

# 3

## Share Others' Joy

LUKE 15:4-32



### GOAL

Through role play and stories from Luke 15, children expand their understanding of joy from personal feelings of happiness to a wider emotion of appreciation and thankfulness for the good things that a community experiences.

- 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

Loving God, with your Son, Jesus, as an example, may I show compassion and model joy in my leadership this day and each day. Amen.

### THIS SESSION

This session's focus is on rejoicing in the joy of others. Children will understand this emotion, but will likely also have experiences of feeling jealousy or even exclusion in witnessing the joy of others. Learning about the compassion and empathy that Jesus modeled and taught is an important part of the life of faith, and so this session invites the children to explore the many feelings around celebrating the joy of others.

### THE BIBLE STORY

In three parables of "lost things" in Luke 15, there are both simple and complex emotions related to finding an item, an animal, and a person that was lost. While the first two stories are fairly straightforward, the third story of the prodigal son asks the listener to take a bigger leap of faith. While it may be easy to feel joy for the shepherd with a retrieved sheep or the woman with a recovered coin, forgiving the reckless son/brother requires a bigger emotional stretch.

### CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

From watching a friend receive wonderful presents at a birthday party to the act of sharing joys and concerns in church, children are acquainted with the practice of rejoicing on behalf of others. It is a step toward maturity to be able to express this joy without being overcome with jealousy, and it is that compassion that this session seeks to cultivate. This may be especially difficult for the concrete-thinking child with a strong sense of fairness.

### SESSION PREPARATION

- "Searching for Lost Things" (p. 30): Hide a nickel and a small sheep figurine or picture in the meeting space.
  - Depending on the options you choose:
- "Story Sort" (p. 31): Write the following words/numbers on nine pieces of card stock, one word/number per piece of card stock: 100, sheep, wilderness, 10, coin, house, 2, son, far-off country. Write the following words, in a different color than the previous nine words, on three pieces of card stock, one word per piece of card stock: LOST, FOUND, REJOICE.
- "Sharing Joys" (p. 33): Gather information (including names and addresses) about joys in your congregation, such as celebrations, births, baptisms, birthdays, graduations, accomplishments, anniversaries, and so forth. Check your church newsletter and talk with your pastor for some suggestions.



## GETTING STARTED

- Small sheep figurine or picture
- A nickel

### SEARCHING FOR LOST THINGS

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Tell the children as they arrive that they need to silently search for two hidden items in the room: a small sheep figurine or picture and a nickel. If they find one, they should hide it in their hand or a pocket and not tell anyone until the leader asks. Emphasize to the children that this is a silent activity.

When both objects have been found, have the children who found the sheep and coin give them to you. Don't make any announcements about the found objects yet.

- Internet-connected device (optional)

### REJOICING IN THE LORD

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Sing together "Rejoice in the Lord Always."

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

Rejoice! Rejoice! Again, I say, "Rejoice!" (*repeat*)

Invite the children to watch, sing, and dance along to the YouTube video "Rejoice in the lord always and again I say rejoice—BF KIDS—Bible songs kids—Action bible songs" ([bit.ly/FMRejoiceDance](https://bit.ly/FMRejoiceDance), 1:07). This video provides the basic song, but also a simple dance. At :37, the video shows the children singing and dancing in a round. You may need to practice the dance steps a few times before adding in singing in a round.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

### JOY AT WHAT'S BEEN FOUND

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Place two chairs facing the rest of the group. Announce the two children who found the sheep and coin, congratulate them, and invite them to sit in the two special chairs. Have the group share their joy at finding the items, leading the group in a "hip, hip, hooray!" cheer or a similar celebration.

Ask the two children who found the items:

- ✿ How did it feel to find the item?
- ✿ How did it feel when everyone cheered for you?

Ask the rest of the children the following questions, inviting them to use their hands to show on a scale of 1–10, with 1 being the least, and 10 being the most:

- ✿ How happy do you feel for the two children who found the items?
- ✿ Do you wish you had found one of the items?
- ✿ If I had given the two finders a prize or reward, how happy would you feel for the people who found the items?
- ✿ If I had given the two finders a prize or reward, how jealous would you feel of the people who found the items?

Engage the whole group in conversation using the following questions:

- How easy is it to be happy for other people when they are feeling joy?
- When have you experienced a time when it was really easy to feel happy for someone who was experiencing joy?
- When have you experienced a time when it was harder to feel happy for someone who was experiencing joy?

