

# 2

# Feel Joy in God's Mercy

PSALM 30



## GOAL

The children seek to understand joy as something that can be present in all seasons of life, and as something that can emerge from not just the good but also difficult times.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Dear God, may I be mindful of the life experiences of those present. May I affirm the joy that is present in each of us, through each season of life. Amen.

## THE SESSION

This session explores an overlooked aspect of joy. God is always with us, even when we may not recognize it. When we are in deep pain, we can experience, through God's mercy, some of the most heartfelt moments of joy. In a unit on joy, it is important to look beyond our initial thoughts of joyful celebrations to see that there is joy to be had in all seasons of life, not just the expected times.

## THE BIBLE STORY

Psalm 30 is full of joy and praise to God for God's mercy and care in difficult times. Despite the obvious pain and suffering that the psalmist experienced, the goodness and transforming love of God in the psalmist's life is lifted up. Perhaps verse 5 sums up the crux of this session with these words, "For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Each person has different experiences of pain. For the most part, children understand sadness, but (hopefully) do not have extensive personal experience with deep sorrow. Some children in your group, however, may have had traumatic events in their lives. Be sensitive throughout this session to the variety of life experience, knowing that, no matter what level of pain or suffering a child has endured, each child's pain is real to them. Some children may have experienced finding joy in a sad situation, and for this session, this is the joy that we seek to lift up as a particularly powerful movement of God in the world.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- "Tears of Sorrow, Tears of Joy" (p. 16): Write the three questions in the activity on a piece of newsprint.
- "Joy Everywhere" (p. 16): Draw large outline letters *J*, *O*, and *Y*, filling three pieces of newsprint or poster board, one letter per sheet or board.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Seeds of Joy" (p. 17): Obtain *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland (Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1993) or use the YouTube video "The Lotus Seed" ([bit.ly/FMTheLotusSeed](https://bit.ly/FMTheLotusSeed), 8:35, ending at 5:09).
- "Beauty Out of Brokenness" (p. 18): Obtain gold-colored adhesive supplies, such as washi tape or glitter glue, and gold-colored ribbon.
- "Some Good News" (p. 19): Go to [bit.ly/FMSomeGoodNews](https://bit.ly/FMSomeGoodNews) and preview a few episodes. Choose a clip from an episode to show the children.



## GETTING STARTED

- Pictures cut apart from Resource Pages 1, 2, and 3
- Newsprint with three questions



If you have more than twelve children, add some pictures cut from magazines showing a person crying, from sorrow or happiness.

- Internet-connected device (optional)

### TEARS OF SORROW, TEARS OF JOY



Display the pictures cut apart from Resource Pages 1, 2, and 3. As the children arrive, invite each child to choose a picture. Looking at their picture, direct their attention to the newsprint and have them consider the following three questions:

- ✦ Do you think the person in the picture is crying tears of sorrow or tears of joy?
- ✦ When was a time that you have felt similar to how the person in the picture looks to be feeling?
- ✦ What are some words to describe that feeling?

Invite the children to share their picture with the group as a gathering activity, and either to share the time that they felt like the person in the picture or to imagine what might be going on in the picture.

### REJOICING IN THE LORD



Sing together “Rejoice in the Lord Always.”

Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I say, “Rejoice!” (*repeat*)

Rejoice! Rejoice! Again, I say, “Rejoice!” (*repeat*)

To sing in a round, form three groups: red, yellow, and blue. Have each group follow the corresponding singer wearing a red, yellow, or blue shirt on the video. Show the YouTube video “Sing-along ROUND: Rejoice in The Lord Always—Dale Reichel” ([bit.ly/FMRejoiceRound](https://bit.ly/FMRejoiceRound), 1:40).



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Prepared newsprint or poster board with the letters *J*, *O*, and *Y*
- Markers and pens
- Sticky notes

### JOY EVERYWHERE



Tell the children that, throughout this unit on joy, they will have the chance to see many different ways that people experience joy. Comment that, in addition to the joy that comes in happy times, sometimes joy comes in the middle of sadness or after something really difficult has happened.

