

WEEK 3 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Jesus brings joy to the world.

BIBLE

Mary Visits Elizabeth:

Luke 1:39–56; Zephaniah 3:14–17

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Have you ever gotten a gift that was so perfect for you that it made you want to dance or jump with joy? This week, we'll take a look at the time when Mary visited Elizabeth to share joyful news with her. Once they saw each other, they both broke out in celebration because **Jesus brings joy to the world.**

LARGE GROUP TIME

Welcome back to *Joy Story*! There are so many things that can bring us joy around Christmastime. Catchy carols, time with friends, presents, hot cocoa ... but the joy these things bring doesn't last forever. There is someone, however, who came to bring us a massive amount of joy—so much joy that it is enough for the whole world!

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Joy To The World

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, get an inflatable globe like [this](#). Have kids stand in a circle and toss the globe to the person next to them in a variation of musical chairs or hot potato. Play the song "Joy To The World" while the globe is being tossed. When the music stops, the person holding the globe has ten seconds to find the country that the leader calls out. If they don't find it in time, they are out. Another option is to use a standard globe and have kids take turns trying to find places on it. Prepare a list of countries beforehand, maybe starting with countries where your church might support missions or sponsor children.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Instead of finding a country on the globe, have them do a joyful dance if they are holding the globe when the music stops.*
- **Have you ever stopped to think about how big our world is?** We live on this tiny speck of the globe, but look how much world there is!
- Jesus came to earth because God loves the world, not just us in this church, churches in our city, or churches in this country. God wants everyone in the world to know God's love!

ACTIVITY | Baby Toy Battle

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, collect some baby toys like rattles, blocks, teething rings, cloth books, bath toys, sorting toys, and the like. (You may want to borrow from families at your church.) Line up kids in two rows facing each other. Place all the baby toys in the middle. Number the kids in each line, making sure to start numbering the opposing team from the opposite end ("Number One" from each team will be diagonal from*

each other). To play, call out an item and a number in the pile. The person from each team assigned that number must race to get the item first! The team with the most items collected wins!

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Show pictures of, or bring in, [popular toys](#) from over the years. You can share what year that toy was popular and why everyone wanted one. Then, play a fun game where preteens wear mittens while taking turns to unwrap a toy that's been wrapped many times with wrapping paper or plastic wrap. The kid who successfully finishes unwrapping the toy gets to keep it or choose to give it away.

✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Place a few baby toys on a tray and have the kids explore them before playing each round. To play, cover the tray and discreetly remove one of the toys. You can include a different kid each round who is in charge of removing the toy. Remove the cover and have the kids figure out which toy is missing. Keep an eye out for kids who may mouth some of the items.

- Look at how fiercely we fought for all the baby toys! You might have played with toys like these when you were younger.
- **Can you think of a specific toy that you really loved when you were little but don't play with anymore?**
- It's interesting how certain toys in our lives used to bring us so much joy, but we grew out of them. Besides, the joy from those toys wasn't the kind of joy that lasted.
- Today, we're actually going to talk about a baby—not a toy—who would bring joy to everyone, and that joy would last forever!

POLL | Which brings you more joy?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have kids go to either side of the room based on their responses to your questions.
- **Which of these things brings you more joy?**
 - Opening presents or giving presents?
 - Decorating a Christmas tree or decorating Christmas cookies?
 - Singing Christmas songs or watching Christmas movies?
 - Buying a gift for someone or making a gift for someone?
 - Mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes?
 - Christmas lights or Christmas parades?
 - Peppermint hot chocolate or plain hot chocolate?
 - Traveling to visit family or having everyone visit your house?
 - A cold Christmas with snow or a warm Christmas with sunshine?
 - Puppies or kittens?
- Different things can bring you different kinds of joy. But the joy we get from stuff is more like happiness for a little while ... not at all like the true joy God gives.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Luke 1:39–56 (Mary Visits Elizabeth)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Set up a simple workbench with some tools and toys like you did in previous weeks. Wear an apron and tinker with a toy (maybe a baby doll) as you tell the Bible story, pretending to fix or adjust it.
- ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Be mindful of different sensory responses. Some students are under-sensitive, or under-responsive, to sensory stimulations and don't seem to be bothered by loud noises, bright lights, or touch—even pain. These students will seek stimulation so provide tools such as fidget toys, weighted blankets or vests, and pressure massage. For over-sensitive students, prevent potential sensory overload by providing “sensory breaks” to calm their

senses. Consult with parents beforehand for further suggestions unique to their child

