



Countdown to Christmas / Week 3

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Because of Jesus, there is always joy.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:10-11 NIV

Hebrews 12:2b NIV

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students see that joy is always possible with Jesus and to encourage them to look for joy in their lives this season.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Keep in mind that for many, Christmas isn't a joyful season. You may have some students who dread the holiday season because of what's happening at home. Or you may have some students who are experiencing this Christmas

with a new and difficult reality. Maybe their parent is newly re-married, or they've recently lost a loved one, or they can't afford presents for the first time this year. To those students, joy feels very far away, and that's something that should be acknowledged. Make sure not to skip over what they might open up about. Create a safe space for students to process why they might be struggling to experience or look for joy this year. And of course, do your best to point them back to the truth that no matter what, joy can be possible in even the smallest ways because of Jesus. Again, this is a hard distinction for middle schoolers—to experience joy on the inside when their outside circumstances don't feel all that joyful. But you're planting a seed and helping them begin the important practice of looking for joy and finding it in God.

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's your all-time favorite Christmas movie?

DISCUSS THIS

1. What's one thing that makes you really happy during the Christmas season?
2. In your own words, what's the difference between happiness and joy?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 1

On your phone, show Christmas movie clips to your few. As a group, talk about where joy can be found in each clip. (*Note: Be sure to watch the movie clips ahead of time to make sure they're age appropriate.*)

3. Why might joy be hard to see sometimes?
4. Why do you think it's important to look for joy?
5. What's one thing we can learn about joy from Jesus?
6. What's one place you can look for joy right now in your life?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 2

Pass out a strip of paper to each of your students and ask them to write down a Bible verse or Christmas song lyric about joy on it. If they don't know where to find a Bible verse on hope, introduce them to the Subject Index of their Bible or the search feature if using the Bible app. Then, create a chain out of the paper strips using tape or a stapler.

Note: This XP can feel elementary and simple, so be sure to present it to your few with excitement, acknowledging that something that feels elementary can still be fun. Focus on the countdown to Christmas and the tangible reminder they're creating with the paper chain. Keep the conversation going while you're working on this XP by having students talk about what they're writing and why they're writing it.