



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Shake It Up / Week 1

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SERIES SUMMARY

A 3-week series about the joy of Jesus coming to Earth.

WEEK 1: Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.

WEEK 2: Jesus is the center of the Christmas story.

WEEK 3: Jesus shows up in the middle of the mess.

SCRIPTURE

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:6-14 NIV).

TEACHING SLIDES

All scripture, bottom lines, and prompts that are bolded in this script are also provided as teaching slides for premium tier

OPTIONAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL MEDIA for this week available for purchase through the XP3 MS Media Package:

- Shake It Up Countdown (10 minutes)
 - Shake It Up Teaching Video – Week 1
 - Shake It Up Integrated Teaching Videos
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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- It's the Christmas season—a time when we celebrate the joy of Jesus coming to Earth.
- What brings joy to you this time of year? Turn and tell a friend.
- The cool thing about joy is that it can come from the most unexpected places

TENSION

- Joy is much more than just feeling really happy. It's about finding a way to be happy despite your circumstances or the changes that happen around you.
- For a lot of people, Christmas feels like it should be one of the most joyful times of the year, but for others, it can feel less-than-perfect and not joyful at all. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- How do we find joy when life doesn't feel joyful?
- Even in the middle of a not-so-perfect Christmas, joy can still show up.
- Joy has a way of turning everything upside down, starting with the very first Christmas!

TRUTH

- The first Christmas was far from peaceful, calm, and perfect.
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, was dealing with a lot of stress at the time; she was a teenager, engaged to be married, and an angel told her she was going to give birth to Jesus, the Savior of the world. On top of that, because of the census, Mary and Joseph had to pack up and travel back to Joseph's hometown, Bethlehem, to be counted. When they arrived, there were no available rooms, so they had to sleep in a place where animals stayed at night.
- Even though things were totally shaken up for Mary and Joseph before Jesus was born, joy showed up.
- *While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:6-12 NIV).*
- The good news that caused great joy was that, in the middle of a whirlwind of events, God showed up through the birth of Jesus.
- *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:13-14 NIV).*

- For many, many years, people had been waiting for Jesus, and in the middle of imperfect circumstances, joy showed up with Jesus' arrival.
- Jesus' birth changed everything for the people back then, as well as for us today.
- When you're experiencing an unexpected shake up this Christmas and feel that joy isn't possible, remember that in what felt like a mess during the first Christmas, Jesus showed up and brought joy to the world.
- We can experience real, lasting joy no matter what happens in our lives.
- Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.

APPLICATION

- When you're going through difficult things this holiday season, remember that joy is possible.
- You can remember this by thinking about the ABC's of joy:
- A: Ask yourself where you saw God today. Pay attention to the surprising ways God shows up in your friends, family, and in you.
- B: Be still and calm and focus on the joy of Jesus this season.
- C: Choose joy and add joy to the world.
- When joy showed up through the birth of Jesus, the world was turned upside down.

LANDING

- Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.
- In your small group, share what joy looks like for you this season and encourage each other to look for and find joy in Jesus no matter our circumstances.
- What's one way you can choose joy this Christmas season?

THINK ABOUT THIS

For middle schoolers, it can be difficult to separate the way they feel from their circumstances. Whatever is happening in their lives dictates their feelings, for better or worse. That makes it challenging for them to understand that they can experience joy no matter their circumstances or feelings. Your job is to help plant the seed for joy that comes specifically from Jesus that will grow as they develop their faith. Be sure to note students who share that they're struggling in this season in any way. This is a great opportunity for you to reach out and do what's in your power to encourage, support, and love them—to bring joy into their world however you can this Christmas!

INTERACTIVE 1: CHRISTMAS JOY Pictionary

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll invite three students upfront to play a version of Pictionary where they'll draw what brings them joy at Christmas.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 3 middle schoolers
- 3 posterboards with empty snow globes drawn on them
- An easel
- A bold, permanent marker
- All of your middle schoolers
- Candy

HOW-TO

- Before your talk, draw a large, empty snow globe on each posterboard.
- Stack the posterboards and place them on an easel on stage.
- Place the marker next to the easel (or have it easily accessible).

INTERACTIVE 2: SNOW GLOBE SHAKE UP

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll interact with a snow globe throughout your talk to help explain the feelings we experience during the Christmas season.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A snow globe
- A small table for the snow globe to be placed on

Note: This Interactive is part of the "Shake It Up" suggested set design found in your Ministry Leader Guide.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Shake It Up / Week 1

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BOTTOM LINE

BECAUSE OF JESUS, WE CAN CHOOSE JOY.

INTRODUCTION

8 MINUTES

Welcome everybody, to the most wonderful time of the year! We're kicking off a new series today called *Shake It Up*. It's all about the thing we celebrate every Christmas: the joy of Jesus coming to Earth!

