

The Fruit of the Spirit is Joy

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Today we are going to learn more about the fruit of the Spirit called, “Joy.” What do you think of when you hear the word “joy”? A lot of times, we think of joy as the happy feeling you get when something nice happens to you—like when someone gives you ice cream for dessert or a new toy from the store or when Grandma comes to visit.

Although things can make us happy, what do you feel like when the ice cream is all eaten up or after the toy breaks or once Grandmas goes back home? It’s important to understand that joy is not just a feeling. Today we’re going to learn that true joy comes from something much more permanent. You can be happy sometimes, but you can be joyful all the time.

Opening Prayer

Father, teach us what true Joy is. Fill our hearts to overflowing with the knowledge of Your love for us and fill our hearts with joy from the inside out. We want that joy to spill out of our lives all over everyone else’s life so that they can know You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Memory Verse

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! (Philippians 4:4 NTL)

Lesson

Last week we learned that Love is not just a feeling, it’s an action word. We don’t just feel love towards others, but we show others our love for them by doing loving things. It’s a choice we make. And, if we truly have the fruit of the Spirit, we choose to love people with God’s kind of love, even when they don’t deserve it or even when it’s inconvenient to us. It’s not always easy to love people. Sometimes to love others the way God loves us, we have to “die to ourselves”, just

like Jesus died on the cross for us. We have to choose to give up our own selfish desires to be loving towards others. But we have the Holy Spirit to give us the power to do that.

This week we’re going to learn what true Joy is. Open you Bibles to Psalm 126:1-3 and read with me...

Psalm 126:1-3

*When the Lord brought back his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream!
(2) We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, “What amazing things the Lord has done for them.” (3) Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us! What joy!*

What gave these people joy? Remembering the amazing things the Lord had done for them! Sometimes we think that the word *joy* means the same thing as the word *happy*. Lots of things make us happy. But if something changes, as when our favorite toy breaks, then we may not be happy any longer. We can be really happy when Grandma comes to visit us, but it makes us sad for her to leave.

Joy means more than just being happy. The Bible tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Joy is an attitude. Our hearts should fill with joy knowing that Jesus has made it possible for us to live forever with Him in heaven. If you truly believe that what Jesus did for you on the cross, paid the penalty for your sins, then nothing in the world should ever get you down.

How does it make you feel to know that you will live with Jesus in Heaven forever? Knowing Jesus gives us true joy. You may still be sad at times, but that can’t take away the joy you have in knowing Jesus.

We can have joy during good times and during the sad times, or when things are difficult, or even scary. We can be joyful because God has done so many wonderful things for us, just like the exiles were filled with joy in just remembering the amazing things the Lord had done!

What good things has God done for you? [Let the children respond.] God does so many wonderful, great things for us! If we start to remember all our blessings, and count them one-by-one, our hearts fill to overflowing with joy.

True joy comes from having Jesus in your life and knowing that you will live forever with Him in heaven.

Romans 15:13

*I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in Him. Then you will **overflow** with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13 NLT)*

What would happen if you left the water running in the bathtub and the plug was in? It would overflow, wouldn't it? This verse tells us that when you trust in what Jesus did for you on the cross, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, God fills your heart completely full with joy and peace. Let me show you an example:

[Teacher, as an active learning experience, setup a dishpan of water, a 2-cup measuring cup and some spoons. Have the children gather around and start filling the measuring cup until it overflows.]

What happened to the water when the measuring cup could no longer hold any more? It overflowed! If our hearts are full of joy and Jesus keeps blessing us with more joy, what do you think will happen? Can you tell me how you would feel if your heart were overflowing with joy? What would that look like? What do you do when you are filled with joy? I think there are at least three ways we show others that we are full of joy: laughter, singing, and dancing!

Let's all laugh together right now! [Teacher, allow the children to cut it up for a minute!] It's fun to laugh, isn't it? The Bible says that a cheerful heart is good medicine (Proverbs 17:22).

Now let's sing a song together that comes from Philippians 4:4

Sing: Rejoice in the Lord Always

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, "Rejoice!" (repeat)

Rejoice! Rejoice! And, again I say, "Rejoice!" (repeat)

God blesses us with so many wonderful things, and he fills our hearts with joy. Even when our hearts are full of joy, He just keeps on giving us good things. When you are happy and full of joy, how do you think that makes the people around you feel? Our joy spills out all over other people around us and makes them joyful, too. Joy is contagious!

