

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Shake It Up / Week 1

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Because of Jesus, we can choose joy.

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).

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to find moments of joy no matter what their circumstances are this Christmas and to look to Jesus for their joy in any 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!

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DURING GROUP

ICE BREAKER

What Christmas movie brings you the most joy?

DISCUSS THIS

1. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "joy"?
2. What do you think the difference is between joy and happiness?
3. What makes the Christmas season more joyful than other times of the year?
4. What's one thing that might make the Christmas season not so joyful for you?
5. Do you think it's possible to choose joy even when things don't feel joyful? Why or why not?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 1

Scatter the provided scenario cards in the middle of your group. One-at-a-time, have your group read each card and brainstorm how they could choose joy during that challenging situation.

1. How might knowing Jesus help you have joy this Christmas no matter your circumstances?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 2

Finish group time by having everyone build their own snow globes! Have your students place an item, drawing, or photo of something that brings them joy or reminds them of the joy of Christmas inside. If they can't think of anything or don't have an item to put in their snow globe, students can simply write "joy" and place it in the snow globe or they can take their snow globe home to finish on their own.

THIS IS YOUR
FIRST CHRISTMAS
WITHOUT A
FAMILY MEMBER.

YOU JUST
MOVED TO A
NEW CITY AROUND
THE HOLIDAYS.

YOU TRAVELED TO
VISIT FAMILY YOU
DON'T SEE OFTEN
OR YOU DON'T GET
ALONG WITH.

MONEY IS TIGHT,
SO YOU KNOW YOU
WON'T GET THE
PRESENTS YOU
WANTED THIS YEAR.

YOUR PARENTS
ARE DIVORCED
AND THAT MAKES
CHRISTMAS TRICKY.

YOU DON'T GET
TO SEE YOUR
FRIENDS EVERY
DAY DURING THE
CHRISTMAS BREAK.

SOMEONE IN YOUR
FAMILY GETS SICK
AND CHRISTMAS
PLANS HAVE TO
BE CHANGED OR
CANCELED.

ONE OF YOUR
PARENTS IS
DEPLOYED OVERSEAS
AND WON'T BE ABLE
TO COME HOME
THIS CHRISTMAS.