So to start, here's my question: What brings you joy this time of year? Turn and tell a friend nearby what gives you all the joyful Christmas feels. *[Pause to give students time to answer.]*

INTERACTIVE: Christmas Joy Pictionary

This is where you'll invite three students upfront to play a version of Pictionary. One at a time, participants will draw what brings them joy at Christmas. The audience will yell out their guesses, and you'll shower the audience with candy at the end of the Interactive.

So many of those things bring me joy at Christmas, too, but the two that bring me the most joy are snow globes! I mean, there's just something about shaking up a snow globe as much as you can, watching the snow fall around the tiny scene inside, and then seeing it settle back on the ground. Anyone else love watching that?!

I know that might sound simple, but it's something that brings me joy every year at Christmas! And honestly, that's the cool thing about joy. It can come from the most unexpected places.

TENSION

2 MINUTES

We hear that word, “**joy**,” a lot this season, but have you ever really stopped to think about what it actually means? You probably know that joy is a word people use to describe moments when they feel really, really happy about something. But really, joy is so much more than that! It’s **finding a way to be happy, even when things don’t go your way**. It’s something that doesn’t change when things around you do!

For a lot of people, the Christmas season feels like it should be one of the most joyful times of the year. I mean, it’s all happiness, and Hallmark movies, and school breaks, and treats, and decorations, and presents. What’s more joyful than that?!

INTERACTIVE: Snow Globe Shake Up

This is where you’ll interact with a snow globe throughout your talk to help explain the feelings we experience during the Christmas season.

A lot of people like to say it’s the most wonderful time of the year, and yes, it can be a really joyful season. But can we just be honest here? Sometimes Christmas feels like a less-than-perfect time of year, too. Some days you’re feeling the joy of Christmas. All is calm, all is bright, all is good. *[Hold the snow globe still.]* Other days, something happens that shakes up everything around your holiday season. *[Shake the snow globe.]*

When the adults in your home are fighting,
or your family has to have a different kind of Christmas this year because your parent lost their job,
or you’re struggling with loneliness now that you’re on break and away from your friends,
or you’ve just lost someone you love and the season doesn’t feel the same without them.

Those things don’t bring a lot of joy to the world, do they? In fact, it feels like the stuff happening in or around us shakes up every sense of joy we have during the holiday season. *[Shake the snow globe.]*

So, what do we do? If we know real life isn’t like the picture-perfect scene inside a snow globe during the holiday season, then what do we do? How do we find joy when life doesn’t feel all that joyful?

Well, the good news is, even in the middle of what feels like a less-than-perfect Christmas season, joy can still show up. It can still shake things up in the best possible way! In fact, joy has a way of turning everything upside down, starting with the very first Christmas!

TRUTH

6 MINUTES

Most people think of that first Christmas we read about in the Bible as a sweet, peaceful time. I mean, we’re talking about swaddled little baby Jesus. How cute is that?!

[Optional purchase through the XP3MS Media Package: Shake it Up – “Silent Night Lyrics” Digital Slide – Week 1](#)

INTERACTIVE: A Silent Night

This is where you’ll display the song lyrics to “Silent Night” for everyone to read.

I mean, just think of the song “Silent Night.” *[Display the song lyrics.]* It describes the night Jesus was born as calm and bright. He was just a baby sleeping in Heavenly peace. That sounds pretty perfect, doesn't it?

Well, there's actually so much more to the story than that! In fact, if you look at what was going on before Jesus was born, you'll see that what took place that first Christmas wasn't even close to perfect!

Let me explain what I mean. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was dealing with a lot of stress at the time. She was a teenager, engaged to be married, and an angel told her she was going to be pregnant. This was even more stressful because Mary was a virgin, meaning she'd never had a physical relationship with a man. Luckily, her fiancé, Joseph, was a good, loving guy who supported Mary when she told him what had to be the craziest thing he'd ever heard: She was going to give birth to Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Now, if all that wasn't enough to keep shaking things up for these two, things very quickly got worse. The Roman Emperor at the time, a guy named Caesar Augustus, declared that he was going to take a census before Mary was to give birth. Basically a census is a way for the government to count the people in their town. Why was this such a big deal? Well, in order for the census to be done correctly, every single person had to return to their hometown. So that meant that no matter how far they were from their hometown or what they had going on in their lives, everyone had to pack up and return home to be counted. Of course, Mary and Joseph were no exception. Joseph's family was from a town called Bethlehem, so he and Mary had to pack up, leave the town of Nazareth where they currently were, and hit the road.

Now you may not know a ton about pregnant women, but let me tell you this: Traveling a long way before they're supposed to give birth is not a good experience. There's nothing peaceful, joyful, or comfortable about that!

