

## 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 Key Question:** What can you celebrate today?

**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 (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**

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. Take a Snapshot

### [Live for God | Application Activity]

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

**What You Need:** Party blowers

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid a party blower.
- Explain that you will read a short scenario for them to imagine then they will use their party horn to indicate if that situation would be easy or hard for them to find something to celebrate—push the party horn out a small amount if the situation seems easy to find joy and more if it'd be difficult to find joy.
- Read the scenarios listed below, one at a time, and pause for responses.
- Invite kids to share why they answered the way they did each time.
- Remind kids that sometimes things that happen are out of our control, but one thing we CAN control is the way we respond.
- Ask:
  - When you can't seem to find anything worth celebrating, what can you do to get out of a celebration funk?
  - Is there ever a time when there's absolutely NOTHING to celebrate? Why or why not?
  - When things go from good to bad or from bad to worse, what are some things about God that NEVER change?
- ***[Make it Personal] Tell kids an appropriate example of a frustrating, discouraging, or otherwise difficult situation you faced that they could relate to. Share something you knew to be true about God that helped you find something to celebrate even in a tough time.***

#### Scenarios:

1. Your parent got a new, exciting job, but it means your family will need to move to another state.
2. You sprained your wrist playing volleyball and can't play in the final tournament.
3. You studied A LOT but still got a "D" on your science test.
4. Your best friend since kindergarten is moving away.
5. Your parents are arguing a lot lately.
6. Your dog is sick and might not get better.
7. Your friends are all going to summer camp, but your family can't afford it this summer.
8. Your birthday party at the water park had to be canceled.
9. You tried out for the team but didn't make it.
10. The internet is down, and you can't play any online games or watch any of your favorite shows.

## 2. Bible Story Extension

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

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

**What You Need:** Marked Bible, “Even if . . .” Activity Page, container of water, large plastic cups, pens, paper towels

#### What You Do:

- Ask for a kid to read to the group, then hand that kid the marked Bible to read Habakkuk 3:17-18.
- Give each kid an “Even if . . .” Activity Page and a pen. Direct kids to write their name on it.
- Ask:
  - Habakkuk 3:17 described a very bad day. Have you ever been upset about dried up fields or no animals in the barn? If not, what would your very bad day be like?” Write down five things that would be extremely hard for you to face on the “Even if . . .” lines of the Activity Page. *(Kids can brainstorm ideas together or work individually. Encourage them to give genuine answers that are real to them—even if they’re not the same as others.)*
  - Habakkuk 3:18 says that Habakkuk would still be glad because of what the Lord has done for him. What are some things you could still be glad about even if a lot of things were not going well? Write it on the last lines of the Activity Page. *(Kids can once again brainstorm with others or work separately.)*
  - If everything you wrote down on the first five lines actually happened, what would it look like to trust God in all of those tough situations?
  - What can you celebrate even on your toughest day?
  - What might God use to fill you with joy in the midst of disappointment or sadness?
- Give each kid a large, plastic cup then lead them to follow the steps below:
  - Slightly crumple the Activity Page—just enough for it to fit into the cup.
  - Gently press the paper wad into the bottom of the cup, being careful to not cause the cup to lose its shape.
  - Flip the cup over to make sure the paper does not fall out.
  - Slowly submerge the cup straight down into the container of water. Do not angle the cup at all.
  - Pull the cup out of the water slowly without tilting it.
  - Shake the excess water from the cup then take the paper out. It should still be dry.
- Ask:
  - If the water in this experiment represented the tough times Habakkuk talked about in verse 17, how might the paper inside the cup demonstrate how he felt in verse 18?
  - What evidence of God’s love and care can we celebrate even when everything seems to be going wrong?
  - What is one thing you can celebrate right now that will still be a reason to celebrate when you’re not having a good day?
- Point out that when things are difficult, we can choose to find reasons to celebrate. The best place to start is to remember what’s true about God. Think about what God has done in the past, the promises God has given in the Bible, and the ways God has shown up for others you know. We can also always remember how Jesus chose to give His life so we could live forever with God.
- Collect the Activity Pages and set aside for the Make it Personal with Prayer activity.

### 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:**

- 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?

## 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, party hats, permanent markers, pens, sticky notes

#### What You Do:

- Ask kids to get into pairs.
- Give each kid a party hat and a permanent marker.
- Explain that when we're going through a tough time, we sometimes *react* with unhelpful thoughts or attitudes rather than *responding* in a way that's helpful. What we think about can either steal our joy or help us focus on what's true and right.
- Give kids time to share with their partners what some of those unhelpful thoughts might be then write them on their party hat. For example:
  - I'm all alone in this.
  - It seems like God is not with me.
  - This is too hard.
  - No one else has ever been through something like this.
  - I'm too afraid.
  - I'm stuck. Nothing will ever change.
  - My way is better than God's.
- Give each pair a Bible. Direct them to look up and read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 using the Navigation Tip 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.

- Give each kid 4 sticky notes and a pen.
- Say 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 together.
- Ask kids to divide the verses into four parts then write each portion on a separate sticky note.
- Ask:
  - How does 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 suggest we respond in a difficult situation?
  - Which of the actions described in the verse is one you need to work on most?
  - What would be different if instead of *reacting* to a situation you chose to *respond* with the ideas described in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18?
- Instruct the kids to place the sticky notes on their party hats to cover the reactions they wrote earlier. Prompt them to choose the portion of the verse they feel would be the best response to the negative reaction or thoughts they wrote on the hat.
- Say the verse together and remind kids that we can't always control what might happen to us. But we CAN control how we respond. We can admit how hard those things are, but then we can choose to remember how God has helped us in the past, and that we can truly trust God no matter what.



## 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?

**What You Need:** Completed "Even if . . ." Activity Pages from the Bible Story Extension Activity

#### What You Do:

- Give each kid their "Even if . . ." Activity Page from the Bible Story Extension activity.
- Allow kids a moment to review what they wrote.
- Invite kids to ask for God's help to follow Habakkuk's example this week when things don't go as planned or they face a tough situation.
- Ask them to review what they wrote at the bottom of the page ("I can still have joy because . . .") then encourage them to pray those words back to God either silently or aloud.
- Pray for each kid individually, asking the Holy Spirit to help them always find something 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.)**

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

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Party blowers (the ones that roll out with no sound), one for each kid

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

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

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

**What You Need:**

- Bible marked at Habakkuk 3:17-18
- Print "Even if . . ." Activity Page on paper, one for each kid
- Plastic cups, one for each kid
- Pens, one for each kid
- Container of water (bin, bucket, or similar deep enough to fully submerge the cup), one for each Small Group
- Paper towels

#### **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 every other kid
- Party hat (solid color), one for kid
- Sticky notes, 4 for each kid
- Permanent markers, one for each kid
- Pens, one for each kid

#### **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:**

- Completed “Even if . . .” Activity Pages from the Bible Story Extension 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**