

## Today's Suggested Schedule—June 2024, Week 5

**Today's Bible Story:** Reason to Believe (God Will Give Us Joy) • *Habakkuk 3:17-18*

**Today's Bottom Line:** There's always a reason to celebrate.

**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. Acknowledge any hard things you're facing, then reflect on how God sent Jesus. Ask God to help you find joy in what God has done. Pray that your kids will understand or catch a glimpse of what it may look like in their lives to see joy even when they're experiencing things or situations in which it may be difficult to do so.*

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: Trio Challenge

Application Activity: Joyful Moments Keepsake

Memory Verse Activity: Verse Charades

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**

Finding joy and peace in God doesn't mean ignoring our problems or pretending they don't exist. It means trusting that God is bigger than our problems and that He is with us through every challenge. Just like Habakkuk, we can choose to rejoice in God and find our strength in Him, even when life is tough.

#### Verse Breakdown

Habakkuk 3:17 - Paints a picture of complete devastation. For people in Habakkuk's time, no figs, grapes, olives, food, sheep, or cattle meant total economic collapse and starvation.

Habakkuk 3:18 - Despite all the bad things happening, Habakkuk chooses to rejoice in God. He decides to find his joy in God rather than in his circumstances.

Key Point: Habakkuk's choice to rejoice shows that true joy and peace come from our relationship with God, not from our external circumstances.

Other verses to support Habakkuk 3:17-18

- **Psalm 23:4** - This verse highlights the comfort and presence of God during difficult and dark times, much like Habakkuk's trust in God's salvation despite dire circumstances.
- **Psalm 46:1-3** - This psalm emphasizes God as a refuge and strength in the face of chaos and turmoil, echoing the trust and rejoicing in God found in Habakkuk's declaration.
- **Isaiah 61:10** - Relation to Habakkuk 3:17-18: Isaiah expresses joy in God's salvation and righteousness, similar to how Habakkuk finds joy and strength in God despite the lack of material blessings.
- **Lamentations 3:22-23** - Lamentations speaks to God's steadfast love and faithfulness, providing hope and a reason for rejoicing even in the midst of suffering and loss.
- **Matthew 6:31-33** - Jesus encourages believers to trust in God's provision and prioritize their relationship with Him, aligning with Habakkuk's choice to rejoice in God despite the lack of physical resources.
- **Romans 8:28** - This verse reassures believers that God works through all circumstances for their good, much like Habakkuk's trust in God's overarching plan despite the apparent desolation.
- **Philippians 4:4-7** - Paul urges believers to find joy in the Lord always and to bring their concerns to God in prayer, paralleling Habakkuk's decision to rejoice in God and find joy in His presence despite difficulties.
- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** - Paul encourages focusing on the eternal and unseen, finding hope and renewal in God's promises despite present difficulties, much like Habakkuk's choice to look beyond the current hardships and find joy in God.
- **James 1:2-4** - James speaks to finding joy in trials because they develop perseverance and maturity, resonating with Habakkuk's message of rejoicing in God even in the face of adversity.

## 1. Trio Challenge

### [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

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

**What You Need:** “Habakkuk Review” Activity Page, index cards, and markers

#### What You Do:

- Invite kids to pair up.
  - Form one group of three kids if you have an uneven amount of kids in your group.
- Give each pair three index cards and a marker.
- Instruct them to write “A” on one card, “B” on another, and “C” on the last card.
- One at a time, read a question with three answer choices from the “Habakkuk Review” Activity Page.
- Encourage kids to collaborate to guess the correct answer and hold up the card indicating their choice when prompted.
- Reveal the correct answers once everyone has held up their selection.
- Instruct kids to keep track of how many questions their pair gets correct.
- Celebrate the pair with the most questions answered correctly.

#### What You Say:

“Wow, Habakkuk had a tough time, didn’t he? It seemed like everything was falling apart around him. Despite being upset, Habakkuk did something pretty amazing. Can anyone remember what he did? *(Invite responses, like: he prayed and asked God to help.)* Why do you think Habakkuk did that? *(Invite responses, like: he trusted God’s character, he believed God to do big things.)*”

“Despite all of the hard things Habakkuk had going on around him, why did he say he could be glad and joyful? *(Invite responses, like: because of what God had done in the past.)*”

“When we face tough times, we have a choice to make. Instead of getting lost in what’s going wrong, we can choose to take our focus off our problems and look to God. Even when everything seems to be falling apart, we can find peace and joy, just like Habakkuk did, by asking God for help and remembering that God has helped us in the past. What are some things God has helped you with in the past? *(Invite responses.)*”

***[Make It Personal] (Share a time you went through something difficult, but you still chose joy. Was it difficult or easy to choose joy? Once you decided to choose joy, how did it change how you saw your circumstances?)***

“Remember, no matter what, ***[Bottom Line]*** there’s always a reason to celebrate.”

## Discussion Questions

Ask:

- If Habakkuk visited our Small Group today, what do you think he would tell us about joy?
- When you realize that you can't control a situation and make it go the way you want, how does that make you feel? What are some good things that can come out of realizing we are not in control of some things? What CAN we control?
- Even though as followers of Jesus we know God is in control and that we can trust God, why is it so hard to believe that sometimes?
- Can you recall a time when you found joy in God despite facing a difficult situation? How did that impact you?
- How can you incorporate practices like prayer, worship, and reading Scripture into your routine to strengthen your trust in God?
- How can your attitude and actions during tough times be a witness to others about your faith and trust in God?
- What role can your faith community play in helping you stay joyful and trusting in God during hard times?