By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, they found out that every room in the town was full! There was literally no place for them to stay. Once again, everything about their plans for the season were shaken right up!

So, what did they do? They set up camp in the only place that was available: a place where animals stayed at night. Now I don't know about you, but all of that sounds pretty stressful to me. Last minute travel, a baby on the way, no place to sleep, chaos in the town, and sleeping in a place where animals stayed . . . not the picture-perfect Christmas story we imagine, right?

Well, what's cool about this story is not that things were totally shaken up just before Jesus was born. It's that, in the moment where nothing was going as planned, joy finally showed up! Take a look:

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them (Luke 2:6-7 NIV).

Can you imagine being born next to a bunch of farm animals? There are news stories of babies born in Ubers on the way to the hospital, in elevators, and in the lobby of apartment buildings. These stories go viral or make the news because they're unexpected. If social media had been a thing back then, I can only imagine how viral this story would've gone! Because a woman having a baby in a place with animals was completely unexpected.

Let's keep reading to see what happened next:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified (Luke 2:8-9 NIV).

If I were out in a dark field at night and an angel of the Lord showed up, I would be shaken up, too. Slightly terrifying, right?

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the

Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:10-12 NIV).

The **GOOD NEWS** that will cause **GREAT JOY** was that in the middle of a whirlwind of events, GOD SHOWED UP! Right there in the middle of it all, Jesus was born!

Luke kept writing . . .

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:13-14 NIV).

When Luke wrote “a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel,” it means the entire sky filled with angels who were praising God all at the same time. How cool is that? I want to see that!

Can you imagine what the shepherds were thinking? I mean, they probably experienced so many emotions! From terrified, to shocked, to celebrating the joy of Jesus coming to Earth.

You see, for years the people of God had been waiting for Jesus. Year, after year, after year, they hoped that joy would come. And year, after year, after year, it didn't.

But then, right there in the middle of imperfect circumstances after a really long wait, joy showed up. And that joy turned everything upside down! Because Jesus' arrival in the world changed everything, not just for the people back then, but for us today, too.

Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.

That's what I want you to remember this Christmas season! Maybe you're experiencing an unexpected shake up this Christmas season. Maybe, like Mary and Joseph, you're facing a lot of challenging circumstances. Things in your world feel completely upside down, and because of that, joy doesn't feel possible for you.

If that's you, I hope you'll remember that, right in the middle of what felt like a mess, Jesus showed up. Right when things felt impossible, Jesus came to make all things possible. Right when life felt the most challenging, Jesus came to be with us. Right when joy felt lost, Jesus came to be joy to the world.

And because of that, we can experience real, lasting joy no matter how shaken up our lives feel.

Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

I know this isn't always an easy time. For so many of us, the holidays have a way of making things feel less than perfect. But even when you're going through difficult things or just struggling to find the feeling of Christmas in your life, I want you to remember that joy is possible. **Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.**

And to help you do that, I want you to try three things—something we're calling the **ABC's of joy**:

1. **Ask yourself: Where did you see God today?** Through everything you may be experiencing this Christmas, pay attention to the surprising ways God shows up in your friends, your family, and even in you! No one expected God to show up as a baby, but in the stillness and quiet of night, God sent Jesus to the world. And in the same way, in our own stillness, I think God will show up for us!
2. **Be still.** One of things I love about this snow globe [*hold it up*] is that I can shake it up [*shake it*] and then let it be still. Once I let it be still, I can see everything more clearly. In the middle of school, friends, Christmas activities, holiday traveling, and all the Christmas festivities that happen this time of year, I want you to try being still. I don't mean literally not moving (though you can try that if you want to!). I mean finding a way to be calm, slow down, and really focus on the joy of Jesus this season.

3. **Choose joy!** Think about what brings you joy. What puts a smile on your face? What are things you can do to add joy to the world? When Jesus was born, angels celebrated and praised God. Celebrating the birth of Jesus, they brought joy to the middle of a field at night. So think about what kind of joy you can bring to the world to celebrate the birth of Jesus this season.

I'm not saying that choosing joy is going to create a picture-perfect Christmas for you. When you look back at the Christmas story, it was filled with a mix of fear, anxiety, and stress. But remember, that's when joy showed up through the birth of a Savior. Jesus' birth turned the world upside down!

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **because of Jesus, we can choose joy.**

As you head to small group today, think about what joy might look like for you this season. And, if you're comfortable, share a little bit about that joy with your small group. It's a great space to encourage one another to look for and find joy in Jesus no matter what's happening in our lives.

In fact, as you go to small group now, I want you to think about this question: **What's one way you can choose joy this Christmas season?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
