

ALLEY Rundown - January 25 - 26, 2025

Today's Bible Story: Walking on Sunshine (Paul and Silas) Acts 16:16 - 40

Today's Key Question: What brings you joy?

Today's Bottom Line: God can help you choose joy.

Monthly Memory Verse: Be strong, all you who put your hope in the Lord. Never give up. Psalm 31:24 NirV

LG CENTRAL SUPPLIES: Skewers and a bag of marshmallows per small group

PRE-SERVICE VIDEOS (Dude Perfect)

Welcome the students and introduce yourself to the group. Set expectations for behavior during the large group. Review "Alley Cash" and bathroom procedures.

SLIDE: Theme

What's up, everyone! We're so glad you all showed up today! This has been quite a month already as we've been looking at how we can handle our life with resilience: rain or shine, summer or fall, God gives us what we need to keep going when the going gets tough!

Speaking of seasons, as you might have figured out by now, today is all about that time of year when, depending on where you live in the world, the temperature drops, lakes can freeze over, and snow can start to fall! When the snow starts falling and collecting on the ground, one of my favorite things to do is build a snowman! But guess what, you don't always need snow to build a snowman . . . let's play a head-to-head challenge called "The Great Snowman Showdown"!

SLIDE: "THE GREAT SNOWMAN SHOWDOWN"

Pass out a bag of marshmallows and a set of skewers to each Group.

I think you can see where this is headed . . . as a Group, you'll have two minutes to make the most epically large marshmallow snowman possible using these skewers to hold it all together. Everyone understand? Any questions? Great! On your mark . . . get set . . . build that snowman!

VIDEO: 5-MINUTE COUNTDOWN CUED AT 2-MINUTES

AUDIO: UP TEMPO BACKGROUND MUSIC

Walk around and supervise/comment. When it looks like most groups are close to done, give a ten-second countdown, involving everyone. Have each group bring their marshmallow man up to the stage to be displayed.

Great job, everyone! But the winning Group is [Name of the Group]!

Of course, finding joy is easy when life is going great, right? When we have the best grades in school, made the team, have great friends, or get a new puppy, OF COURSE we will have a feeling of joy and happiness bubble up inside of us. But life isn't all good grades and puppies, is it? Can we still find a reason to have joy?

Like, what happens when life gives us reasons to feel those negative emotions like being sad, worried, or angry? How can we find joy when our situations do not FEEL happy?

This is a great question that's important to ask. There's a situation in the Bible that happened to a couple of Jesus followers, and we can learn from how they faced what they faced.

VIDEO: The So and So Show 15:29

The next day, the judges let Paul and Silas go. Paul and Silas were free, but if you could have asked them if they wished this had never happened, I bet they would tell you something pretty shocking. I bet they would say they were glad it happened. GLAD to be beaten? GLAD to be imprisoned? No. But think about why they were there—to spread the message of Jesus. Did they do that? Absolutely . . . maybe even to people they normally wouldn't have been able to reach. The entire prison was listening to Paul and Silas, watching them worship God even after being beaten. That must have made an impression. And then when the earthquake happened, did you see who the jailer went to? Paul and Silas. And they had the opportunity to introduce the jailer and his entire household . . . family, servants . . . to Jesus and a forever relationship with God.

Let's back up for a second. Imagine Paul and Silas after all they had been through. Just think about how this would have gone down if they were complaining and whining about how unfair it was or about how this mission from Jesus was just too hard and they didn't want to do it anymore. Would that have changed the outcome of this story? I have a strong feeling it would have. But because Paul and Silas found JOY through trusting God in the middle of their circumstances, something positive came out of a pretty dark situation. And it was because of their joy, that eventually the jailer and his whole household were filled with joy!

I'm sure you've found yourself in a spot before where you wanted to be anything but joyful. It doesn't have to be big things like what Paul and Silas experienced that threaten your joy. It could be everyday things, like maybe you've put in long hours of practice to make the team, and you are starting to wonder if it was worth it, and it is hard to hold onto your joy. Or maybe you've been practicing hard, but you didn't get the part in the play or musical that you were hoping for. Even in those situations, God can help us CHOOSE joy . . . even when things are really difficult. Remember, there's a big difference between feeling happy and choosing joy. It's easy to be happy when everything goes right in your life. Joy is something deeper and more real. It's choosing to look to God and trust God no matter what. It's knowing that even if your troubles don't go away right now, God has promised to make everything right in the end for those who follow Jesus.

As you go to your groups today, think about this:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

What brings you joy? Think about the difference between happiness and joy. Maybe chat with your group about how you can choose joy even when things aren't going the way you might want. Before you go, let's pray and ask God to help us have the strength to get back up and choose joy when we're down.

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

CHECK THE TIME: There should be 20-25 minutes for small group. If LG is running late, skip the next part.

OFFERING:

This year we are collecting our offering to support a new mission partner! Our money will go to support a church called La Liberte' Church (La Lib-er-tay) in Africa.

La Liberte' Church is in a financially challenged area in The Congo. The kids at the church don't have access to a lot of food so this church feeds 700 children a meal every weekend! Each meal costs \$2.00 and our goal is to help feed as many kids as we can!