs, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find chapter 17. Explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find verse 22 in chapter 17.

- Choose a kid who would like to read the verse to the group.
- Invite others who would like to read the verse to the group.
- Instruct the kids to circle up.
- Select one kid to start the game.
- Instruct that kid to walk around the circle while tapping each kid’s head as they recite the words of the verse.
 - If they struggle to remember the words, encourage the group to recite the verse together, using their Bibles if needed.
- When the kid walking around the circle gets to the reference, instruct the kid they tap to get up and chase the tapper around the circle until one of them sits back down in the empty spot.
- Instruct the last kid standing to start a new round.
- Repeat as time and interest allow.

What You Say:

“Let’s give a big cheer for ourselves to **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way** towards memorizing this month’s Memory Verse! *(Allow time for kids to cheer.)* We’ve made big progress on learning this month’s Memory Verse. Celebrating our progress not only makes us happy inside, but it also makes our bodies strong—it’s like medicine for the body! So let’s learn to **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way** when we do things!”

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Say:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember?
- How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission?

What You Need: Prepared "Joy Journals" from previous weeks, additional prepared, blank "Joy Journal" Activity Pages, markers, and pencils

What You Do:

- Give the kids their "Joy Journals" from the previous week.
- Set out the pencils.
- Give blank "Joy Journal" Activity Pages to any kids who you don't have a journal for. Encourage them to write their names on the front cover.
- Direct the kids to turn to page 4.
- Read the Bottom Line, and invite the kids to recite it with you a few times.
 - **[Bottom Line] Celebrate each step of the way.**
- Read the prompt to the group. "Think about new steps for new skills you have learned or tried recently. Write or draw about one of each step above."
- Set out the markers.
- Draw the group's attention to the steps visual.
- Ask the kids to draw or write about something significant on each step, representing a step they've taken recently.
 - Some suggestions could be: learning a new skill, making a new friend, not arguing with a sibling, or overcoming a challenge.
- Give kids time to fill in their journals.
- Collect the journals and store them for the following weeks.
- Close your group time in prayer.

NOTE: Kids will be adding to their journals each week this month. Be prepared to collect and store them each week. Prepare extra copies for kids not present in previous weeks. If preferred, don't staple the pages—send individual pages home each week.

What You Say:

"Dear God, thank You for reminding us of the things we have overcome and achieved. Help us to remember not to get stressed when we struggle to complete things or when they don't go the way we think they should. Help us to remember that we will never be completely finished in this lifetime with all the things we might want to do or learn. Help us enjoy and celebrate the steps we accomplish and trust You to be with us as we keep going. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to show them the "Hidden" Activity Page and explain how they paused to celebrate.

GETTING READY

Here's everything you need to know to get ready for this week.

GROUPS: Creating a Safe Place to Connect (25 minutes)

Create a safe place to connect and learn how the Bible Story applies to real-life experiences, through interactive activities and discussion questions.

(Choose as many of these activities as you like.)

** If you don't have time to do all these activities, be sure to do activity #2.*

1. Pause to Celebrate

[Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

What You Need:

- Print "Hidden" Activity Page on paper, one for each kid
- Print "Hidden" Activity Page Key on paper, one for each Small Group
- Print "Script" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Party streamers; two, two-foot lengths for every kid
- Markers, enough for a Small Group to share
- Device for playing high-energy music (consider the monthly song from Orange Kids Music)

*** 2. Celebration Shuffle**

[Live for God | Application Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Print "Signs" Activity Page on paper, one set for each Small Group
- Print "Skills" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Painter's tape, one roll for each Small Group

3. Verse Tap

[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

Made to Move: an activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body

What You Need:

- Bibles, one for each kid

4. Pray and Dismiss

[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

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

What You Need:

- Prepared "Joy Journal" Activity Pages from previous week
- Print additional "Joy Journal" Activity Pages on paper, cut apart, and staple pages together in order, one for each kid not present last week
- Markers, enough for a Small Group to share
- Pencils, one for each kid
- *NOTE: Kids will be adding to their journals each week this month. Be prepared to collect and store them each week. Prepare extra copies for kids not present previous weeks. If preferred, don't staple the pages—send individual pages home each week.*