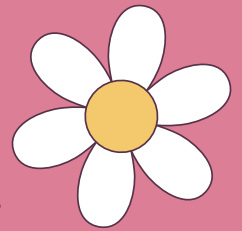


# MONTREAT YOUTH + PARENT DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY GUIDE

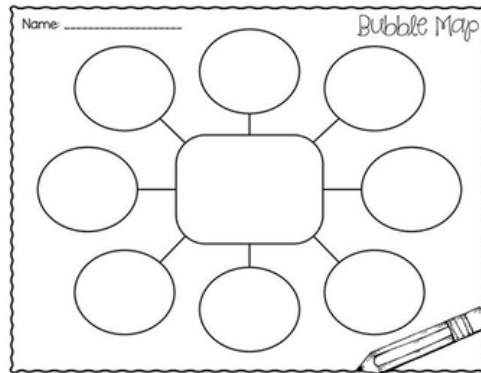


# MONDAY



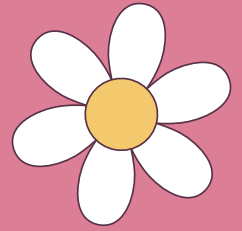
DAILY THEME - "CLAIMING JOY: WHERE DOES JOY COME FROM?"

1. Where does your joy come from? Maybe use a Bubble map template like the one below and write "joy" in the middle and on the outside bubbles, think about where your joy comes from.



1. How can you always remember that God is the source or foundation of our joy? How does God provide you with joy? (Maybe make a bulleted list...)
2. How can you nurture/ cultivate the joy that God places in each one of us and share it with our world that so desperately needs it? (Maybe make a list of ways you can do this...)
3. Then consider how **SHOULD** our joy that is given from God intersect with our call to love kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with God from Micah 6:8?
  - a. Maybe consider doing something within your community that would allow our joy that we experience in and through Christ to align with our call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Some ideas could include...
    - i. Serving at a homeless shelter or assisted living facility
    - ii. Writing a hopeful and inspiring card to an elderly neighbor or family member who is grieving or sick.
    - iii. Sharing your table with those who are hungry.
    - iv. Baking cookies or baking your favorite dessert for your neighbor
    - v. Make dinner for your neighbor who might be ill or struggling financially to afford food.
    - vi. Draw a happy picture or write friendly words or words of encouragement on a neighbor's sidewalk or driveway as a reminder of your love and joy for them
    - vii. Provide your elderly neighbor who might be lonely with company. Go over to their house and sit with them. Also offer to help them with something that they maybe cannot do themselves.

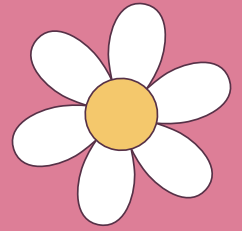
# TUESDAY



DAILY THEME - "COMPLICATED JOY: WHERE CAN JOY SURVIVE?"

