

4

Practice Joy at All Times

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9



GOAL

Children hear Paul's words of encouragement and practice finding joy at all 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, help me be an example of rejoicing in your love so that the children I lead may find joy in you now and in the future. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Joy is not just a feeling; it is a response to what God has already done and has promised to do. The encouragement to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:5) acknowledges that joy rises above circumstances and is found in God’s steadfast love for us, past, present, and future. No matter how hard life may be, God is always good and present with us.

THE BIBLE STORY

Paul’s letter to the community in Philippi was written from jail, the least likely of joyful circumstances, Paul sends words of encouragement to people he loves knowing that they are facing their own challenges in difficult times. He urges them to look beyond the circumstance and remember to rejoice in the Lord always. Paul knows that joy is found in God. He also offers sound advice: to pray with thanksgiving—knowing that giving thanks will call to mind God’s blessings—and to think about those things that are good in life.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children are focused on the present moment. Past experiences and future possibilities are difficult to hold onto or maintain for any prolonged amount of time. The idea that there is something more than present circumstance is a developing notion. Paul’s words can be a joyful song or chant that lay a foundation for a life of faith that has joy in God’s steadfast love as its bedrock. Repetition of teachings is how young children learn and eventually grow into that knowledge and experience.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Exploring Emotions” (p. 44): Obtain *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain (Parenting Press, 2005) or use the YouTube video “The Way I Feel” (bit.ly/FMTheWayIFeel, 3:35).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Remembering Joy” (p. 46): Obtain an inflatable beach ball and use a permanent marker to write the following prompts with their corresponding pictures in different places on the ball:
 - Who brings you joy? (*happy face*)
 - Where is a place that brings you joy? (*house, playground, church*)
 - Tell about something you think is beautiful. (*flower, face, rainbow*)
 - Tell about someone you think is good. (*several faces*)
 - What is a sound or place you find peaceful? (*tree, mountain, waves*)
 - Who is someone who reminds you of God’s love? (*happy face, heart*)



GETTING STARTED

- ❑ Flowing scarves, pieces of chiffon fabric, and/or ribbons
- ❑ Internet-connected device or music player with various types of music expressing different emotions

JOY OF MOVEMENT



Provide an open area for children to move to music. Greet the children as they arrive. Invite them to take one or two scarves, pieces of chiffon, or ribbons. Lead the children in waving their materials high and low, making circles and figure eights, fast and slow. Play various types of music expressing different emotions, such as joyful, peaceful, sad, energetic, sleepy, and so forth. Show short portions of the following YouTube videos or play music of your choice representing different emotions on a music player. Encourage children to move in different ways to the music.

- “Positive Morning Music—Happy Uplifting Mood Booster Sunny Music” (bit.ly/FMJoyfulMusic, 1:03:24)
- “Relaxing Guitar Music—Acoustic—Calming Music for Stress Relief, Studying” (bit.ly/FMPeacefulMusic, 3:09:20)
- “Best of Sad Cinematic Background Music/Emotional Drama Music Instrumental—by AShamaluevMusic” (bit.ly/FMSadMusic, 15:45)
- “Energetic Upbeat Percussive Clap and Stomp Background Music” (bit.ly/FMEnergyMusic, 1:28)
- “Lullaby Songs—2 hours—Baby bedtime music” (bit.ly/FMSleepyMusic, 2:05:51)

- ❑ Flowing scarves, pieces of chiffon fabric, and/or ribbons
- ❑ Internet-connected device (optional)



To learn the song, invite the children to sing along with the YouTube video “Rejoice in The Lord Always—Bible Songs for Children with Lyrics” (bit.ly/FMRejoiceSong, :38).

REJOICING IN THE LORD



Sing, and dance together with the scarves, chiffon, or ribbons, “Rejoice in the Lord Always.”