Tell the children that today's session will be all about finding joy in others' joy and blessings. Acknowledge that sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is hard, but when we can share others' joy, we can have joy too.

## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### HEARING THE STORY

Take turns reading the story from the Bible or a children's story Bible, making sure to cover each of the three parables: lost sheep (Luke 15:4–7), lost coin (Luke 15:8–10), and prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). Then choose one or both of the options below to explore the story.

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- Bibles or children's story Bible with the three parables from Luke 15:4–32

### GRAPHIC PARABLES

In the style of a graphic novel or comic, encourage the children, on their own or in pairs, to depict a portion of the three parables from Luke 15 in comic format. Use the following divisions of the story:

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- Large, light-colored construction paper or newsprint
  - Colored pencils, crayons, or markers
  - Bibles

- 1) Sheep—Luke 15:4–7
- 2) Coin—Luke 15:8–10
- 3) Son, part 1—Luke 15:11–16
- 4) Son, part 2—Luke 15:17–24
- 5) Son, part 3—Luke 15:24–32

It is all right if more than one person or pair depict the same part of the story. Provide large, light-colored construction paper or newsprint and drawing materials. Suggest that the children draw four large squares, like comic book panels, on their paper to show the progression of their part of the stories. Comment that they don't have to show every detail, just the movement of their part of the story. Encourage the children drawing pictures for parts 1, 2, and 5 to emphasize the celebration and joy, or lack of it in the case of the older brother, and the end of their stories.

### STORY SORT

Play a game to sort the stories of the three parables from Luke 15:4–32. Form three teams, using all participants (include adult helpers if needed to make three teams). Assign each team one of the three parables: Sheep, Coin, Son. Explain that the goal of the game is to be the first team to have the three story cards that go with your story and any one of the wild cards. Tell the group that there are twelve game cards, three cards that go with each story and three wild cards that can go with any of the stories.

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- Prepared card-stock story cards:
    - Nine story cards: 100, sheep, wilderness, 10, coin, house, 2, son, far-off country
    - Three wild cards: LOST, FOUND, REJOICE

Have the teams line up on one side of the space. Shuffle the game cards and place them face down on the floor in front of the three teams. Think of a number, 1–100, and have each team take a guess. The team with the closest

number goes first. Have one player from that team draw the top card from the stack and follow these directions:

- If the card chosen is from their story, they may keep it and place it, face up, in front of their team.
- If the card is from another group's story, they must put it back at the bottom of the stack.
- If it is a wild card (different color—LOST, FOUND, or REJOICE), they may use it to fill their one wild slot. If their wild slot is filled, they must put the card back at the bottom of the stack.

Continue play, alternating between teams, with a different player each turn choosing a card, until one team wins by completing their board and shouting out what is written on their three story cards and one wild card. Play again, as desired, with the same teams or mixing up teams for a challenge.



## FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Newsprint
- Marker

### SCHADENFREUDE AND MUDITA

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Explain to the children that other languages or cultures sometimes have single words with very specific meanings. Tell the children that they will learn two words associated with joy that come from different cultures that have quite specific, and opposite, meanings.

Write the word *schadenfreude* (SHAH-den-froyd) on a piece of newsprint and tell the children that it is a German word for the feeling of joy at the misfortune of others. Practice saying the word with the children. Wonder together what might be instances of *schadenfreude*. Then write the word *mudita* (mu-DEE-tah) on the newsprint and tell the children that it is a Sanskrit word for the experience of joy at the joy of others. Practice saying the word with the children.

Invite the children to think about movies or books they have read or seen that have themes of either *schadenfreude* or *mudita* in them, or, if they wish, to share their own experiences of these emotions. Some examples of *schadenfreude* may be when an opposing sports team loses their best player or when a celebrity fails at something. Gloating is an example of *schadenfreude* as well. Some examples of *mudita* may be the joy one feels at a wedding for the happy couple or seeing a baby laugh.

Use the following questions or ones that arise naturally in your discussion:

- ✿ Does seeing someone else experience joy make it easier or harder to feel happy? Why?
- ✿ Have you ever felt bad sharing your own joy with someone else because you felt worried that they would be envious or feel badly?
- ✿ Does something very good happening to one person in a friendship affect that friendship? How?

