

GOD MADE ME TO HAVE JOY

3-4

BIBLE VERSES: Matthew 13:44-46, Acts 16:16-40, Philippians 4:4-7.

In this session we'll look at how we can be joyful.

LEADER'S NOTES

I feel like God has been teaching me a lot about joy this year... but I'm not remotely sure how to crystallise it just here! Maybe the bottom line is that it's so easy not to have joy. A well-known Christian speaker spoke at an event I was at a few months ago. He was extremely provocative - some might say almost rude - about the state of the church in the west. He put it down to the fact that we have no joy. I wonder if he might be right. If you ask a non-Christian to describe Christians, I'm fairly sure that joy wouldn't feature highly on their list of characteristics! Yet we have more reason than anyone to be joyful: our eternal destiny is secure and we live within the love of an all-powerful God. How can you display joy this week?

Welcome Activities: If this session is being run as a 'Sunday School' session then the idea is that all 3 activities are provided, allowing the children choice. If it is being run as part of a Toddler Group then these activities can be provided as part of the all the other activities on offer. If it is part of a short Toddler and Parent worship session (e.g. Pram Service) then it may only be practical to offer one of the activities.

Story Time: Choose whichever Story Time activity best suits your circumstances. It would be best to use the same area and seating arrangement each time. Probably helpful if it's separate from other distractions. Perhaps with a special chair for the story teller to sit on.

There are two stories and one more active activity this week.

Get Creative: A choice of 3 activities reflecting the Bible Story in some way. If you have lots of time and space then you could offer all 3, but just to offer 1 is fine. Children of this age are exploring their own ideas and ways of creating so may go off on their own tangent e.g. if you ask them to make a sheep they may well turn it into something else – don't be anxious about this – 3 year olds especially are much more interested in the 'doing' than the finished product.

The fourth Get Creative Activity will be a suggestion for a creative prayer activity. This is specifically for any parents/carers who are staying with their children. If you are in a Sunday School setting where no parents stay then you would not need to organise this activity.

Revisiting The Story: Similar to the three welcome activities and may well include some of those. An opportunity for the children to revisit and retell the story themselves using small world figures, dressing up etc. The idea would be that if you chose a making activity in the Get Creative section then the children could move on to the Revisiting The Story activities when they've finished – there is no need for the whole group to finish together.

The fourth activity “Time To Go Home” in this section suggests a take home activity and also a short prayer or song which you can use if you want to round up the sessions with all the children together again. If you want to you could adopt your own special good bye song. In other circumstances it may be better to have an informal ending with parents collecting children as the children are continuing to play.

A JOYFUL NOISE!

MUSIC |  **WELCOME ACTIVITY**

Let the children explore and enjoy the musical instruments.

The Point: A welcome activity.

EQUIPMENT

Any musical instruments - percussion may be easiest.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

SMALL WORLD

ACTIVITY |  **WELCOME ACTIVITY**

Let the children play small world.

The Point: A welcome activity.

EQUIPMENT

Small world toys, including people.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

WATER PLAY

ACTIVITY |  **WELCOME ACTIVITY**

Let the children enjoy pouring and filling.

The Point: A welcome activity.

EQUIPMENT

Water table, things that can pour or be filled.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE

STORY | STORY TIME

Before the session, use a craft knife to cut a window with bars in one side of the cardboard box. Make sure the open side of the box is on the floor.

Say to the children that today's story is about two men called Paul and Silas. Pick two children to be Paul and Silas. Say that Paul and Silas were God's friends and their job was to tell people about how amazing God is. Ask your volunteers to tell everyone something about God.

Say that lots of people liked what Paul and Silas had to say but some people really didn't. Those people managed to get Paul and Silas thrown into jail. Sit your two actors down and put the box over them. You should be able to see them through the window you have cut. Oh dear! Paul and Silas were in jail. How do you think they must have felt? The children will probably say sad or scared or cross.

Say that Paul and Silas weren't these things at all; they knew that God would look after them so they decided to sing some songs praising God. See if the children can suggest or sing some suitable songs. They sang late into the night. At about midnight, they were still singing when suddenly there was an earthquake. Get all the children to shake as if there was an earthquake.

An amazing thing happened - all the doors of the prison broke open and Paul and Silas were free! Let your volunteers out of the box. The person in charge of the prison was amazed at how powerful God was and he asked Paul and Silas how he could get to know him. The jailer was a very happy man!

Say that this story shows us that we can still be joyful and trust that God will look after us even if not so good things are happening. Ask the children to show you their most joyful faces.

The Point: To show how we can be joyful always.