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



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- ❑ *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain (Parenting Press, 2005) or internet-connected device

EXPLORING EMOTIONS



Read the book *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain or show the YouTube video “The Way I Feel” (bit.ly/FMTheWayIFeel, 3:35). Use the following questions to engage the children in conversation about feelings:

- When have you felt some of the feelings mentioned in the story?
- Do you think it is possible to feel more than one way at a time?
- What might it look like to have more than one feeling at a time?
- What might it be like to find joy, even when we may not feel joyful?
- How would finding joy change how we are feeling?
- What might be some ways to find joy no matter what is happening or how we are feeling?

Suggest to the children that we can find joy when we remember God’s blessings in our lives and when we are thankful for them. Comment that another way to find joy is to think about God’s love for us and that it never ends.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

PAUL'S MESSAGE FOR US



Resource Page 1

Tell the children that today's Bible story is from a letter written long ago from a follower of Jesus whose name was Paul. He traveled around to many places and told people about Jesus. Explain that it wasn't easy being a follower of Jesus at that time. The rulers didn't like people who followed Jesus. They even put Paul in jail, not because he had done something wrong, but because Paul believed that God was the most important one to follow, not the ruler. Paul wanted to encourage the new followers of Jesus when they were having tough times and remind them to always be joyful because of God's great love.

Read the Bible story on Resource Page 1 based on Philippians 4:4–9. After reading the story, tell the children that Paul wanted his friends to remember to be thankful and show joy for all the good things that God had given them. Ask the children what good things they can think of. As the children respond, write their ideas on a sheet of newsprint.

When the list is complete, tell the children that Paul wrote that, when we pray, we should always give thanks. Teach the children sign language for "thank you." Hold your hand flat and place your fingertips near your mouth. Move your hand out and down toward the person you are thanking. Tell the children that you will read the list of their responses of the good things in life, and they can respond by signing and saying, "Thank you, God!"



Go to bit.ly/FMASLThankYou to see a video of the American Sign Language sign for "thank you."



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

FINDING JOY IN MINDFULNESS



- Resource Page 2
- Copies of Resource Page 3
- Crayons

Recall that Paul's letter encourages us to rejoice always. It is hard to rejoice when we have worries and things that are troubling us. Paul suggests that we think about positive and good things. One way to calm our mind and find joy is to breathe and focus on positive qualities or actions. Tell the children that they will try some activities and poses that can help them breathe and be peaceful, thankful, strong, and so forth. Try the following breathing exercises and poses with the children.

Breathing Exercises: The same word in Hebrew (*ruach*) means both "spirit" and "breath." Doing breathing exercises can help a person become calm and focused and aware of God within us, which can bring joy. Do the following exercises with the children.

- **Basic Breathing:** Invite the children to sit in a comfortable position. Tell them to relax their shoulders, arms, and neck. Tell them to breathe in through their noses and out through their mouths. Encourage slow, even breaths by saying, "Breathe in . . . breathe out."
- **Noisy Breathing:** Tell the children to breathe in through their noses and then blow out through their mouths, blowing out as much air as they can and then taking a deep breath in through the nose. It's OK that they make noise as they breathe in and breathe out.

- **Belly Breathing:** Invite the children to lie on their backs on the floor in a comfortable position. Have them place their hands on their bellies. Tell them to breathe in through their noses and out through their mouths. Tell them to be aware of the rise and fall of their stomachs.

Poses: Show the children Resource Page 2. Lead the children in doing the different poses. Suggest that the children may use these poses when they are worried or troubled to calm their hearts and minds and be joyful. Have the children take home a copy of Resource Page 3 to practice the poses at home. If you have time, have the children color their papers.

PRAYING JOY



Recall that Paul encourages people to pray and give thanks as a way to rejoice always. Wonder together how giving thanks to God may bring joy. Comment that prayer does not have to be quiet or still. Suggest that we sometimes pray with our eyes open, talking together, and moving. Tell the children that you are going to lead this kind of prayer! Invite the children to repeat your words and actions, responding as prompted, as you lead them in a five-finger prayer.