- Hi friends, thanks for dropping by the workshop again! As you know, I'm the "Toy Maker," and I love spreading joy through the toys I make! But even all this joy can't compare to the joy of Jesus!
- Jesus is the savior God promised to the world a long time ago. He would be born to a young woman named Mary who loved God. But Mary wouldn't be the only one getting a baby in a miraculous way! Her relative Elizabeth would be giving birth to a son, John, even though she was very old.
 - **How do you think Mary felt about having a son? What about Elizabeth?**
 - The timing was very strange for Mary because she was young and about to be married to a man named Joseph. Would anyone believe that an angel had told her she would be carrying God's son?
 - It also had to be challenging for Elizabeth, who would have to care for a newborn when she was older and not expecting this at all.
- Even so, both women trusted God and were able to turn any signs of fear and doubt into joy. Let's take a deeper look at Mary and Elizabeth's experiences throughout this Joy Story of Jesus!
 - **Let's read Luke 1:39–40.** Mary hurried to visit Elizabeth. This was smart of her! Elizabeth would be the one person that could relate to Mary. Elizabeth understood receiving surprising news from an angel about having a baby.
 - **Let's read Luke 1:41–45 to see what happened when Mary got to Elizabeth's house.** The baby in Elizabeth's belly leaped with joy! That baby, John, seemed to have a sense that Jesus was nearby. Even his mother Elizabeth was filled with God's Spirit at that moment. God was near! Elizabeth gushed about how blessed Mary was. Mary knew she wasn't alone, and she was also filled with joy!
- **Have you ever been so filled with joy that you couldn't help but sing?** That's what Mary did. She expressed her joy and gratitude with beautiful words.
 - **Let's sing along in Luke 1:46–55.**
 - God was doing something big! Mary couldn't help but sing this song of praise to God, who has always been faithful. And now, God was sending the savior through her. Jesus would soon be here for everyone!
 - All of the questions and worries she probably had before might have kept her from feeling joy. But when she saw Elizabeth and heard her words of blessing, she was filled with joy. It was a lasting joy that could only come from knowing the savior was on the way.
- Our true joy only comes from Jesus, who saves us and makes us right with God. Even if we don't know exactly what is going to happen next or what people might say, none of that can overcome the joy that we have from God!

BIG IDEA | Jesus brings joy to the world.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create as many gift tags as there are Big Idea words (six for this week). A simple way to do this is to cut wrapping paper into little rectangles, fold them over, and write the word on the inside. Attach each tag to a different toy and place them inside a large gift box. Invite kids to come up and pull out a toy and read the word aloud (or show it to a leader to read for them). After all the toys have been brought out, arrange the toys in order and have everyone say the Big Idea together. You could also do this without the toys and have kids draw out one gift tag at a time from the box.
- Let's say the Big Idea together joyfully: **Jesus brings joy to the world!**

STORY | A Story About Joy

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Share a personal story about a time you experienced so much joy because of Jesus! You may also choose to show [this ad](#) with the characters from "Toy Story 4" or [this clip](#) (until 1:40) from "The Grinch (2018)" to discuss further the fleeting joy that comes from external things, like winning a carnival toy

or how the Grinch observed all of Whoville singing even when he had stolen all their presents and toys. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)

✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** As this week's Big Idea tells us, Jesus brings joy to the world! This would be a great time to bring people from your church who are part of local and global outreach programs to talk to your preteens about how Jesus is bringing joy to people living in other places. You can also have preteens think about different countries they know around the world and encourage them to pray for the people living in other places to know the joy that Jesus brings.

- A lot of things and people give us joy, but they are usually just for a moment. We outgrow toys, and we grow out of touch with people sometimes. But the true joy that Jesus gives will last us a lifetime.
- Because the joy Jesus brings to the world is about life with God forever. God had given Elizabeth a baby boy against all odds, and that baby in her belly was overjoyed when he heard the news of Jesus!
- When Mary accepted the fact that she would carry God's son, she sang a joyful song even though she didn't know what was in store for her future. Why? Because she trusted in God and had joy that Jesus was about to come into the world. **Jesus brings joy to the world.**

ACTIVITY | Expressions Of Joy

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, pass out paper plates and markers to have kids draw their own emoji-style faces depicting joy. Have them put their plates over their faces and take a fun group picture together!
- There are different ways we can express the joy we feel because of Jesus. When Mary experienced joy, she sang a song. When Elizabeth experienced joy, she blessed Mary. When Elizabeth's baby experienced joy, he leaped inside her belly!
- **What do you do when you are joyful?**
 - What happens in your mind?
 - What do your hands do?
 - What do your feet do?
 - What sound comes out of your mouth?
 - What does your face look like?
- The promise of Jesus the savior caused joy for Mary and Elizabeth—and baby John—but that joy was not just for them. The joy of Jesus was meant for everyone in the world.
- Let's create our own joyful emoji faces and remember **Jesus brings joy to the world.**