EQUIPMENT

A very large cardboard box - big enough for two children to sit in.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

THE MOST JOY

STORY | STORY TIME

Ask the children what would make them really happy or joyful. They will probably come up with a whole load of 'stuff' that they want. Say that the Bible has some things to say about where we get our joy from. Say that God isn't against us having nice things and enjoying them but there's something that is more important and that will bring them more joy.

Read the story of The Precious Pearl making sure that you show the pictures. Ask the children to look at the last picture - how does the merchant look? He looks really joyful! Why is he joyful? He has got the pearl - and only the pearl. What does the story say that the pearl is like? It's like knowing God. If we know God then we can know what real joy is like - even if we don't have anything else.

The Point: To think about what true joy is.

EQUIPMENT

"Stories Jesus Told" by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen (Zonderkidz) - either the collection or the single story of The Precious Pearl.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

CROSS THE ROOM AS IF

ACTIVITY | STORY TIME

Sit the children at one end of the room. Say that you're going to ask them to cross to the other end in particular ways. You might have to give them some ideas but after a few goes they should get it. Get them to go across as if they are:

- In a big strop
- Very excited
- Tired
- Sad
- Very happy

Ask if the children know any other words for being happy. Ask them if they have heard the word joy. Say that joy can make us look happy on the outside but more important than that, it makes us smile on the inside. Say that God wants to give us great joy and make our hearts smile.

Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine how it feels to have joy right inside of them. Ask them to explain if they can. Ask them to close their eyes again. Pray that God would fill every one of them up with joy.

The Point: To think about joy.

EQUIPMENT

None.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

MORE JOYFUL NOISE

CRAFT IDEAS |  **WATCHER** |  **GET CREATIVE**

 [Download activity worksheet](#)

Give everyone a bottle and let them half fill it with pasta, beads and sequins. Have an adult put some strong glue on the inside of the lid and then screw it on tight. Give everyone a strip of paper saying 'Make a joyful noise' and let them colour it and then stick it onto the outside of the bottle. If you can print the attachment onto sticker paper this will be very simple indeed.

The Point: To make shakers to express joy!

EQUIPMENT

Plastic bottles - 330ml-500ml sort of size, coloured beads, sequins, pasta, strong glue, attachment, coloured pens and pencils.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

DANCE!

MUSIC |  **GET CREATIVE**

Let the children have a good dance to express their joy!

The Point: To express joy.

EQUIPMENT

Songs about joy (I like Joyful, Joyful from the IHOP album 'Joy') and the means to play them.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

JOY LEAVES

DISPLAY PICTURE | 🖐️ **GET CREATIVE**

Let the children cut out a leaf and help them to write joy on them - or get the adults to. Add them to your tree display.

The Point: To build a series reminder.

EQUIPMENT

Paper in leaf colours, scissors, pens.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

JOYFUL FIREWORKS!

FOOD AND COOKING | 🖐️ **GET CREATIVE**

Make up some water icing with the icing sugar and black food colouring. Let the children spread their fairy cake with the icing and then sprinkle on the sprinkles/glimmer sugar to look like fireworks. Enjoy the snack together.

The Point: A joyful eating experience.

EQUIPMENT

Fairy cakes, icing sugar, black food colouring, sprinkles, glimmer sugar, spoons, spreading knives.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

BE JOYFUL ALWAYS

WORSHIP AND REFLECTION | 📖 **WATCHER** | 🖐️ **GET CREATIVE**

🔗 [Download activity worksheet](#)

Provide adults with the time and space to do the attached reflection sheet.

The Point: To respond to God.

EQUIPMENT

The attachment, pens.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

JOYFUL NOISE

MUSIC | ↺ REVISITING THE STORY

Let the children make a joyful noise. If you made the shakers, they can use these too.

The Point: To make a joyful noise!

EQUIPMENT

Instruments, recorded music.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

SMALL WORLD

ACTIVITY | ↺ REVISITING THE STORY

Let the children revisit the small world toys - they might act out one of today's stories.

The Point: To revisit the story.

EQUIPMENT

Small world toys.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

WATER PLAY

ACTIVITY | ↺ REVISITING THE STORY

Let the children play with the water again - you might suggest that they think about filling things up with joy - especially if you did the third story activity.

The Point: To revisit the teaching.

EQUIPMENT

Water table, things to pour with and be filled.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

JOY LEAF

CRAFT IDEAS |  **WATCHER** |  **TIME TO GO HOME**

 [Download activity worksheet](#)

This activity adds to those in previous weeks. Have the sheet with the instructions for making the tree available for those who missed the first session. Give everyone a joy leaf to take home, cut out and colour and put on their tree.

The Point: A take home activity.

EQUIPMENT

The attachment - one leaf per child.

DURATION: 10 MINS.