This is my thumb and I give THANKS! (*hold hand in fist with thumb sticking up, wiggle thumb*) /

I give thanks for . . . (*name several things you give thanks for*)

What do you give thanks for? (*encourage responses*)

This is my pointer and I PRAY for PEOPLE. (*hold pointer finger up*) /

I pray for you, and you, and you . . . (*point to each person*) and pray for . . . (*name one or more people*)

Who do you pray for? (*encourage responses*)

This is my middle finger and I have MEMORIES. (*hold hand up with fingers spread, use pointer finger on other hand to tap middle finger*) /

A memory that brings me joy is . . . (*name a joyful memory of a person, time, or place*)

What is a joyful memory you have? (*encourage responses*)

This is my ring finger and I REJOICE! (*hold hand up with fingers spread, use pointer finger on other hand to tap where a ring might be*) /

One way I rejoice is to . . . (*make a sound or say a word and do an action of rejoicing*)

How do you rejoice? (*encourage responses*)

This is my little finger and I know that God LOVES me! (*cross hands over heart*) /

Amen! /



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Prepared beach ball

REMEMBERING JOY



Play a game to reinforce Paul's teaching. Ask the children to recall the things Paul suggested that people focus on, no matter what situation they are in. Read the section in the story, if necessary, to remember.

Hold the prepared beach ball in your hands and turn it over, reading aloud each prompt and showing the children the associated picture. Use the following directions to play:

- Have the children stand in a circle and toss the ball to someone, or sit in a circle and roll the ball if that works better for your group.
- Whatever prompt or associated picture the catcher's right thumb is on or nearest to is to be answered. Read prompts for the children as necessary. They may begin to "read" the pictures after a few rounds.
- Have the catcher toss or roll the ball to another person to continue play. Pass the ball so that everyone has received it at least once.
- Continue playing for as many rounds as you like.

Encourage the children to remember the prompts to think about people, places, and situations that bring them joy as well as the qualities Paul urges us to think about, such as what is beautiful, good, and loving.

CHOOSING JOY

A

Help the children choose joy when they are sad, frightened, or worried by focusing on something that brings joy. Provide paper plates, markers, and crayons and invite the children to draw a picture of their face when they are worried, frightened, or sad on the back side of the plate. As the children work, talk together about some times that they may feel this emotion. Then provide magazines and invite the children to find one or more pictures that show what they thank God for or that make them feel joyful. Have them tear or cut out the pictures and glue them to the inside of the plate.

Have the children place their plates with their drawn faces facing up. Invite the children to take turns naming a situation that might cause worry, fear, or sadness. You may need to provide some situations. Prompt children who have emotion showing on their plate to lift it up and turn it over to the magazine pictures. Have the children share what they are thankful for or brings them joy. Continue until all children have had a chance to share. Encourage the children to use their plates at home to practice giving thanks and choosing joy when they are faced with a difficult situation.

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- Paper plates
 - Markers, crayons
 - Magazines
 - Scissors (optional)
 - Glue sticks



FOLLOWING JESUS

JOYFUL RESPONSE PRAYER AND MARCH

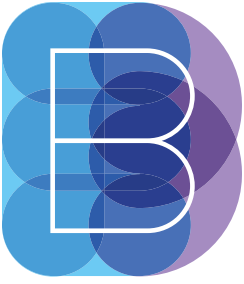
M AM T

As the group readies to leave and follow Jesus daily, offer a prayer and time of joyful response. Invite the children to name different feelings and emotions or situations that might be difficult. Write their responses on newsprint. Practice the response with the children: "God, you give me joy!" Pray the following prayer, prompting the children to respond after each item from the list you mention.

Dear God, when I am (*name emotions or situations from list*),
God, you give me joy! Amen.

Provide children with scarves or ribbons. Invite them to march, waving the scarves or ribbons as they listen to the YouTube video "Joy of the Lord (Lyric Video)—Worship Together Kids Anthem Series" (bit.ly/FMJoyOfTheLord, 3:40; or "Joy to the World" during the Advent/Christmas season). Play music or show the YouTube video for "Joy to the World with Lyrics—Christmas Carol & Song" (bit.ly/FMJoyWorld, 2:09).