Using the prepared newsprint or poster boards, invite the children to express their ideas about the word *Joy* as follows:

- Inside the letter *J*, have the children write other words or exclamations that they associate with joy (such as happiness, celebration, or Hurray!).
- Inside the letter *O*, have the children draw pictures of joy (such as hearts, smiling faces, or stick figures dancing).
- Inside the letter *Y*, have the children write or draw things that they think of as the opposite of joy (such as sadness, fighting, or faces with tears on them).

As a group, review the words and pictures in *J* and *O*, affirming what the children have written and drawn and adding any others that come up in the conversation. Then, as you review what the children have written in *Y*, discuss in what ways those things could be made joyful. For example, forgiveness could turn fighting into joy. As the children come up with ideas, invite them to write those words or ideas on a sticky note and place it next to the word in the *Y*. Tell the children that today's Scripture reading from the Psalms talks about how we can turn sadness to joy. Set aside posters for "Mourning into Dancing" (below).



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### LISTENING TO THE PSALM



Tell the children that just as last session's Scripture reading was from the Psalms, so is today's reading. Reinforce that the Psalms, one of the books of the Bible, is sometimes called the Bible's hymn book or prayer book and often reads like poetry.

Hand out Bibles. Have the children turn to Psalm 30 and follow along as you read it. Then invite the children to listen to the psalm a second time as it is sung. Since there is nothing to watch in the video, encourage the children to listen carefully to the words, perhaps closing their eyes or lowering their gaze so they can pay attention to the words. Play the YouTube video "Psalm 30 (Mourning Into Dancing) (feat. Elizabeth Enalls) - The Psalms Project" ([bit.ly/FMPsalms30](https://bit.ly/FMPsalms30), 4:57). Engage in conversation using the following questions:

- Even in the psalmist's sadness, they are able to praise God. What have you found praise-worthy in times of sadness?
- Did you connect more with the psalm through the music or the words? Why?
- Consider a sad story you have heard recently in the news or from someone you know. How might some joy be found in the midst of that sadness?

- 
- Bibles
  - Internet-connected device

### MOURNING INTO DANCING



Provide card-stock copies of Resource Page 4 and drawing or painting supplies. Invite the children to consider the phrase "mourning into dancing" from Psalm 30 and choose one of the pairs of words from the *Y* poster from "Joy Everywhere" (p. 16) to illustrate.

- 
- Drawing and/or painting supplies
  - Card-stock copies of Resource Page 4
  - Posters from "Joy Everywhere" (p. 16)



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

### SEEDS OF JOY



Tell the children that they will hear a story about beauty that comes as a result of sadness. Encourage them to listen for both the sadness and joy in it. Read or show the YouTube video "The Lotus Seed" ([bit.ly/FMTheLotusSeed](https://bit.ly/FMTheLotusSeed), 8:35, ending at 5:09). Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- 
- The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland (Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1993) or internet-connected device (optional)

- Card-stock copies of Resource Page 5
- Scissors
- Gold-colored adhesive supplies, such as washi tape or glitter glue
- Single-hole punch
- Gold-colored ribbon



For more information on the practice of *kintsugi*, go to [bit.ly/FMKintsugi](http://bit.ly/FMKintsugi).

- ✦ Why do you think the lotus seed was so important to the grandmother?
- ✦ Why do you think the brother wanted to plant the seed? If you were the brother, would you have tried to plant it?
- ✦ What are two or three words to describe this story to someone who had never heard it?
- ✦ Will you remember this story as more of a sad story or a joyful story? Why?

## BEAUTY OUT OF BROKENNESS



Explain the Japanese practice of *kintsugi*, repairing broken pottery with gold. This practice asserts that, rather than disguising or hiding the broken parts of something, they can instead be made beautiful, becoming part of the piece. *Kintsugi* means “golden joining.”

Comment that we all hope that bad things won't happen and that things do not break, but we know, in fact, that life is full of moments when things do not go the way we would like them to. Tell the children that they will create bookmarks using gold-colored craft items, inspired by the *kintsugi* art form as a reminder that joy can come out of sorrow.

Provide card-stock copies of Resource Page 5 and invite the children to make one or more bookmarks using these verses from Psalm 30. Have the children cut the bookmarks apart. Tell them to rip a bookmark in two or three places, and then put it back together using the gold-colored adhesives provided. Have the children punch a hole in the top of the bookmark and add a gold-colored ribbon.