The last two weeks we learned that when you accepted Jesus to become Lord of your life, God planted seeds in your heart that began to grow—of love, joy, peace, and so forth. The first of those seeds is *Love*. The second seed is **Joy**. Why does God give us these gifts? He wants us to show others what He is like.

When our hearts overflow with the joy Jesus gives us, other people will want to know what's going on. And, we'll be able to share with them the joy of knowing Jesus, the creator of the Universe.

When you accepted Jesus to become Lord of your life, He gave you the right to live forever with him in heaven. Doesn't that give you joy deep in your heart? That joy can be ours no matter what happens. Even when times are hard and you go through a trial or even if you're scared, the Holy Spirit can give you that joy that's deep in your soul.

Sing: I've Got Joy In My Heart

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, (where?)

Down in my heart, (where?), down in my heart!

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, (where?)

Down in my heart to stay.

I'm so happy, so very happy

I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

I'm so happy, so very happy

I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

There's another way that we show others that we are joyful. God's gift of joy helps us do something very important in *all* situations.

Ephesians 5:20

Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does this verse tell us to be thankful for? *Everything!* —Even the bad stuff that comes along into our lives. God gives us Joy so that we can have a thankful heart no matter what happens—in bad situations as well as the good ones. Being grateful to God grows that seed of joy in our lives!

When are there times it might be hard to be thankful? (When someone makes fun of you or when you feel scared.)

What are some things you could do to help yourself be thankful? (Pray to God. Remember all the good things God has given and done.)

God's gift of Joy causes our hearts to overflow with thankfulness to Him for all He has done for us! He wants us to be filled with so much joy, we can't help showing it to others!

God has given us wonderful gifts, hasn't He? Let's review the gifts of the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Let's close by reading this verse:

Psalms 111:1-4

Praise the LORD! I will thank the LORD with all my heart as I meet with his godly people. (2) How amazing are the deeds of the LORD! All who delight in him should ponder them. (3) Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty. His righteousness never fails. (4) He causes us to remember his wonderful works. How gracious and merciful is our LORD!

Closing Prayer

Father, remembering all the amazing things You have done for us gives us that joy down in our hearts. It's good to know that we belong to You. Help us to share that joy with everyone we meet so that they will come to know You as their Lord, too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Snack

Oranges. Bring in a juicer and let the kids make orange juice.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 says, "*Always be joyful.*" Can you say that with me? "*Always be joyful!*" Let's give thanks to the Lord for this yummy snack.

Craft Corner

Game Center

Praise Phrases

Materials: Index cards, markers, cardboard box, pencils

Procedure:

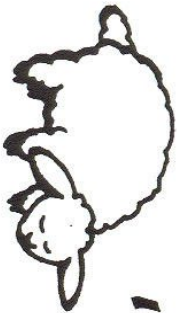
1. Brainstorm words to use in sentences giving praise to God, such as "I," "we," "give," "thanks," "for," "God," "love," "gifts," "help," "sing," "joy," "your," "Son," "Food," etc. [Teacher, have some of these cards already made.] As you brainstorm, write the suggestions on the white board.
2. Students print words on separate index cards, making a large number of cards.
3. Make a string or yarn circle about 4 feet around the cardboard

box. (You can split the kids into teams and have more than one box.)

4. Have students stand around the circle and throw cards into the box(es) for 30 seconds, re-throwing any cards that land outside the circle.
5. When 30 seconds have passed, call time.
6. Have students use the words that landed in the box in praise sentences.

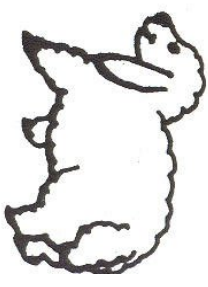
Or, use the following questions in a discussion or game of your choice:

1. When are there times it might be hard to be thankful? (When someone makes fun of you or when you feel scared.)
2. What are some things you could do to help yourself be thankful? (Pray to God. Remember all the good things God has given and done.)
3. What gave the Israelites the joy of the Lord? (Remembering the amazing things the Lord had done for them!)
4. What should make our hearts fill with joy? (Knowing that Jesus has made it possible for us to live forever with Him in heaven.)
5. What are three ways you show others that you are joyful? (Laughter, singing, and dancing.)