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- Newsprint and marker
 - Scarves or ribbons
 - Internet-connected device (or music for "Joy to the World" and music player during the Advent/Christmas season)



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

Paul was a follower of Jesus. He traveled to lots of faraway places to spread the good news about Jesus. After Paul left a place, the followers of Jesus would meet together to worship and learn and help others. After Paul left one church, he was put in prison. The people were sad that Paul was in jail. They wondered if they could keep living the way God wanted them to live. Paul heard that the people were sad and frightened, so he wrote a letter to help them in their faith. He wrote:

My dear friends in Christ, I love you and miss you so much. You bring me such joy. Be strong in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I will say, Rejoice! Do not worry about anything. Instead of worrying, pray. Let God know everything. And when you pray, be sure and give thanks to God. God's peace will calm your heart and mind, because you know that Jesus is with you. It's hard to understand, but that's how God works. Finally, my brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever situation you are in, instead of worrying, think about things that are good and true, that are right and beautiful and make you happy. Practice what you learned from me. Do what I have told you and what you saw me do. And the God who gives peace will be with you.

The believers were so happy to read Paul's words. They knew that, even when Paul was in difficult situations, he trusted God to be with him. Paul knew God's peace, and he wanted them to know it too. Yes! They would practice what they had learned from Paul. They would rejoice and give thanks at all times!



prayerful



rejoicing



peaceful



strong



kind



thankful



calm

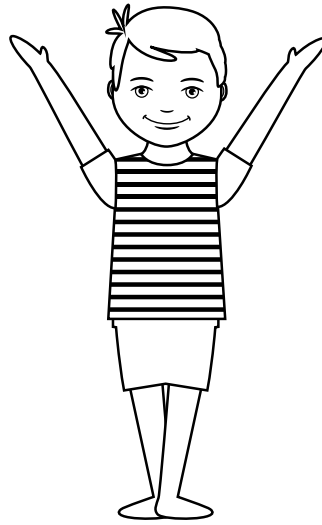


happy

Calming Poses



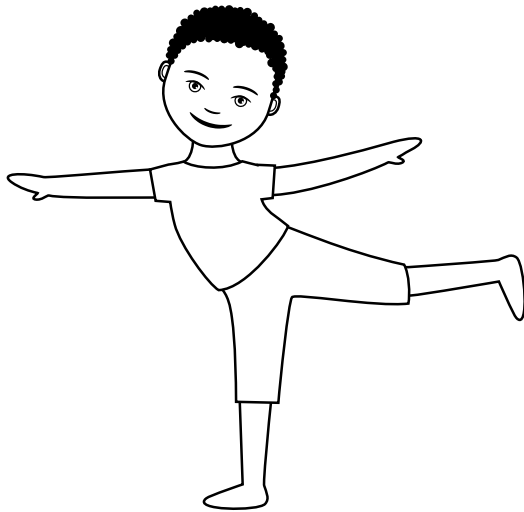
prayerful



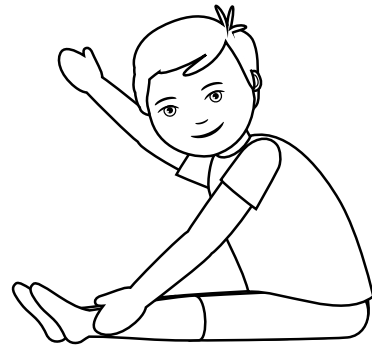
rejoicing



peaceful



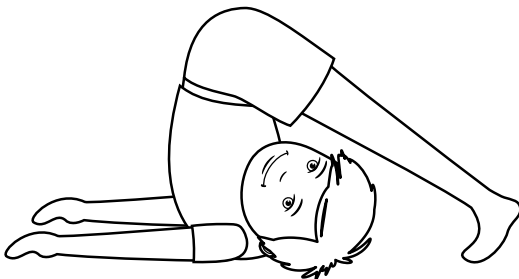
strong



kind



thankful



calm



happy

Do not worry about anything. Instead of worrying, pray. Let God know everything.
And when you pray, be sure and give thanks to God.
God's peace will calm your heart and mind, because it will remind you that Jesus is with you.

