

ALLEY SG – July 20- 21, 2024

Due to summer scheduling, these activities can be done in small groups or in one large group led by one leader.

1. Bible Story Extension

What You Need: Stationery paper, envelopes, pens

What You Do:

- Review the Bible Story by asking the following questions and inviting responses:
 - What book of the Bible was today's story from? (*Romans*)
 - Who wrote the book of Romans, and who was it originally for? (*Paul wrote it as a letter to believers in Rome.*)
 - What was Paul known for? (*He traveled all over, telling others about the good news of Jesus.*)
 - How would you say this part of Paul's letter in your own words: "*Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed*" (*Romans 12:2, NIV*). (*Answers may vary.*)
 - What does Paul's letter have to say about joy? ("*Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad.*" —*Romans 12:15, NIV*)
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 - What was Paul trying to say when he wrote this to the Romans? (*Because of what Jesus has done for us, we can show God's love to others with empathy.*)
- Give each kid a piece of stationery and a pen.
- Encourage the kids to think of someone in their life who either recently had a reason to celebrate OR has recently experienced a difficult time.
- Explain that they will have several minutes to write that person a letter as an opportunity to show empathy. Kids can either:
 - Write upbeat, encouraging words to celebrate with them.
 - Write understanding and loving words to let them know they care.
- Be sure to offer guidance for those who might be struggling to find the right words to say in their letters.
- After everyone has had plenty of time to write, explain that it is good to practice using our words to show empathy.
- Challenge kids to give their letters to the people they wrote to. They can either give them the letter in person or send it in the mail. Provide envelopes for anyone who wants one.

2. Memory Verse Activity

What You Need: Bibles, playdough, and paper plates

What You Do:

- Give each child a Bible and look up the memory verse together.
- Ask kids to share some ways they can find joy—even if they don't feel joyful in that moment.
- Prompt them with ideas, as needed, like:
 - Think about the people who love them and help them.
 - Think about how much God loves them.
 - Think about places that make them feel safe.
- Give each kid a cup of playdough and a paper plate.
- Instruct the kids to sculpt something that reminds them of one of the joyful examples mentioned.
- Invite kids to share their creations with the group.
- Collect the playdough and dispose of the plates.

3. Discussion Questions

- How do you like to celebrate with someone when something exciting happens to them?
- How do you feel when someone you love is having a hard time?
- How can listening and being present with someone when they are feeling sad eventually lead to joy?
- How did Jesus show empathy to others?
- What are ways you can help others find joy?

4. Take a Snapshot

What You Need: No supplies needed

What You Do:

- Explain that you are going to play an improv game and everyone will get a chance to put themselves in someone else's shoes.
- Choose two kids to be the actors and ask them to stand up.
- Explain that you will whisper one of the suggested plots below into their ears.
- Continue to explain that the "actors" will act out the scenario.
- See if the kids can guess what they are acting out.
- Have the audience suggest ways they can respond to that scenario with empathy.
 - Remind kids that empathy is when we use our imagination to put ourselves in someone else's place.
- After you are finished playing, ask:
 - Does empathy always look the same? Why or why not?
 - How can following Jesus help us have empathy for others?
- Explain that when we follow Jesus, we can learn to see and respond to others like He did.

Suggested improv plots:

- You're a cook at a restaurant and you accidentally dropped a basket of fries on the floor.
- You're walking your dog in the neighborhood and your dog runs off to chase a squirrel.
- You just won the school spelling bee.
- You hit a home run for the first time ever.
- You tripped as you were stepping off the bus at school.
- You show up at school, dressed almost exactly like your teacher.

AT THE 5- MINUTE CALL:

PRAY

- Ask, "Does anyone have any prayer requests or things they want to thank God for from this week? *(Let the kids share their prayer requests and praises)*"
- Take some time to pray for these things as a group, then finish with the prayer below...

*"God, thank You for **my friend**. Only You know what **my friend** is facing and what **my friend** needs each and every day to experience the joy that is offered in Jesus. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit to help me understand how to show love and joy to **my friend**. I know **you can help others find joy**. Help me be an encouragement to them and know how to pray for them this week. Thank You. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."*

- If there is still time, pass out the Parent Discussion Guides to the kids and begin to read through them together. Remind them they can do the activity at home and bring back next week for a prize.

PARENT PICK UP POINT: invite kids to explain what it means to put themselves in someone else's shoes.