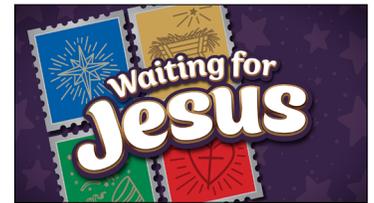


LESSON 3
JOY**LESSON AT A GLANCE****WONDER TRUTH:** Jesus Is Our Joy**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 35; Luke 2**GOD'S BIG STORY:** After many years of waiting, the Savior is born. His name is Jesus, and He brings joy to the world!**WORD OF WONDER:** Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see.
—Hebrews 11:1**CURIOSITY****BELIEF****FAITH**

- Welcome Question: What makes you joyful?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Joyful Art
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Joy Journals



[Waiting for Jesus Elem Spotify playlist](#)

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Is Our Joy

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 35; Luke 2

WORD OF WONDER: Hebrews 11:1

I think joy can best be learned from kids. There's nothing like hearing children laugh at silly songs or watching tiny babies giggle at funny faces people make at them. Or if you'd like to shed tears of joy, watch a clip of a child hearing her mother's voice for the first time. These are simple joys.

Joy is the ability to experience deep gladness no matter the circumstances of life.

Sometimes as we grow up, we take things like funny faces and silly songs for granted, or even the sound of the voices of people we love. Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed by our circumstances that joy seems hard to find.

How are your circumstances impacting your joy this season?

The people hearing the words of Isaiah, and those later described in Luke's Gospel, lived in difficult times. Read Isaiah 35 and note that it describes a day when God will overwhelm His people with joy. Next, read Luke 2:6–18. Notice the angel's words to the shepherds that this news will bring "great joy for all the people" (v 10).

Born into difficult circumstances and laid in an animal feeding trough, this new baby probably still had funny faces made at Him. And at some point, He heard the voice of His mother for the first time. The difference in this story is that Jesus doesn't just teach us about joy; He is the source of it!

Jesus is our joy!

—**Matt Irvine**

Pastor and Editor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Isaiah was God’s messenger to the nation of Judah during an unstable time who foretold of the coming Savior. The shepherds near Bethlehem were the first to hear of Jesus’ birth and the first-ever evangelists, who told everyone about the child.

WHAT?

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy that “the eyes of those who are blind will be opened” when He came (Isaiah 35:5). Jesus showed what the kingdom of God is like when He healed many who were sick. When Jesus returns, He will fix and restore all that is broken and disordered.

WHERE?

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the shepherds lived in fields near Bethlehem, located about six miles south of Jerusalem in the region of Judea. Jesus was born in the humble setting of Bethlehem, instead of the glamorous palace of a king.

WHEN?

Jesus was born about 700 years after Isaiah wrote about God’s “coming” to save His people. At the time, Isaiah’s audience probably thought about how God would save Judah from physical destruction. But God “comes” to His people in physical form when Jesus is born.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:

When sin entered the world, God put a plan into motion—He would redeem His people and fix all that was broken by sin. In the Old Testament, we see God working through one family—Israel—to bring about this plan of salvation, but this would not be clearly unveiled until the arrival of Jesus.

LESSON 3 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Small Group

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Is Our Joy
SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 35; Luke 2
WORD OF WONDER: Hebrews 11:1

Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "I'm curious.." before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **How would you define the word joy to someone who has never heard it?**
- **Do you think happiness and joy are the same thing? Why or why not?**



Small Group Begins

After the Opening Activity or game, Large Group Leader will begin small group time by reading the Welcome Question aloud and inviting everyone to open their Bibles and begin.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see.

—Hebrews 11:1 (NIRV)

SUPPLIES: Bible, paper, scissors (prep only), pen (prep only), basket or container (1 per small group)
Ahead of time, cut out slips of paper, and write the names of well-known Christmas carols on each slip. Create a set of slips for each small group and place each set in a basket or container.

Jesus is our joy! Like the angels, we can praise God with singing! And like the shepherds, we can share the good news of Jesus with everyone we know! Let's praise Him now by saying our Word of Wonder! Open your Bible to Hebrews 11:1. Practice the verse with the kids by reading it several times together.

Let's do a fun activity to help us remember the verse! Invite kids to take turns pulling slips of paper from the basket. Whatever song is on the slip is the tune everyone will try singing the verse to together! For example, if someone chooses "Silent Night," then everyone will try singing the words of Hebrews 11:1 to the tune of "Silent Night." Some songs and tunes will be easier than others, so if a tune is particularly challenging, just move on to another slip. Sing the verse several times to several different tunes. (Assure kids it's OK to laugh at yourself as they do this silly activity!)