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

### A STORY OF JOY AND SORROW



Based on the improv group game “Fortunately/Unfortunately,” this storytelling game invites participants to create a story together.

How to play:

- Form two groups into two lines facing each other. Children take turns telling a sentence of a story. One side begins each line of the story with *Fortunately* and a sentence that is positive. The other side begins each line with the word *Unfortunately* and a setback of some sort.
- Give the children a starting sentence, or have one group brainstorm a sentence. For example, “Fortunately, Alex came upon a stray dog in the park.”
- Alternate side to side, having each child add a sentence to build on the story. If the story seems to lag, start another story with a new sentence starter.
- Be sure to end on a *fortunately* statement!

Questions for discussion:

- ✦ What was easy about this game? What was hard?
- ✦ Do you think you could have kept going? Why or why not?
- ✦ In what ways is this game like life? In what ways is it different?

## SOME GOOD NEWS

C T

Ask the children if any of them saw a YouTube series hosted by John Krasinski called “Some Good News” that first aired during the spring of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. If any children remember it, ask them to summarize it, and if not, explain that it was a web series focused on lifting up stories of hope in the middle of the scary time of the pandemic. With special guests, they tried to bring joy to people who may have missed important events like graduations and weddings, and also shared stories of kindness and community. Show the clip of an episode you have previewed.

With the children, brainstorm things that they or members of their family missed during the pandemic. Some suggestions may be vacations, holiday celebrations, sports events, birthday parties, recitals, graduations, and so forth. Have a volunteer recorder write down suggestions on newsprint. Then brainstorm some good things that happened. Possible answers may include more family time, a new hobby, learning new ways to use technology, and so forth. Have the recorder write down these suggestions as well.

Wonder together how good things may come out of bad situations. Note that the good things probably don’t always outweigh the bad, and they don’t take away disappointment, but they do provide hope and offer moments of joy in times of difficulty.

- 
- Internet-connected device
  - Newsprint, markers
  - Previewed clip from a “Some Good News” episode ([bit.ly/FMSomeGoodNews](https://bit.ly/FMSomeGoodNews))



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

M T

Gather in a circle and invite the group to hold hands. Tell the group that they will send a prayer around the circle two times by squeezing the hand of the person next to them when they have offered a prayer or passed when it is their turn. The first time, the children are invited to share a concern. As each person shares, prompt the group to respond, “Lord, hear our prayer.” The second time around, they are invited to share a joy. As each person shares, prompt the group to respond, “Praise God!” When all who would like to have shared, close by saying “Amen” together.

Close by singing the hymn “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” (*Glory to God*, #250) or invite children to sing along with the YouTube video “Hymn of Promise with Lyrics” ([bit.ly/FMInTheBulb](https://bit.ly/FMInTheBulb), 2:53).

- 
- Glory to God* hymnals or hymnals with “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” or internet-connected device



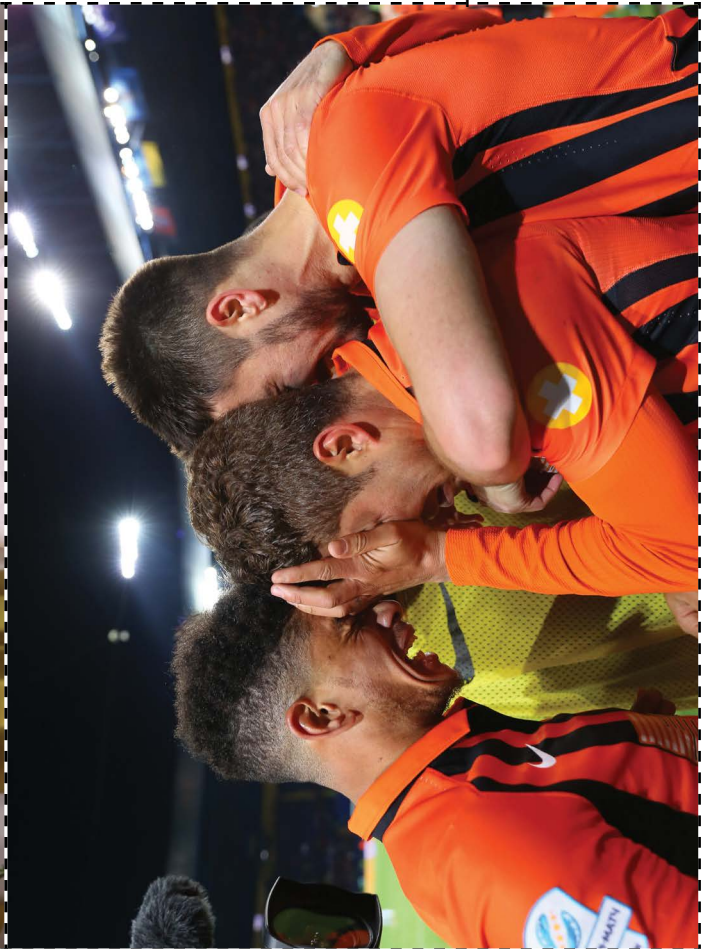
Participants who do not wish to share can be invited to simply squeeze the hand of the person next to them when their turn comes. Leaders should emphasize the choice to share or not.