"Joy" Word Search

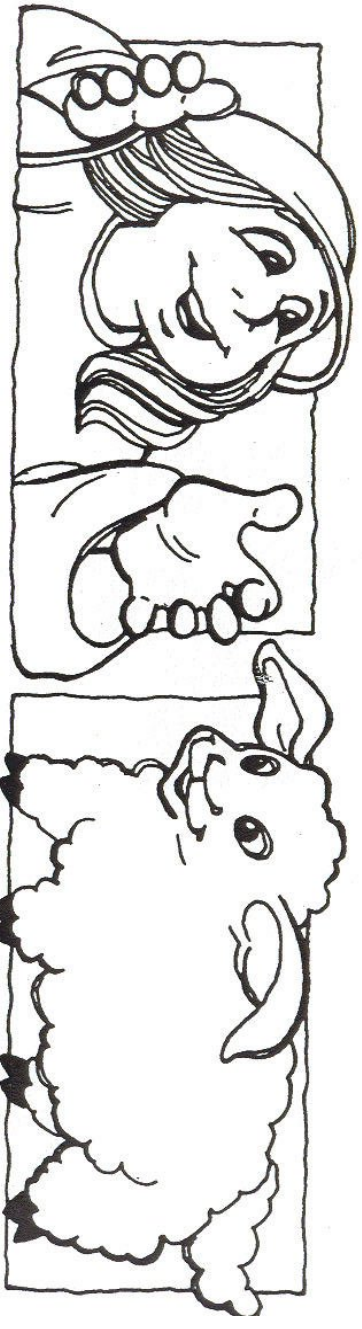
by Joan Marie Arbogast



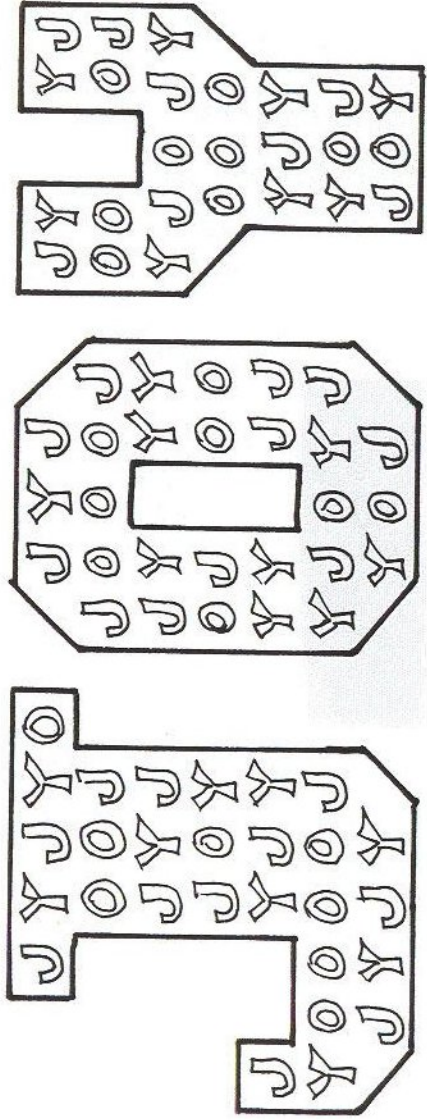
Jesus told the Pharisees a story about a man who lost one of his sheep. When the man found it, he was filled with joy. Jesus also said that when a sinner turns from sin and repents, there is even greater joy in heaven. Find and circle the following "joy" words in the word search.

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|-------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| CONTENTMENT | DELIGHT | ENJOYABLE | HAPPINESS |
| HAPPY | JOY | JOYFUL | JOYOUS |
| OVERJOYED | PLEASURE | PRAISE | SMILE |

A G N I S D E Y O J R E E V O A F R
 J B O C O N T E N T M E N T S O W
 W D N C L O R D T N A H L R
 I N G I S U O Y O J Y G M
 H T M A I A T O P I F
 A S V L N M J Y L L U
 P E U Y G E G A E L L
 P F N E W N N B A D L
 G L O R Y A R J E S U S O L S E E
 B C O M F O R P R A I S E U F S
 J A S S E E N I P P A H R I T
 K G R E E A T E L L F



Up, down, across or diagonally—how many times can you find the word “JOY”?



“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22

Use the noisemaker code at the bottom to finish the verse about “JOY.”