## \* 2. Joyful Moments Keepsake

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

**What You Need:** Jars or small containers (*Optional: paper envelopes instead of jars*), strips of paper, markers, pencils, stickers, and other decorating materials on hand

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid a small jar or container.
  - (*Optional: Give each kid a paper envelope instead.*)
- Set out the markers, stickers, and other decorating materials.
- Invite kids to decorate their jars (or containers/envelopes) using the materials provided.
- Explain that the jar will be their “Joy Jar.”
- When kids have finished decorating, give each one several slips of paper.
- Set out the pencils.
- Ask the kids to think about times in their lives when they’ve felt God’s goodness, help, or joy.
  - Kids can also recall Bible stories where God kept a promise to help.
- Instruct kids to write or draw their ideas on the strips of paper.
- Direct the kids to fold or roll the papers and place them in their Joy Jars.
- Invite kids to share what they wrote with the group.
- Encourage kids to take their Joy Jars home and continue adding more joyful moments in the weeks to come.

#### What You Say:

“Picture your Joy Jar, filled to the brim with moments of God’s goodness. Just like Habakkuk found reasons to celebrate in the midst of tough times, your Joy Jar is your secret stash of joy when life feels a bit challenging. Your current struggles might not magically disappear, but guess what? Your Joy Jar becomes your treasure chest of peace and joy right in the middle of it all.

“Think about Jesus. He faced some seriously tough stuff, but you know what? He found joy in knowing that God is ALWAYS up to something good, even if we can’t see it at the moment. So, when life gets difficult, take a peek into your Joy Jar. Remind yourself of the incredible things God has done, is doing, and will do, and you will find that **[Bottom Line] there’s always a reason to celebrate.**”

### 3. Verse Charades

#### [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

*Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery*

**What You Need:** “Acting Cards” Activity Page, “Verse Motions” Activity Page from Week 1, and opaque bag

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

- Review the verse using the motions from the “Verse Motions” Activity Page (same as week 1).
- Put the cards from the “Acting Cards” Activity Page in the bag.
- Choose a kid to pick a card from the bag and act out that word(s) from the Memory Verse.
  - Share that kids can come up with their own action, or use the ones reviewed from the “Verse Motions” Activity Page.
- Repeat until all the words have been chosen from the bag.
- Repeat as time and interest allow.

#### **What You Say:**

“It’s okay to feel upset when things are tough. But, when we choose joy and celebrate God’s goodness, it helps us practice this verse. One way to practice this verse while going through hard times is to remember that **[Bottom Line] there’s always a reason to celebrate.** When we pause and recall all the things God has done for us in the past, it gives us hope for the future. When we’re hopeful, it makes us feel joyful. Having a happy heart makes us healthy.”

## 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?

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

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid 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 6.
- Read the Bottom Line, and invite the kids to recite it with you a few times.
  - **[Bottom Line] There's always a reason to celebrate.**
- Set out the markers.
- Read the prompt: "Draw or write about a situation that feels scary or uncertain."
- Encourage kids to draw a difficult, scary, or uncertain situation they're concerned to face or are facing.
- If time allows, give kids who were not present for previous weeks some time to fill in any blank, previous pages.
- Encourage the kids to take their Joy Journals home and flip through them to be reminded that they can always find joy.
- Close your group time in prayer.

*NOTE: If you've sent individual pages home each week, encourage the kids to put the pages together to form a Joy Journal.*

#### What You Say:

"Dear God, You already know the situations we face that make us feel afraid or uncertain about the future. Help us to remember Your goodness and focus on the times You've shown up in our lives. Help us remember how You've promised to make everything right. Thank You for the joy that comes from knowing Jesus. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage kids to show them their "Joy Journals."

## 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. Trio Challenge**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Print "Habakkuk Review" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- Index cards, three for every two kids
- Markers, one for every two kids

#### **\* 2. Joyful Moments Keepsake**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Glass jars or other small containers, one for each kid
  - *Optional: Use paper envelopes instead of jars or small containers.*
- Strips of paper, four or five for each kid
- Markers, enough for a Small Group to share
- Pencils, one for each kid
- Stickers, enough for a Small Group to share
- Other decorating materials on hand that would decorate a glass jar including: washi tape, stick-on sequins and jewels, paint pens, etc.

#### **3. Verse Charades**

**[Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]**

*Made to Explore: an activity that extends learning through hands on experimentation and discovery*

**What You Need:**

- Print "Acting Cards" Activity Page on cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- Print "Verse Motions" Activity Page, one for each Small Group
- Opaque bag, one for each Small Group

#### **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 Journals" from previous weeks
- Print additional "Joy Journal" Activity Pages on paper, cut apart, and staple pages together in order, one for each kid not present the previous weeks
- Markers, enough for a Small Group to share

- Pencils, one for each kid
- *NOTE: Kids will be taking their journals home this week. Prepare extra copies for kids not present in previous weeks. If you haven't stapled the pages each week, and sent individual pages home each week, encourage the students to assemble the pages as a Joy Journal.*

### **HOME: Prompting Action Beyond the Experience**

- Print on cardstock or email this week's devotionals and Parent Cue cards.
- Tell parents about our additional family resources: **Parent Cue app**