

BIBLE VERSES: Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 4, 98, Romans 5:13, Galatians 5:22-23, Hebrews 1:8, 1 Peter 1:8.

In this session, we'll think about what joy is and where it comes from.

LEADER'S NOTES

One of my favourite songs at the moment is a new version of the old hymn, 'Joyful, Joyful'. The verses of the hymn remain but a chorus and other extra bits have been added:

*We sing in jubilation adoration to our joyful King.
You are singing, you are singing zealous love over all your children.
I got the joy, I got the joy, I got the joy!*

*In your presence, O God there is fullness of joy.
At your right hand, O God, there are pleasures evermore.*

(You can hear this song on the album 'Joy' from the IHOPU student Awakening.)

Lots of people in our church *really* hate this song... Especially the line "I got the joy". And I guess it's a really hard song to sing - if you don't have any joy! It makes me really sad that in our church we seem to be so lacking in joy. The Bible tells us that God is a joyful King and that in his presence we find fullness of joy (Psalm 16) so it seems to me that we are supposed to follow suit and be a joyful people! In fact the Bible is full of references to the fact that we are to be filled with joy - many of which are found in this session.

The people who like this song seem to be mostly children... that says something profound in itself I guess!

Joy isn't merely happiness - it's a deep contentment stemming from a trust in God that reassures us that ultimately everything will be ok - even when it's really, really not at the time. It's an ability to see beyond the immediate into the eternal. It's having eyes only for Jesus and being able to rest in God's presence whatever else we are doing.

The warm up activities in this plan are designed to produce fun and laughter so that you are entering into the teaching from a joyful place!

GREAT BLUE HERON

GAME | 📈 WARMING UP

If you have a large group, you may be better to split into smaller groups and provide a box for each group.

Sit the group in a circle and place the box in the middle with the top open. Each person must, in turn, go to the box, bend over and pick it up using only their mouth - the only bit of them that can touch the floor are their feet - no knees, hands or elbows! Anyone who fails is out.

When everyone has had a go, cut an inch or so off the top of the box all the way around and play again. Play until there is no box left or until the last person fails to pick it up.

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

Cereal box, scissors.

DURATION: 15 MINS.

ZIP, ZAP, BOING

GAME |  **WATCHER** |  **WARMING UP**

Stand the children in a circle. One person begins by looking at the person on their right and saying 'zip' the next person then says 'zip' and it continues round in a circle.

The next command is 'boing' (as in the sound a spring makes). This changes the direction of the 'zip' and so it continues back round in the opposite direction.

Finally, 'zap!' 'Zap' throws the 'zip' across the circle. The person who says 'zap' points to who they want to have the 'zip'. The receiver then looks in the direction they wish to continue play and the 'zip' moves on.

Once the children have got this, you can add in some more rules: maybe that you can't 'boing' a 'boing', you can't 'zap' a 'zap', you can't 'boing' a 'zap' or 'zap' a 'boing', you can only 'zip' a 'zap' and 'zip' a 'boing' etc!

This is a fantastically fun game once people have mastered it!

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

None.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

HOT POTATO PANTS

GAME | 📌 WARMING UP

First you load a plastic bag with all sorts of clothes - make them odd or funny - dressing up clothes, etc. Now in the form of hot potato you pass the bag around and when the music stops, the person with the bag pulls out an article of clothing and must wear it (over their own clothes)!

The game ends when all the clothes are gone. The winner is the person with the least clothes from the bag on.

You could take a funny photo when the game is over.

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

A plastic bag with various items of clothing in it, recorded music.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

MORE THAN ENOUGH JOY!

DISPLAY PICTURE | 📖 TEACHING TIME

Ask the children if they know what joy is. It's when you feel content or happy deep inside - whatever happens. Ask them what kind of things might give them joy. Say that you're going to look at a Psalm which tells us where we can get our joy from. Read the following version of Psalm 4 from The Message:

¹ When I call, give me answers. God, take my side! Once, in a tight place, you gave me room;
Now I'm in trouble again: grace me! Hear me!

² You rabble—how long do I put up with your scorn?
How long will you lust after lies?
How long will you live crazed by illusion?

³ Look at this: look
Who got picked by God!
He listens the split second I call to him.

⁴⁻⁵ Complain if you must, but don't lash out.
Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking.
Build your case before God and wait for his verdict.

⁶⁻⁷ Why is everyone hungry for more? "More, more," they say.
"More, more."
I have God's more-than-enough,

More joy in one ordinary day

7-8 Than they get in all their shopping sprees.
At day's end I'm ready for sound sleep,
For you, God, have put my life back together.

Explain any slightly tricky bits - particularly verse 2. (You might find it helpful to look at a few different versions of the Psalm before the session so that you are familiar with the message and some different ways it can be put.) Ask them where the Psalm says we get our joy from. It's from knowing God - nothing else.

Then divide the children into 2s or 3s and give them each a bit of the Psalm - just as it is broken up above is fine. Arrange the groups in order along the edge of the lining paper and ask them to express what their bit is saying in a creative way using the colouring materials provided. Feel free to add collage into the mix if you like. If you have lots of children, you might be able to have several different versions of the whole Psalm by setting them up at different rolls of lining paper.

Once the Psalm is finished, display it where everyone can see the whole thing. Ask the children if they think it is easy to just get our joy from knowing God.

The Point: To show that our joy comes from knowing God.

