

# 2

# Feel Joy in God's Mercy

LUKE 17:11-16



## GOAL

Children hear the story of the thankful person with leprosy and practice recognizing and giving thanks for blessings in their lives.

- 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](https://bit.ly) addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Dear Lord, for your listening to my cries for help and turning tears to joy, I am thankful. For the many things you have done for me, I am thankful. May I model joy in thankfulness for your blessings. Amen.

## THE SESSION

In this session, the children are encouraged to find joy in God's love and presence in times of trouble. The causes of human pain are many. At times, suffering is brief; at other times, it lingers. Whatever our pain—illness, guilt, injustice, grief, loss, fear, hunger, helplessness, shame, poverty, or others—in every case, our ability to experience joy is dulled. God does not will our suffering, but God is with us through our suffering, giving moments of joy. Individual and communal witness give hope and joy.

## THE BIBLE STORY

In the story of ten people who were healed by Jesus, all may have been happy to have been healed, but the Bible tells us that only one expressed this joy, praising God and returning to Jesus to give thanks. It is noted that this person was a Samaritan, which meant that their joy moved them to cross social practices and cultural barriers to approach and engage Jesus in a more personal way. The person experienced God's mercy and compassion by being heard and being healed. They felt and expressed their joy in this miracle.

## CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children will equate joy with thanksgiving when talking about responding to the blessings given by God. Thanksgiving and praise are outward expressions of internal joy. Children live very much in the present and may find it difficult to imagine a better future when experiencing trouble. Recognizing joy in thanksgiving for blessings is a good place to start.

## SESSION PREPARATION

- “Stone Soup” (p. 24): Obtain *Stone Soup* by Jon J. Muth or use the YouTube video “Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth: Children's Books Read Aloud on Once upon a Story” ([bit.ly/FMStoneSoup](https://bit.ly/FMStoneSoup), 7:43).

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Clouds, Rainbows, and Silver Linings” (p. 26): If the children in your group are not proficient with scissors, cut out a set of shapes on card-stock copies of Resource Page 2 for each child.



## GETTING STARTED

Recognizing what we are thankful for—seeing signs of God’s presence around us—prepares our hearts to be all the more grateful when we are given unexpected gifts of mercy. In painful and difficult times, we can still find joy. We just need to look for it.

- Play dough
- Crayons and paper
- Paper with the question “What are you thankful for this week?”

- Internet-connected device (optional)
- Sculptures and pictures from “Sculpting and Drawing” (above)



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](https://bit.ly/FMRejoiceSong), 0:38).

- Stone Soup* by Jon J. Muth (Scholastic, 2010) or another version of this familiar folk tale
- Internet-connected device



There are a number of different book and video versions of the story about stone soup, even ones called *Cactus Soup* and *Quill Soup*. One recommendation is provided, but you may use any version of the folktale you like.

## SCULPTING AND DRAWING



Set up two areas, one with play dough and one with paper and crayons. Display the question “What are you thankful for this week?” so you can point to it as children enter.

Welcome the children as they arrive and direct their attention to the question. Ask each child the question and then invite them to choose sculpting with play dough or drawing a picture to show what they are thankful for this week. Set aside for “Rejoicing in the Lord” (below).

## 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*)

Ask each child what they are thankful for this week and have them show their sculpture or drawing. Invite the group to sing the song after each response.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

God’s joy of life can be hidden in things, people, and events. If we let go of the things that limit us, we are freed to experience God’s joy.

## STONE SOUP



The legend about stone soup has been told and retold in many ways. But in every telling, its core theme is that good comes out of difficult times. Read *Stone Soup* by Jon J. Muth or show the YouTube video “Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth: Children’s Books Read Aloud on Once upon a Story” ([bit.ly/FMStoneSoup](https://bit.ly/FMStoneSoup), 7:43). Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ➔ What difficult times were the people experiencing?
- ➔ How do you think they were feeling?
- ➔ Even though those were bad times, what good things did they have?
- ➔ How do you think the people felt at the end of the story?
- ➔ What did the people have to let go of in order to find joy?
- ➔ When was joy found?
- ➔ What do you think made them feel that way?
- ➔ How do you think life changed in the village?



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### MERCY AND JOY

AM

☐ Resource Page 1

Place chairs in a circle and invite the children to sit on the chairs with their feet touching the floor. Explain that they are going to help tell the story today and will need to use their hands, feet, and voices. Read the story on Resource Page 1 from Luke 17:11–16, prompting the children to do the actions indicated in the parentheses. At the end of the story, remain kneeling or with head bowed and offer a prayer:

Dear God, thank you for seeing us and hearing us when we cry out to you when we are hurt or scared. Thank you for the joy of your presence. Thank you for the joy of being thankful. Amen.

If there is interest, read the story a second time.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

### JOYS AND CONCERNS

C QC

Gather in a circle. Tell the children that people all around them—in their families, in their neighborhoods, in our country, and around the world—have times of struggle and troubles as well as times of joy and celebration. Explain that many worship services include a time of prayer in which people share their joys and concerns. Tell the children that they can share their joys and concerns with the community as well. If your congregation has this practice in worship, encourage the children to participate in it.

Explain that prayer time does not always have to be quiet or with eyes closed. Sometimes it can be talking to God together. Have a time of prayer, inviting the children to practice sharing something that is a trouble or concern and something that is a joy. Give the children a few minutes to think about what concerns they have for themselves or someone else. Then have them think about where God's blessings are that bring joy to themselves or others. Tell the children you will pray, just like you are talking with one another and God together.

Pray the following prayer or one of your own choosing:

God, we are all here, and we are thankful that you are with us today.