SCRIPTURE | Zephaniah 3:14–17

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the passage aloud.
- Zephaniah was another prophet, or messenger from God, who lived long before Jesus was born. During his time, Zephaniah was surrounded by people who were not following God, so he tried telling them to come back to God.
- Zephaniah's message wasn't all gloom and doom, though. He didn't tell people, "Turn back to God or you'll be punished!" Instead, this is what he said.
- **Let's read Zephaniah 3:14–15.**
 - Zephaniah starts off by telling the people to sing, be glad, and rejoice! **Does that sound like good news or bad news?** It's great news—news that brings joy!
 - The reason that the people can sing and rejoice is because of Jesus. In verse 15, it says, "The LORD has taken away your punishment."
 - Jesus came to save the world from sin—the mistakes and harmful choices that hurt us, our relationship with God, or others. Sin separates us from God, but because of Jesus, we can be with God.
- **Let's read Zephaniah 3:16–17.**

- Did you catch that? Not only did Zephaniah encourage people to sing, but said that God “will rejoice over you with singing!” God takes joy in you!
- God loves you, me, and the whole world so much that God sent Jesus to earth. Jesus is the promised savior who came at the perfect time. Jesus saves us from our sins and takes the penalty for our sins away.
- Isn't this a wonderful reason to be joyful? **Jesus brings joy to the world.**

VIDEO | Joy Story, Episode 3

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | Time For Toys

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Like previous weeks, provide a box of [assorted fidget toys](#) that kids can manipulate as they think and share. Encourage kids to choose a different one each week to give everyone a chance at the different types. Play a Christmas song of your choice and give kids time to play and chat freely with their neighbors (because they will want to talk about the toy they got!) before you invite them to focus on today's reflection questions. Collect the toys to use again next week.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Add questions to this reflection time for preteens. Talk about Marie Kondo and her method of keeping only the things that spark joy in your life. How can giving away things that don't bring you joy help you focus on the real joy that Jesus brings?
- In today's Joy Story, Mary found joy, even though her life was going to be completely different than she expected. It wasn't her idea to become the mother of God's promised savior, but she knew this was God's plan and trusted in God. Trusting God brought Mary joy. Even Elizabeth's baby jumped for joy inside her belly!
 - **What does joy mean to you?**
 - **What are some ways you express your joy?**
 - **Can you have joy in a difficult situation? How?**
 - **How does Jesus bring you joy?**
- Our joy isn't from the things around us. Sure, they can make us happy for just a little bit, but it fades away. True joy remains even when things in our lives aren't perfect.
- The joy Jesus brings is forever because Jesus is the savior who connects us to God and will be with us forever. **Jesus brings joy to the world.**

RESPONSE | Joy Tree

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use your version of the Christmas tree you set up in Week 1. Hand out this week's ornament [printable](#) that they can write or draw their response on. Punch a hole at the top and loop some string through it to create an ornament to put on the tree.
- **What can you do to share the joy of Jesus with others?**
- The joy of Jesus is meant for the whole world, not just the people in this room. Let's make it a goal to let others know that **Jesus brings joy to the world** and why!
- Let's ask God to help us share this gift with others this Christmas season!

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 1:46–47 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”**

PRAYER

- God, your love is so big that the world can't hold it all. Thank you for sending Jesus, the promised savior who came at the perfect time to bring joy to the world. Help us remember that this joy isn't just for us but for everyone around us, all over the world. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME

DISCUSSION

● SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS

- **Where did Mary go as soon as the angel left her?** *To visit Elizabeth.*
- **What is something interesting that happened when Mary greeted Elizabeth?** *The baby in Elizabeth's belly leaped for joy!*
- **How did Mary respond when Elizabeth told her she was blessed?** *She sang a song and gave praise to God.*
- **Read Zephaniah 3:17. How does this verse remind you that God loves you?**

● APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- **What are some things that bring you joy, at least for a little while?**
- **What are some things that take away your joy?**
- **How does God give us joy that lasts forever?**

ACTIVITY | Recycled Joy

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, have kids make a "toy" using found materials (toilet paper tubes, milk cartons, egg cartons, loose cardboard, old CDs, straws, utensils, rubber bands, and paper scraps). Check out sources like [this](#) for inspiration!*
- You may have realized by now that oftentimes, the things that give us the most joy are not always the most expensive things. After all, the greatest joy comes from Jesus, and God gave him to us for free!
- Let's make a toy out of ordinary things to help us remember we don't need to be surrounded by fancy gadgets and the coolest toys to have joy this Christmas. **Jesus brings joy to the world**, and that's more than enough!