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Simplify this activity by having kids sing Hebrews 11:1 to just one simple Christmas carol, such as "Deck the Halls."

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), sticky notes (2 per kid, optional)

Invite kids to open their Bibles first to Isaiah 35 and put their finger or a sticky note on the page. Next invite them to open to Luke 2 and mark the page with their finger or sticky note.

Before we read, it helps to know that Isaiah spoke God's words hundreds of years before Jesus was born. God's people were discouraged, and Isaiah promised that God would bring strength, healing, and hope. This promise pointed forward to the arrival of the Messiah. In Luke we will read how that promise began to unfold in a quiet town with ordinary people like shepherds. Think about what it shows you about God when His biggest rescue plan starts in such a simple way.

PASSAGE: Isaiah 35:3–6 and Luke 2:6–18

Elementary Questions

- **About 700 years before Jesus was born, God’s people were surrounded by the enemy army. How do you think God’s people felt?**
- **Which of these did the prophet Isaiah tell God’s people: “Be strong and do not fear” or “I have forgotten about you”?** (“Be strong and do not fear”)
- **Where was baby Jesus born? Where did Mary lay Him? What do you think it might have looked like in that place? Smelled like? Sounded like?** (Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Mary wrapped Him in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger because there was no guest room for them.)
- **What did the shepherds do once they heard the news that Jesus had come?** (They went to see the baby. Then they told everyone the good news!)
- **Why do you think the shepherds were filled with joy?**
- **What can you do to help other people experience the joy of Jesus?**

The joy God gives us comes from knowing Him and His goodness. Let’s take some time in prayer to thank God for our joy.

Preteen Questions

- **About 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah wrote about God coming to save His people. When people thought about the Savior’s arrival, what do you think they expected? Who did they probably expect would get to see the Savior first?** (Possible answer: Most people likely expected the Savior’s arrival to be a grand occasion and that the most powerful, important people would get to see Him first.)
- **Imagine the night Jesus was born. What do you think Mary and Joseph experienced? What did they see, hear, smell? What emotions do you think they felt?**
- **Now imagine the shepherds in the fields near y. What do you think they experienced that night? What did they see, hear, smell? What emotions do you think they felt?**
- **What did the shepherds do once they heard the news that Jesus had come?** (They went to see the baby. Then they told everyone the good news!)
- **Why do you think the shepherds were filled with joy?**
- **What can you do to help other people experience the joy of Jesus?**

The joy God gives us comes from knowing Him and His goodness. Let’s take some time in prayer to thank God for our joy.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to spend some time praying aloud. They can thank God for giving us Jesus, who is our joy! And they can ask Him to help them wait patiently for the things they are waiting for. If kids don’t want to pray aloud, remind them that they can pray in their hearts—God knows what we are thinking and feeling, and He cares!

Elementary Responding in Worship: Joyful Art

SUPPLIES: Bible; butcher paper or posterboard; 11x17 cardstock or other large paper, permanent marker (prep only); coloring utensils; art supplies such as bright-colored chalk, paint pens, etc. (optional); masking or painter's tape (optional) **RESOURCES:** [Waiting for Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, with a permanent marker, write the Wonder Truth across the top or center of a large sheet of butcher paper or posterboard: Jesus Is Our Joy! (If your group is very large, prepare multiple posters, each with the Wonder Truth on it.)

Set out the butcher paper or posterboard, coloring utensils, and any other art supplies. Write the following verse on separate pieces of 11x17 cardstock or large paper:

- Isaiah 35:1
- Isaiah 35:2
- Isaiah 35:5
- Isaiah 35:6
- Isaiah 35:10

Today in God's big story, we were reminded that God sent Jesus to bring joy to the whole world. Because Jesus was born, then later died on the cross for our sins and rose again, He is our joy!

Leader Tip: If some kids are new, take a few moments to share about God's ultimate act of love for us: the death and resurrection of Jesus. Explain that we have all sinned—or done wrong things. And our sin separates us from God. Explain that Jesus died and rose again so that we can be with God forever.

How has Jesus brought joy to your life? Give the kids a few moments to answer. Some kids might not be comfortable answering aloud, and that's OK!

The Bible shows us that long before Jesus was born, God put a plan into motion that would bring us love, hope, peace, and joy through Jesus. That's why we saw in God's big story that 700 years before Jesus came, the prophet Isaiah wrote about a future when God would come and save His people and the whole earth would be glad!