Hear the concerns we have for ourselves or for others. (*Invite the children to take turns sharing a concern. After each child shares, have the group say: **Hear our prayer.***)

Thank you for hearing our prayers.

God, many things bring joy to us and to others. (*Invite the children to take turns sharing a joy. After each child shares, have the group say: **Praise God!***)

And all God's children say, "**Amen!**"

- Card-stock copies of Resource Page 2, or sets of cutout shapes
- Scissors
- Crayons, markers
- Silver glitter glue
- Single-hole punch
- Yarn or ribbon
- Hangers

## CLOUDS, RAINBOWS, AND SILVER LININGS A

Tell the children that there is a saying that is used to show the positive side of a situation or where joy may be found in the midst of troubles: “Every cloud has a silver lining.” Wonder together what that saying means. Comment that clouds often glow when the sun shines around them.

Invite the children to make a mobile to remind them of God’s love, promises, and joy that may be found in the midst of troubles. Give the children a card-stock copy of Resource 2 or the set of shapes you have cut out for them. Read what is on each shape. Have the children color the clouds, sun, and rainbow. Show the children how to outline the clouds with silver glitter glue.

Help the children punch a hole in the top of each shape, thread a piece of yarn or ribbon through the hole, and tie a knot by the hole. Provide a hanger for each child and help them tie their shapes onto the hanger. Encourage the children to hang their mobile at home where they can be reminded of God’s love, promises, and joy in the midst of troubles.



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

- Smiles/frowns cut from copies of Resource Page 3
- Paper plates
- Crayons
- Brass fasteners
- Large googly eyes (optional)
- Large craft sticks
- Double-sided tape

## TURN THAT FROWN UPSIDE DOWN A

Tell the children that sometimes it is difficult to find joy in the midst of difficult times, but remembering that God is always with us can bring us joy and turn our frown upside down! Invite the children to make a paper plate face that will be able to turn frowns upside down into smiles.

Give each child a paper plate and invite them to draw and color their face—except for a mouth—on the center of the concave side of the plate. Encourage them to add hair on the top and sides of the face, if appropriate. Give the children the smiles/frowns cut from copies of Resource Page 3 and have them color the mouths. Push a brass fastener through the plate at the space for the mouth and attach the mouth facing down in a frown. If you have googly eyes, help the children glue them on the eyes on their plates. Attach a large craft stick as a handle to the back of the plate with double-sided tape.

Wonder together what might be things that would make the children have a face with a frown. Invite the children to hold their paper plate faces with frowns in front of their faces. Then ask the children what might turn that frown upside down and bring them joy in that circumstance. Have the children turn the frowns upside down into smiles. Repeat several times.

## GIVING THANKS FOR GOD’S BLESSINGS G

Tell the children that one way to find joy in the midst of difficulties is to remember the many blessings of God, the things that we are grateful for in our lives. Invite the children to sit in a circle and play a game like “I’m going to Grandma’s house, and I’m bringing (*something that starts with the first letter of my first name*).” Have the children think of something that they are grateful for or that brings them joy that starts with the first letter of their first name. Have the child on your right begin by saying, “I am grateful for . . .” and what they have chosen. For example, George might say, “I am grateful for games with my friends.” Have the child to their right repeat what the first

child said (name and item) and add their own. For example, Hannah might say, “George is grateful for games with friends, and I am grateful for hugs.” Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance to play. As a group, provide help in remembering each child’s item, if necessary. For a challenge, play the game again using the first letter of each child’s last name.



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### JOYFUL RESPONSE PRAYER AND MARCH

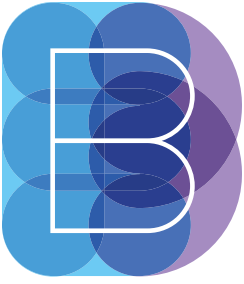


As the group readies to leave and follow Jesus daily, offer a prayer and time of joyful response. Invite the children to name something they are thankful for this week. Write their responses on newsprint. Practice the response with the children: “This brings joy to our lives.” Pray the following prayer, prompting the children to respond after each item from the list you mention.

Dear God, thank you for (*item from list*).  
This brings joy to our lives.  
Amen.

Provide children with scarves or ribbons. Invite them to march, waving the scarves or ribbons as they listen to “The Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart” (or “Joy to the World” during the Advent/Christmas season). Play music or show the YouTube videos “The Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart! (Kids Praise and Worship)” ([bit.ly/FMJoyJoyJoy](https://bit.ly/FMJoyJoyJoy), 1:59) or “Joy to the World with Lyrics—Christmas Carol & Song” ([bit.ly/FMJoyWorld](https://bit.ly/FMJoyWorld), 2:09).

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- Newsprint and marker
  - Scarves or ribbons
  - Music for “The Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart” (or “Joy to the World” during the Advent/Christmas season) and music player or internet-connected device



## BIBLE STORY

### BASED ON LUKE 17:11–16

Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem, walking along the road between Samaria and Galilee. (*move feet to walk while seated*)

He came to a village and met ten people. (*count to ten*)

These people had a serious and contagious skin disease. (*pretend to scratch arms*)

They kept at a social distance and shouted, “Jesus, have mercy on us!” (*shout “Jesus have mercy on us!”*)

Jesus responded to them, “Go and let the priests look at you.” (*stretch out arm, pointing*)

So the ten people walked on. (*move feet to walk while seated*)

One of them stopped, realizing that they had been healed. (*make a surprised face*)

That one person went back to Jesus. (*hold up one finger*)

The person was so joyful that they shouted, “Praise God!” (*shout “Praise God!”*)

The person was so joyful that they fell down on the ground and thanked Jesus. (*kneel on the floor, or bow head, and say, “Thank you, Jesus!”*)

