

## 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

Bible Story Review: Celebration Builders

Application Activity: Small Group Leader, May I?

Memory Verse Activity: Memory Verse Hopscotch

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.

## \* 1. Celebration Builders

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

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

**What You Need:** Jenga game, pom-pom shakers

#### What You Do:

- Set the Jenga blocks in the center of your small group area.
- Give each kid the party shaker they made in the Opening Activity. *(Or hand out store-bought pom-pom shakers.)*
- Encourage the kids to work together to build a tall tower as you review the Bible Story.
- As you talk through the following review points, stop the kids from building where indicated and lead them to pick up their pom-poms, and point out something good a friend has done to celebrate.
  1. The Israelites were captured and taken to Babylon. Babylon eventually was taken over by the kingdom of Persia. About 70 years after God's people were conquered, the Persian King Cyrus allowed God's people to return to their homeland. More than 40,000 Jewish people traveled home to Jerusalem.
  2. They settled in towns outside of Jerusalem and started to rebuild their lives. But the most important task was to rebuild the temple, where the people could come to worship and honor God.
  3. **LET'S CELEBRATE!** *(Select a kid to point out a friend and share something that friend did to help in the building. Lead kids to shake their shakers and celebrate!)*
  4. God's people built a beautiful altar where they could make offerings to God. Here they could celebrate feasts and festivals that God wanted them to celebrate.
  5. **LET'S CELEBRATE!** *(Select a kid to point out a friend and share something that friend did to help in the building. Lead kids to shake their shakers and celebrate!)*
  6. God's people had a ton of work to do to rebuild the temple and the city walls. It was a BIG job!
  7. After they built the altar, they built the foundation of the temple. Then they stopped to celebrate.
  8. **LET'S CELEBRATE!** *(Select a kid to point out a friend and share something that friend did to help in the building. Lead kids to shake their shakers and celebrate!)*
  9. The priests and Levites, who led the people in worship, stood before the temple foundation, and played their trumpets and cymbals to lead the people in praising God.
  10. There was still a lot of work to do, and the foundation of the new temple wasn't as impressive as the foundation of the first one. The people were still SO happy and filled with joy knowing that they'd completed one big step in rebuilding everything!
  11. **LET'S CELEBRATE!** *(Select a kid to point out a friend and share something that friend did to help in the building. Lead kids to shake their shakers and celebrate!)*
  12. Collect the party shakers to use during the prayer activity.

#### What You Say:

"You did a great job, builders! God's people took an opportunity to stop and praise God all along the way! Rebuilding the temple and the city of Jerusalem was a GIGANTIC job, but they found joy in working hard and made time to honor God. And we did the same thing as we took time to celebrate our friends as we worked on our tower!"

“When we follow Jesus, God gives us joy through the Holy Spirit so we can celebrate every moment along the way. When anything we have to do seems too big or hard for us, we need to remember that God is with us! Let’s remember to take time to ***[Bottom Line]*** **celebrate each step of the way.**”

## 2. Small Group Leader, May I?

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

#### What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to line up, shoulder to shoulder, on one side of your group area.
- Stand on the opposite side of the group area with your back turned to the kids.
- Lead kids to play a version of “Small Group Leader, May I?” (like “Mother May I?”)
- Explain that you will call out a name and that kid will ask to take any type of step like, “Take ten baby steps.”
- Before the kids move, instruct them to ask, “Small Group Leader, may I take...?” each time, and then move toward you once you say, “yes.”
- Call out the first name.
  - Periodically turn around, move to the children before they reach you, and stop to celebrate!
  - Lead the kids to cheer and clap.
  - Say: “God is always with you, so we can stop and celebrate!”
  - After a few seconds, return to your original spot, back turned, and call out the next name.
- Continue in the same way until the kids have reached you and celebrate together!

#### What You Say:

“That was so fun! Normally when you play this game, you don’t celebrate until you reach the end! But the end isn’t the ONLY time we can celebrate! We find joy all along the way, especially when the job is a big one!

“When we stop to give thanks for what God has already done, it can give us the joy to keep going! Friends, as you grow, you’ll face big jobs, challenging jobs that require you to work hard and keep going. But the good news is, you aren’t alone! Remember when you follow Jesus, God gives you joy through the Holy Spirit so you can **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way.**”

**[Make It Personal] (Share why you come to church each week. Include that being surrounded by other followers of Jesus is a way to stop each week and celebrate what God has done.)**

### 3. Memory Verse Hopscotch

#### [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:** Bible marked at Proverbs 17:22, “Hopscotch Verse” Activity Pages, and floor tape

#### What You Do:

- Select a volunteer to open the marked Bible to Proverbs 17:22.
- Read the verse aloud and lead the kids to repeat each line of the verse after you.
- Talk about the part of the verse, “*a broken spirit*” (NIRV).
  - Or “*a crushed spirit*” in the NIV.
- Say: “A broken (or crushed) spirit is the opposite of joy. It’s a spirit that’s filled with sadness from the inside. God wants to fill us with joy—the kind of joy that lasts!”
- Lay out the “Hopscotch Verse” Activity Pages in a hopscotch pattern on the floor of your group area and secure with tape.
- Point out the words of the verse as you repeat them with the kids together.
- One at a time, invite the kids to take turns jumping from one page to the next as you say the words.
- Encourage the kids to repeat after you with each jump.
  - Point out the numbers on each page to help kids jump in order.
- Continue until every kid has a turn.

#### What You Say:

“I love this month’s Memory Verse! It reminds us that God gives us real joy. When we remember that God is with us and that God loves us no matter what, we can find joy. That’s why we can be cheerful instead of having a broken (or crushed) spirit. No matter what we face—even when it’s a really big job—we can stop and **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way.**”

## 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:** Party or pom-pom shakers from the Celebration Builders Activity

#### What You Do:

- Instruct the kids to stand in a circle.
- Give each kid their party shaker (or a pom-pom shaker) from earlier.
- Lead kids in a call-and-response prayer (see below).
- Instruct the kids to walk in a circle.
- Anytime you pause when saying the prayer below, invite the kids to shake their shakers and say, "Thank You, God!"
- Instruct the kids to continue cheering until the end of the prayer.

#### What You Say:

"Start walking in a circle, friends! Let's pray together. When I pause, we'll celebrate and say, 'Thank You, God!'"

SGL: "Dear God, thank you for helping us when we need it."

KIDS: "Thank You, God."

SGL: "For encouraging us when we're sad, we say:"

KIDS: "Thank You, God."

SGL: "For caring about the things we care about, we say:"

KIDS: "Thank You, God."

SGL: "For loving us no matter what, we say:"

KIDS: "Thank You, God."

SGL: "We love You, God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to show off their shakers and talk about how we can thank God as we **[Bottom Line] celebrate each step of the way.**



## 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 #1.*

#### **\* 1. Celebration Builders**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Jenga blocks, one set for each Small Group
- Party shakers from Opening Activity
  - If you did not do the Opening Activity, use store-bought pom-pom shakers instead.

#### **2. Small Group Leader, May I?**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- No supplies needed

#### **3. Memory Verse Hopscotch**

**[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:**

- Bible marked at Proverbs 17:22
- Print "Hopscotch Verse" Activity Pages on paper, one set for each Small Group
- Floor tape, one roll 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:**

- Party or pom-pom shakers from the Celebration Builders Activity

### **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**