

Alley SG -November 30-December 1, 2019

Bible Story: A Thrill of Hope (Jesus Is Promised) • *Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 53:8, Micah 5:2 (plus Old Testament review)*

Bottom Line: You can have joy because God keeps His promises.

Key Question: What's the difference between joy and happiness?

Memory Verse: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4 NIV)

1. Get Your Head in the Game

What You Need: Candy canes (2 per student), Gift Bows (44 per group- 22 per team), Gift Bags (4 total, 2 per circle), *Optional: Smartphone Timer*

What You Do:

- **Form** two circles.
- **Give** each student two candy canes.
- **Set** the two bags (one containing 22 bows, the other empty) in the center of each circle.
- **Explain** that teams will compete to see who can pass the most bows around their circle and into the empty bag in 60 seconds using only the candy canes to pass them.
 - They can't touch the bows with their hands at any time.
- Before you signal teams to begin, **ask** teams to "foretell" or predict how many bows they think they will pass in 60 seconds then write it on the sticky note.
- **Check** how close they came to their predictions.
- **Repeat** the game with new predictions.

What You Say:

"We don't always get it right when we guess or predict something, but that's not true of God. He knows the future, and He knows the past. When He says something will happen, it does. God never lies, forgets, or makes a mistake. That's why He never breaks a promise. What He says is true—always and for eternity. Let's spend some time today focusing on one of the best things about God—His ability to keep a promise."

2. Take a Snapshot

What You Need: Slips of Paper (4 per Student), Pens, Gift Bag from Act. 1

What You Do:

- **Give** each person a pen and four slips of paper.
- **Ask** the students to write on two slips- one thing God promises—either Christmas related or not—and two slips with one thing He **doesn't** promise on each.
 - Have them fold their slips twice without letting others see what they wrote.
 - If kids need an example to get started, tell them that God promises to be with us, but He doesn't promise to give us a puppy if we want one.
- **Place** all the folded slips of paper in the gift bag and then sit down together in a circle.
- **Pass** bag around the circle and let kids take out and read one of the slips.
 - If they believe that it's a true promise from God, they keep the slip.
 - If they think it's not something God promises, have them discard it by crumpling it up and tossing it aside.

What You Say:

"When God makes a promise, He keeps it. Believing that God is trustworthy helps us have joy even when things don't go our way. God never promised that we wouldn't have bad days. In fact, He warns us that we WILL have rough stuff to go through at times. That's when His promises kick in as we remember how He said He'd always be with us and help us through our problems. Even though things won't always go the way we want, we can have joy because we know that God keeps His word."

3. Bible Story Extension

What You Need: Bible, “Gift Tags” (1 set of green and red per group), Wild Cards (1 set red and green per service)

What You Do:

- **Briefly review** the information presented in the Rundown by asking kids to name people and events that were part of the timeline from creation to Christmas. For example:
 - God creates an amazing, perfect world.
 - Sin entered the world.
 - God promises to make Abram’s family into a great nation.
 - Moses leads Israel out of slavery in Egypt.
 - David and many other kings rule over Israel.
 - God’s people didn’t keep their promises to God, but God still kept His promises to them.
 - Prophets tell of the Rescuer God will send to save and forgive.
- **Form** two teams.
- **Give** each team a set of the “Gift Tags”.
- **Explain** that you will call out a word and teams will race to spell the word by aligning the letters on their tags in the correct order!
- **Use** each word and the suggested questions to prompt review and discussion about the things they learned in Large Group.
 - PROMISE (*What’s the difference between the promises found in the Bible and other promises?*)
 - JOY (*Why does knowing God keeps His promise give us joy even in hard times?*)
 - SAVIOR (*What would be different if God hadn’t keep His promise to send a Savior?*)
 - KEEP (*Why is God able to keep all of His promises?*)
 - HAPPY (*Explain the difference between having joy and being happy.*)
 - HELP (*What has God done to help us? In what ways are God’s promises helpful?*)
 - PRAY (*How does knowing God keeps His promises help you pray?*)
 - LOVE (*How does God’s love impact the promises He makes?*)
 - THANKS (*For what promise of God are you most thankful?*)
 - MISTAKE (*Why do we need a Rescuer or Savior?*)
- If time allows, **invite** teams to use the letters on the “Gift Tags” to come up with other words that connect with the theme.
 - Give each team one of the blank “Gift Tags” to use as a “wild card” for an additional letter they may need.

4. Discussion Questions

Ask:

- What are some ways you can learn and remember God’s promises?
- If God only gave us one promise ever, what would you want it to be? Why? (The promise of more promises doesn’t count!)
- If someone asked you how to have joy in a tough time, what would you tell that person?
- When things are not going well and you begin to doubt or question God’s promises, what can you do?

5. Verse to Take with You

What You Need: Bible, pens, sticky notes (1 pad per group), *Optional: Smartphone Timer*

What You Do:

- **Ask** kids to each choose a number between 10 and 30 and write it on a sticky note.
- **Explain** that they will take turns holding their breath as you count silently in your head, or use your smartphone timer.

- The goal is for them to exhale when they think their time is up (the number they wrote on their sticky notes).
- Challenge them to come as close to their EXACT times as they can.
- **Repeat** until all the kids have had a turn.
- **Open** the Bible to Galatians 4:4-5 and hand it to someone in the group who enjoys reading aloud.
 - **Tell** the person with the Bible to read the verses to the group at whatever pace is needed in order to end at the last second of the time written on their sticky note.
 - **Allow** others to read the verse again (from a variety of translations if desired) and at different paces.
- **Discuss** Galatians 4:4-5 together.
 - God decided when the Savior would come, and Jesus arrived right on time. What other promises can you find in these verses?
 - How can knowing and understanding God's promises help us when we don't know or understand His timing or why things happen the way they do?
 - If this verse were written on the inside of a Christmas card, what picture would you put on the front?
- **Close** the activity by letting kids share one thing they want to remember from Galatians 4:4-5.

6. Make it Personal with Prayer

What You Need: "Gift Tags"

What You Do:

- **Gather** in a circle.
- **Spell** out on the floor one of the words you discussed from the "Bible Story Extension" activity.
- **Invite** kids to pray for a minute or two in response to the things that come to mind when they read the word and think about what they learned today.
- **Encourage** prayers either silent or aloud, if kids feel comfortable.
- **Arrange** the cards several times using different words each time.
- **Use** the cards to spell "AMEN" for the final word.

What You Say:

"Dear God, we just want to say how grateful we are for the many promises You have given us in Your Word. When we think of Your promises, it gives us hope and joy. They remind us that You love us and are always with us even on our hardest days. Thank You for giving us a way to be happy even when things don't go our way. In Jesus' name, amen."

BEFORE DISMISSAL: AT "COMMUNION CALL"

HAND OUT "GOD TIME" CARDS TO EACH STUDENT BEFORE DISMISSING AND ALLOW THEM TIME TO BEGIN WORKING ON THE WEEKLY ACTIVITY

IF STUDENTS BRING THEM BACK THE FOLLOWING WEEK, THEY RECEIVE \$3 IN ALLEY CASH!