God knows us, loves us, and leads us!

Let's take some time to worship God and express our joy to Him

through art. Invite kids to gather around the butcher paper or posterboard. **Long before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah described beautiful scenes that are a part of God's promise for a joyful future in Jesus. As I read some of the words from Isaiah 35, you'll see images on the screen that go with some of the words. I invite you to fill this poster with art that represents what you hear. You can draw pictures, symbols, or designs—you can recreate the images from the screen or create something totally different. It's up to you!**

Leader Tip: Invite a volunteer to help you show the different verse in Isaiah 35 you read from the Bible.

Open your Bible to Isaiah 35. Read verses from Isaiah 35 slowly while displaying the indicated posters:

- Read Isaiah 35:1 (slide 2).
- Read Isaiah 35:2 (slide 3).
- Read Isaiah 35:5 (slide 4).
- Read Isaiah 35:6 (slides 5, 6, and 7).
- Read Isaiah 35:10 (slide 8).

Encourage kids to draw on the poster. Play songs from the [Waiting for Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as they work. Consider asking these questions to help kids process their ideas as they create:

- **What image stood out to you most in Isaiah’s words?**
- **How do you feel as you listen to Isaiah’s description?**
- **What does it mean to you that Jesus is your joy?**

After several minutes, invite kids to share their art with the group. If possible, display the poster on the wall where kids will see it each week and remember that Jesus is our joy!

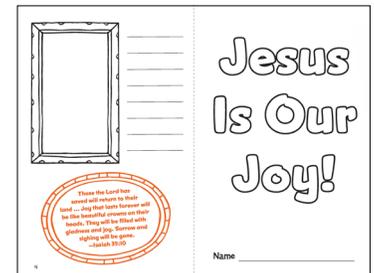
Preteen Responding in Worship: Joy Journals

SUPPLIES: writing utensils, coloring utensils, small notebooks or journals (1 per kid, optional)

RESOURCES: [Joy Journal Sheet NIV](#) (1 per kid), [Waiting for Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print the Joy Journal Sheet NIV or NIV for each kid and fold it in half to create a simple journal that consists of four half-pages. (Use two-sided printing and lip on the long edge.)

Today in God’s big story, we were reminded that God sent Jesus to bring joy to the whole world. Because Jesus was born, then later died on the cross for our sins and rose again, He is our joy!



Leader Tip: If some kids are new, take a few moments to share about God’s ultimate act of love for us: the death and resurrection of Jesus. Explain that we have all sinned—or done wrong things. And our sin separates us from God. Explain that Jesus died and rose again so that we can be with God forever.

How has Jesus brought joy to your life? Give the kids a few moments to answer. Some kids might not be comfortable answering aloud, and that’s OK!

The Bible shows us that long before Jesus was born, God put a plan into motion that would bring us love, hope, peace, and joy through Jesus. That’s why we saw in God’s big story that 700 years before Jesus came, the prophet Isaiah wrote about a future when God would come and save His people and the whole earth would be glad!

God knows us, loves us, and leads us!

One way we can talk with Him and praise Him is through journaling.

Journaling is simply writing or drawing our thoughts, ideas, and

prayers. Give each kid a Joy Journal Sheet or a small notebook or journal, and set out writing and coloring utensils. **Long before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah described beautiful scenes that are a part of God's promise for a joyful future in Jesus. As I read some of the words from Isaiah 35, you'll see images on the screen that correspond with some of the words. I invite you to think about Isaiah's words. You might even want to close your eyes and see what images, colors, or scenes you image. Then you can draw or write what is on your mind.**

Open your Bible to Isaiah 35. Read verses from Isaiah 35 slowly while displaying the indicated slides:

- Read Isaiah 35:1
- Read Isaiah 35:2
- Read Isaiah 35:5
- Read Isaiah 35:6
- Read Isaiah 35:10

Encourage kids spend time journaling. They can draw pictures of the joyful scenes from Isaiah 35. They can write prayers or tell God how amazing He is—it's up to them! Play songs from the [Waiting for Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) as they work. Consider asking these questions to help kids process their ideas as they create:

- **What image stood out to you most in Isaiah's words?**
- **How do you feel as you listen to Isaiah's description?**
- **What does it mean to you that Jesus is your joy?**

After several minutes, invite kids to share their journals with each other if they choose. Invite them to take their journals home and to continue journaling throughout the week.

Leader Tip: Consider providing small notebooks or journals that preteens can write in week after week. Keep them in your room or supply area for easy access and so that they don't get misplaced.