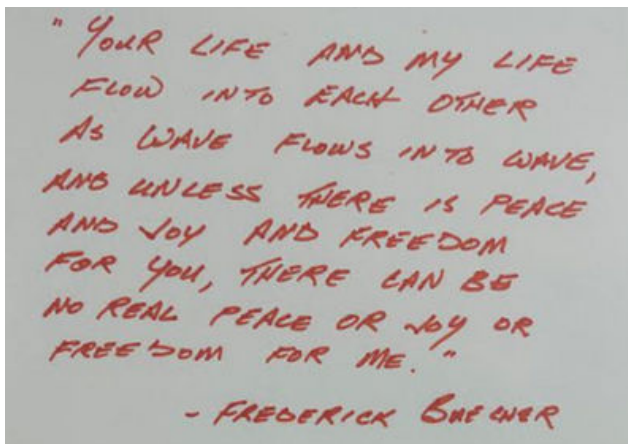
1. On Tuesday, we learned that joy can be complicated. Make a bulleted list in response to this question: "what makes joy difficult or complicated?"
1. Think about this alongside your parents or guardians. Is there a time that you as an individual or as a family have not been able to experience joy and why? Consider: What makes joy difficult?
1. Joy can be complicated, especially when we are going through difficult times, but the apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:4-20 that we are supposed to "Rejoice in the Lord always..." because God's joy lives in all of us and God's joy is a DEFIANT JOY that does not deny the brokenness of our world, but instead defies (confronts/ resists) the despair, injustice, and hopelessness of our world. With this being said, try the following activity below:
  - a. Get a rainbow scratch pad or a black piece of construction paper and think about how the black part of the paper or scratch pad represents our broken and unjust world. Then, using the pencil that comes with the scratch pad set or a silver/ gold sharpie that would appear on the black construction paper, do the following:
    - i. Write ways or draw a picture of what a DEFIANT JOY looks like.
    - ii. Then express what it would mean to practice a DEFIANT JOY?
    - iii. Then consider how our DEFIANT JOY can lead to change, long lasting change that aligns with God's intention or will for all of creation.
  - a. Notice how the color shines through on the scratch pad or the black piece of construction paper and reflect on this. Let this inspire you to go into our world today and practice a DEFIANT JOY. Maybe even consider with the beginning of the school year coming up, what are some ways you can practice a DEFIANT JOY in your school environment?

# WEDNESDAY



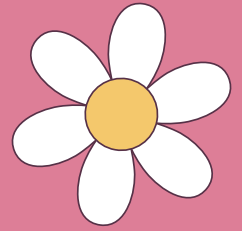
DAILY THEME - "CULTIVATING JOY: HOW DO I FIND JOY?"

1. On Wednesday, we learned about what it means to find, discover, and experience joy. It is easy in such a beautiful place like Montreat to discover joy, especially with the sight of the mountains and the campus, but it can be harder once we return home to our daily lives to see, experience, and discover God's joy.
1. So, figure out a way that you can find joy within your own community and GO DO IT.
  - a. It could be inside or outside.
  - b. It could be something as simple as going on a walk and enjoying God's creation or it could be going on a hike somewhere near you.
  - c. It could also be baking, knitting, creating something artistic, playing an instrument, reading a book, going swimming, hanging out with friends and family etc.
1. On Wednesday, we also learned that Joy is not a destination, but a practice. What will it look like for you to practice and live out God's joy?
1. Read this quote by Frederick Buechner.



- This quote reminds us that as disciples of Jesus Christ we will have to continually practice joy and live it out in order to create change where all God's people can experience a true sense of joy, love, peace, justice, and freedom.
  - So, consider a social issue of our world today such as LGBTQIA rights, women's rights, environmental justice/ creation care, race/ color discrimination, poverty/ homelessness, etc. that makes you PASSIONATE and brainstorm ways you could bring joy and justice to these social issues and get involved in them seeking to create change for all God's people to experience.
1. We also learned that our Gratitude or thankfulness for the many blessings that God has given us leads to joy. So, consider individually or together as a family who or what are you thankful for? Then, consider creating and decorating a box, glass jar, or small container that will be known as your "Gratitude Jar" and fill it with pieces of paper that acknowledge what you are thankful or grateful for. If you want, discuss the gratitude statements that you put in the jar alongside your family.

# THURSDAY

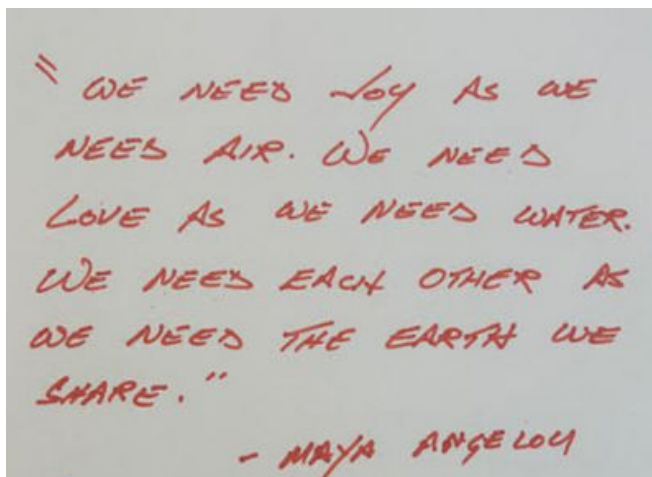


DAILY THEME - "COMMUNAL JOY: WHERE DO WE FIND JOY?"

