

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS

SHAKE IT UP

DECEMBER 7, 2022

Week 1 of a 3-week series
about the joy of Jesus
coming to Earth

BOTTOM LINE

Shake it up by choosing joy.

SCRIPTURE

*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.*

-Luke 2:10-11 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to
find moments of joy this
Christmas season and to
look to Jesus for their joy
in any season

>> BEFORE GROUP

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!

>> DURING GROUP

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.

DISCUSS THIS:

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

DO THIS:

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. Then discuss this question: How might knowing Jesus help you have joy this Christmas no matter your circumstances?

DO THIS:

Finish group time by having everyone draw their own snow globe! Hand out the provided snow globe activity page and markers and have your group members draw something inside the globe that brings them joy or reminds them of the joy of Christmas. If they can't think of anything, they can simply write "joy." Encourage everyone to bring their drawing home and keep it someplace they'll see it often to remind them to "shake it up by choosing joy!"

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HIGH
SCHOOL
FOCUS

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>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: This week's conversation encourages students to find joy in Jesus this Christmas. Be sure to remind students that joy isn't the same as happiness. Happiness is a feeling often related to our circumstances while joy is a contentment we can find regardless of our circumstances. Choosing joy isn't easy, especially when living in the tension of unmet expectations. Be careful not to gloss over the challenges or difficulties your students may be facing this season. Instead, listen with empathy while pointing them toward the joy they can find in Jesus even in the midst of trials or hardship.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about Christmas?
- What expectations do you have for the holiday season?
- How does it feel when your Christmas "reality" doesn't meet your expectations?
- What makes living in the tension between our expectations and our reality difficult?
- Think back to the birth of Jesus we talked about today. (Re-read Luke 2:1-20 if you need to refresh your memory.) What shook up that first Christmas?
- Even though there were a lot of difficult circumstances during that first Christmas, the angels said that Jesus brings us joy. How did the birth of Jesus bring joy to the world? How does it bring joy to your world?
- What would it look like for you to choose joy this Christmas?

TRY THIS:

This week, challenge your group members to notice a moment when they experience joy related to the Christmas season. This could be seeing decorations, hearing a favorite Christmas song, or spending time with friends or relatives. Encourage them to send a group text describing the moment that sparked joy to help them, and your whole group, remember to "shake it up by choosing joy!"