

## 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 Key Question:** What is something that took longer than you wanted it to?

**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 (Communicator Script)

Key Question

Prayer

### **SMALL GROUP (25 minutes)**

**GROUPS:** Creating a Safe Place to Connect

Story Exploration

Application Activity: Take a Snapshot

Bible Story Review: Bible Story Extension and Discussion Questions

Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You

Prayer Activity: Make it Personal with Prayer

**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. Take a Snapshot

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

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

- Direct the group to sit in a circle.
- Share one of the following prompts and challenge kids to go around the circle taking turns to respond:
  - Describe joy using 2 rhyming words.
  - Define joy using a word that begin with “H.”
  - Talk about joy using a sentence containing the word “anyone” in it.
  - Share a word that ends with “L” and reminds you of joy.
  - Name something that is the opposite of joy.
- When kids run out of ideas or repeat words, move on to another prompt from the list above.
- Ask kids questions or invite them to explain more about their responses throughout the game.
- ***[Make it Personal] Share your definition of joy and a way God helped you find it in a situation that took longer than you wanted.***

## 2. Bible Story Extension

### [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:** “Timeline” Activity Page, “Timeline Key” Activity Page, blue tape

#### What You Do:

- *kids can tape their cards to the wall or simply line them up on the floor.*
- Shuffle the cards from the “Timeline” Activity Page and give each kid a card.
  - If you have fewer than 10 kids, give some kids more than one card.
  - If you have more than 10 kids, pair some kids up.
- Choose one kid to read their card first, out loud, to the group. Direct that kid to tape their card toward the middle part of the wall area.
- Choose another kid to read their card then tape it to the left or right of the first card, depending on when they think the event occurred in today’s Bible story.
- Repeat until all cards have been taped to the wall in story order.
- When all the cards have been taped, read them out loud in the order kids have taped them.
- Invite a discussion, asking if any cards should be adjusted. (Check the correct story order using the “Timeline Key” Activity Page.)
  - *Optional: Let your group know how many cards should be moved and invite them to share which ones they think should move.*
- After the timeline is complete, ask kids to identify key events that were cause for celebration along the way. Invite kids to share how God’s people may have felt during those times of celebration.
- Ask:
  - If you created a timeline of your life from this past week, what are some things God helped you accomplish day by day?
  - If there was a timeline of your whole life, what are some big, important accomplishments God has helped you with?
  - Why is it important to celebrate the little things God does for us each step of the way?
- Remind kids that even though they won’t be constructing a city like in the story today, they will still have big projects to complete in their lifetime and important work God will give them to do. Along the way, with each step, every day, they can find something to celebrate.
- Encourage kids to remember that God is with them and gives us the Holy Spirit to help us. When we stop and take notice of the big as well as small things God is doing, we will find joy every day.

### 3. 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*

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

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

##### **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?

## 4. Verses to Take with You

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

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

**What You Need:** Bibles, sand timers

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid a Bible and invite kids to look up then read Colossians 4:2 using the Bible Navigation Tips below:

***Finding verses with 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders:*** Ask kids to tell you if the book of the Bible they're looking for is in the Old Testament or New Testament. If it's in the Old, instruct kids to flip slowly, starting at the front of the Bible and heading toward the back, until they find the book they're looking for. If it's in the New, instruct kids to start flipping from the back, going forward to find the book they're looking for. Once they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. First, have them find the chapter they're looking for. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Tell kids to find the verse within the chapter they've already found.

- Invite the kids to say the verse together a few times then put Bibles aside, and challenge anyone who would like to try to recite it from memory.
- Discuss the verse.
  - What is the writer of Colossians 4:2 encouraging us to do with our time and energy?
  - God continually shows up in small, everyday ways. What would help you to stay watchful and not miss an opportunity to praise and celebrate?
  - How might prayer help you with this?
  - What are some things that always seem to take longer than you'd like? When that happens, how might the challenge of Colossians 4:2 be a helpful reminder from God?
- Give each kid a sand timer. (They can keep it)
- Challenge kids to turn their timers over then say Colossians 4:2 before the salt or sand finishes filling the bottle.
- Invite kids to take the timers home and use them as a reminder to spend time looking for the evidence of God's care for them in big and small ways. When they see it, remind them to take time to celebrate.

## 5. Make it Personal with Prayer

### [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:** Sand timers from "Verses to Take with You"

#### What You Do:

- Invite kids to use the sand timers to time their prayers.
- Give kids a prayer prompt (some ideas below) then invite them to turn their water bottle timers over and pray until the sand or salt falls from the top to the bottom. Repeat as time and interest allow.
  - Thank God for a small accomplishment you completed recently.
  - Pray for help to be watchful for ways God shows up in your life.
  - Pray to say thank You for something big God has done for you, your family, or someone you know.
  - Think about how much God loves you, and the way God sent Jesus to rescue us.
  - Pray about something you love most about God and want to celebrate.
- Close your group time in prayer, encouraging kids to be on the lookout for evidence of God's love and care each day this week.



## 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.)**

#### **1. Take a Snapshot**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- No supplies needed

#### **2. Bible Story Extension**

**[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:**

- Print "Timeline" Activity Page one cardstock and cut apart, one set for each Small Group
- Print "Timeline Key" Activity Page on paper, one for each Small Group
- wall tape

#### **3. 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*

**What You Need:**

- No supplies needed

#### **4. Verses to Take with You**

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Bibles, one for each kid
- Sand Timers

#### **5. Make it Personal with Prayer**

**[Pray to God | Prayer Activity]**

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

**What You Need:**

- Sand timers from the "Verses to Take with You" 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**