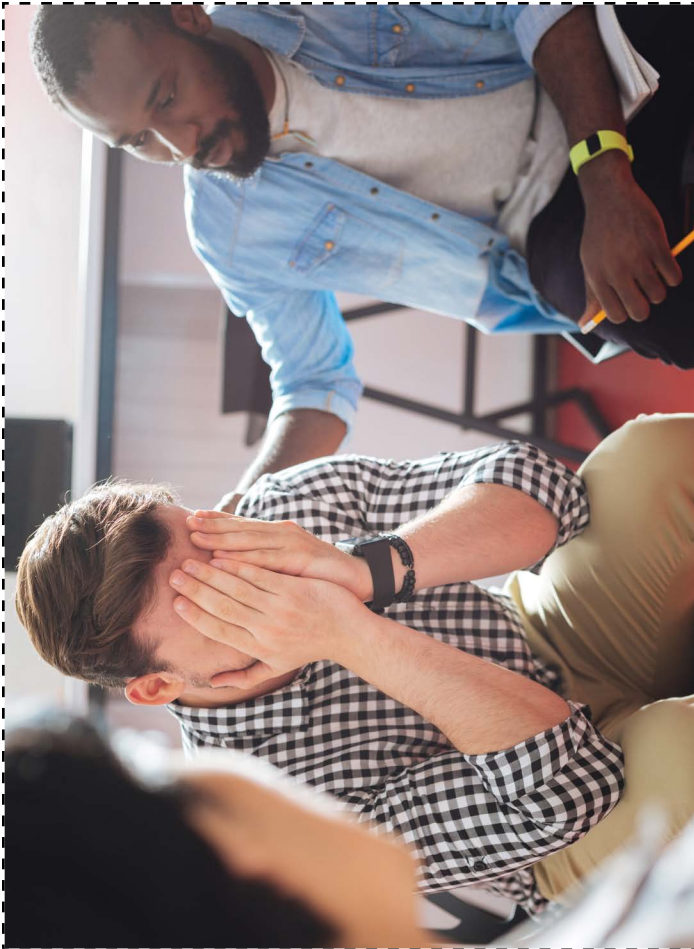




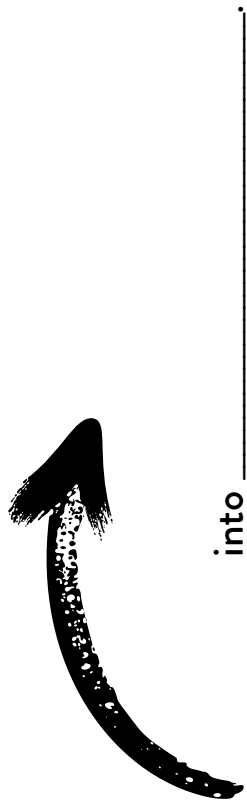












**O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you have healed me.**

*Psalms 30:2*

**Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.**

*Psalms 30:5b*

**You have turned my mourning into dancing . . .  
and clothed me with joy.**

*Psalms 30:11*