EQUIPMENT

Lining paper on a roll, colouring pens/pencils or paints, print out of the Psalm.

DURATION: 15 MINS.

THE PRECIOUS PEARL

STORY |  **WATCHER** |  **TEACHING 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.

Is this an easy thing to believe?

The Point: To show that knowing God is the ultimate joy-bringer.

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.

CLAP YOUR HANDS

CRAFT IDEAS |  **WATCHER** |  **TEACHING TIME**

Begin by reading Psalm 98 to the children from the Contemporary English Version. What is this Psalm all about? It's about being joyful and celebrating how good God is. Read the Psalm again and ask the children to listen carefully to some of the ideas.

Now set everyone up in their own space with a piece of heavy paper and pastels or oil pastels. Say that you're going to play a recording of some joyful music and that as they listen (without talking!) they can use the pastels to express the joyful sounds they hear - this might just be shape and colour or they might be reminded of some of the ideas from the Psalm. Play the [Holst piece](#) [link to YouTube] and let them create!

The Point: To take some time to give joy a creative form.

EQUIPMENT

Recording of 'Jupiter, Bringer of Jollity' from The Planets by Gustav Holst, nice heavyweight paper, pastels or oil pastels, Bible (CEV if possible).

DURATION: 15 MINS.

MAY THE GOD OF HOPE

MUSIC |  **WATCHER** |  **RESPONSE**

Play the song 'May The God Of Hope' by Doug Horley from the New Wine album Massive: Supersize Worship for Kids ([lyrics here](#), [YouTube video here](#)).

This can be either as a quiet reflection or as a song for the children to learn and sing.

The Point: To respond and pray in song.

EQUIPMENT

The song 'May the God of Hope' by Doug Horley and the means to play it.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

OIL OF JOY

WORSHIP AND REFLECTION | 🙏 RESPONSE

In small groups, look at Hebrews 1:9 together: You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.

Explain what justice means - it's fairness or people being treated how they deserve. Say that this verse is about Jesus. Ask the children what Jesus did to get the oil of joy poured out on him. Say that God wants us to have the oil of joy too. Say that the oil of joy is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit will help you to be joyful.

Let the children paint the word JOY on the back of their hand with the oil and the brush - you can scent to oil as they decide. They can paint their own or one another's, or you can paint them. Pray that God really would fill them with joy.

The Point: A response and prayer.

EQUIPMENT

Unscented massage oil and a couple of scented essential oils, fine paintbrush.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

STRONG JOY!

MEMORY VERSE | 🙏 RESPONSE

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10

Explain his verse to the children: if you have God's joy inside of you, you will be able to be strong even when bad stuff happens. Show the children how to do press ups and sit ups. Ask them to do 5 press ups then say the verse. Now do 5 sit ups and say the verse. Keep going and let the children stop when they are too tired to do any more. See who can last longest!

The Point: To learn scripture.

EQUIPMENT

None.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

FULL OF JOY

CRAFT IDEAS |  WATCHER |  TAKE AWAY

[Download activity worksheet](#)

This activity will work well with the following Teaching Time activities: all.

This activity is based on 1 Peter 1:8: Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Explain what inexpressible and glorious mean and then ask the children why this verse says we are filled with joy. Say that just knowing God fills us with joy - it's something that the Holy Spirit makes happen in us.

Give everyone a printed sheet and let them fill up the man shape with the word JOY in lots of different colours and sizes. As they work, get them to talk about how they would act if they were full of joy.

The Point: To think about being full of joy.

EQUIPMENT

The attached sheet, coloured pens or pencils.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

EXPLOSIONS OF JOY

CRAFT IDEAS |  WATCHER |  TAKE AWAY

[Download activity worksheet](#)

This activity will work well with the following Teaching Time activities: all.

Show the children how to create fireworks on their back paper by drawing lines and firework type patterns with a glue stick and then sprinkling glitter over. To use the glitter most effectively, have them shake off the excess onto a tray or something similar so that it can be re-used. Once done, leave to dry whilst you do another activity.

Once dry, help the children to cut the letters JOY out of the firework picture. You can use the attached template to make the letters nice and big and regular. The easiest way to do this is to draw round them in pencil on the back of the fireworks picture. Remember to put the J back-to-front when you do this to end up with it the right way round on the fireworks side.

You can mount the letters on a contrasting colour of paper or hang them like a mobile.

The Point: A teaching reminder.

EQUIPMENT

Black paper, glues sticks, glitter in several colours, pencils, scissors. Optional: template provided.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

FRUITY!

FOOD AND COOKING | 🍷 **TAKE AWAY**

This activity will work well with the following Teaching Time activities: all.

Ask the children what fruit you grow if you plant an apple seed? What about a cherry pip? Say that the Bible tells us God wants to grow some things in us - it calls that fruit as well. Read Galatians 5:22-23 to the children: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Ask the children if they recognise part of the fruit from what you've been talking about today? Joy!

Let the children model any kind of fruit they like out of marzipan or fondant icing. Make the fruits small enough for each one to fit in a petit fours case. If you like, the children can add colour and detail to their fruit with food colouring diluted in a small amount of water (to make it less intense). The amount of water will vary depending on the type of dye used, so experiment beforehand.

The Point: A tasty, take-home reminder.

EQUIPMENT

Marzipan (or fondant icing if there are nut allergies in your group), tiny size cake cases (petit fours).
Optional: food colouring and fine paint brushes.

DURATION: 20 MINS.