1. On Thursday, we learned that we experience joy in community. Joy is not a solo act as we were NOT created by God to be self-sufficient creatures, but rather, to live together in community with one another. So, please discuss the following questions:
  - a. Where are the places that you feel part of a community in?
  - b. What does it feel like to be a part of a community? What feelings arise for you?
  - c. How do you experience a sense of joy within that community that you identified?
  - d. When was the last time you felt joy in community? Describe it to someone.
  - e. What are the things you desire from community with one another?
  - f. How do we welcome others into that community?
  - g. Why should we look to broaden our community?
  - h. How can practicing and living out God's joy help us to create community and seek to broaden it?

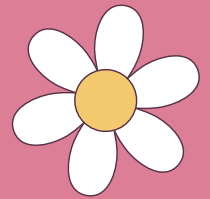
(Questions written by Christian educator, Laura Roberson Hadas and Lindsey Odom)

1. Read and reflect on this quote by Maya Angelou. Then consider the following questions below.



- In this quote, Maya Angelou provides powerful words about life, love, joy, and the power of community.
1. What did you hear about communal joy in this quote written by Maya Angelou?
  2. How does this quote change or impact your thoughts regarding communal joy?
  3. How SHOULD our need for each other and the fact that God created us to be together influence our communal joy?
  4. How can you allow your communal joy to impact other areas of your life, especially areas of our life that are more private/secluded or tucked away (isolated)?

# FRIDAY



DAILY THEME - "CONTRIBUTING TO JOY: WHY DOES MY/OUR JOY MATTER?"

1. On Friday, we were reminded once again that our joy is an act of defiance against the injustice, brokenness, hurt, and despair of our world today and **THAT THE WORLD NEEDS OUR JOY.**
  - a. So, how will you fill up your cup or your whole being with Joy and how will you share it with our world? List some ways...
  
1. Once you leave Montreat and return home, how will you remember that **YOU** are the **SOURCE/ FOUNDATION** of God's joy and that you are called to share this joy with the world?
  - a. How can your church youth group or your church community help you?
  
1. On Friday, we read John 20:19-29, which depicts the disciples gathered together behind locked doors scared and fearful of what lies next after Jesus has died, but then the disciples encounter something that is bigger than their comprehension or understanding. They encounter **JESUS!** So, despite them being behind locked doors, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" The good news of this text is that Jesus cannot be stopped by our locked doors or parts of our lives that we seek to remain hidden or isolated. Rather, Jesus keeps coming to us like he did with the disciples in the midst of our fear, pain, grief, hopelessness, doubt, confusion, and brokenness. Not only this, but Jesus keeps sending us out of our safe, locked rooms, or comfortable places in our lives into a world that so desperately needs God's gifts of **JOY**, love, peace, and justice for all. So, consider the following questions:
  - a. What are some of the places in your life that you keep hidden, locked, secluded, or isolated from others? You can identify them alone if it makes you uncomfortable to do it in front of other people.
  - b. What would it look like to go out of your comfort zone to create Joy for all God's people to experience? (You can even draw or sketch what it would look like)
  - c. On Friday, we discussed why our joy matters. Our joy matters because we live in a broken world, and we have created unjust systems that perpetuate (spread) injustice. Some of the systems that we have created within our world today deny some groups of people from experiencing God's **JOY**. What can we do to reverse this?
  - d. Thinking about why our **JOY MATTERS** and why our joy is **NEEDED** within our world today, reflect on this question:
  - e. How can we begin to create beloved community with each other where all are welcome, all experience a true sense of joy and peace, and all feel like they have a place to belong?