## SHARING JOYS

Talk together about joys that are happening in your congregation or in the lives of people the children know. Invite the children to create notes of congratulations to give or send to the people you have named. Provide blank notecards or paper to fold into cards, envelopes, and drawing supplies. Brainstorm possible pictures or phrases the children may want to use and write them on newsprint. Encourage children to assist those who need help writing. Help the children address envelopes. Encourage the children to deliver their cards to the people they can. Stamp and mail cards as necessary.

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- Gathered information about joys in your congregation
- Blank notecards or paper
- Envelopes
- Stamps (optional)
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Newsprint



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

### CHOOSE JOY!

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Using the idea starters found on Resource Page 1, encourage the children to imagine the different responses that they could have—both joyful and envious—for the situations named. Form small groups, giving each a card from Resource Page 1. Invite the groups to create a brief skit of the situation listed on the card with two endings: one where the joy of the person is shared, and one where it is not.

As each group presents their situations, discuss the two different endings. Once all have shared, consider the questions below together:

- ✦ Was it easier to come up with an ending with shared joy or with envy?
- ✦ Why might one have been easier than the other?
- ✦ How can one person's joy rub off on others to multiply the joy in these situations?

- Cards cut apart from Resource Page 1

### IT'S ALL ABOUT GRACE

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Ask the children what they think about when they hear the word *grace*. Some answers may include: a girl's name, elegance, or prayer before meals. Talk together about the meaning of *grace* that we learn about in the Bible. Tell the children that grace is a gift from God. It is the unearned, abundant love of God, no matter what. Comment that "no matter what" means that God's gift of grace is forgiving; so even when we miss the mark, we are still loved.

Recall the parable of the prodigal son and the joy that the father felt when, even after making mistakes, his child came back home. Suggest that God's grace is this joy God feels for each one of us. When we have joy at the goodness in others' lives, we are showing the kind of love and grace that God has for us.

Provide paper, pencils, and drawing materials. Have the children write the letters *G*, *R*, *A*, *C*, and *E* vertically down the left side of their paper and create an acrostic poem from the word *GRACE*, using the ideas you have discussed together. Explain that they can write a word or phrase that begins with each letter. If necessary, brainstorm some words and phrases together or write an acrostic poem as a group, using one or more suggestions for each letter.

- Paper, pencils
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils



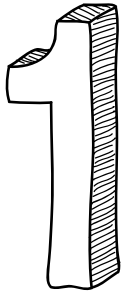
## FOLLOWING JESUS



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.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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, children are invited to say a name of someone with whom they rejoice. The second time around, they are invited to say the name of someone or something that brings them joy. When all who would like to have shared, close by saying “Amen” together.



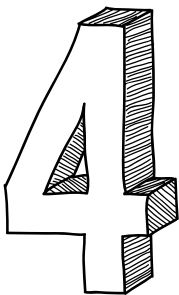
For fire-safety month, the local fire department was holding a poster contest for the whole district, with a prize for the best poster. Ms. Ortega’s class was given a class assignment to create an entry into the poster contest. Everyone in the whole school was hoping to win, but when Ms. Ortega announced that the winner was in her class—everyone got more excited. Create a skit showing Ms. Ortega announcing the name of the winner and different reactions to the news.



Maggie and Tamara were best friends and next-door neighbors. Tamara stood by Maggie when her parents got divorced and when her dog got hit by a car last month. Create a skit showing Maggie’s reaction when Tamara tells Maggie that her grandparents just announced that they were going to take Tamara and all of her cousins on a two-week trip to Hawaii this summer.



Ryan sat in the auditorium at the 5th-grade moving-up ceremony. Ryan was quiet, a hard-working student, so he wasn’t surprised that he didn’t get noticed for many of the awards. As the afternoon went on, though, he saw so many of his friends get called up for “most improved” or “best” awards. Ryan had mixed feelings as the assembly ended with three of his best friends having ribbons and plaques in their arms, while he just had his “certificate of completion” in his hand. Create a skit showing Ryan greeting his friends in the hall.



Nyla and Marco have a big sister, Kat. Kat has done gymnastics for as long as either Nyla and Marco could remember, and yesterday, she won the state championship competition. Her picture was on the front of the sports page of the local newspaper, and even though Kat is only 14 years old, they overheard their parents saying that there were some people from colleges at the competition, and that Kat would likely be offered a scholarship. Create a skit of a conversation between Nyla and Marco as they discuss their sister’s accomplishments.

