

LESSON 3

JOY AND CONTENTMENT

LESSON AT A GLANCE

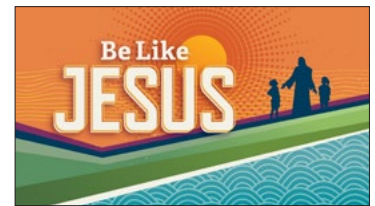
WONDER TRUTH: God Gives Us Joy

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2–4

GOD'S BIG STORY: While he is in prison, Paul encourages the church in Philippi to rejoice. He teaches that when we are thankful, God's Spirit will give us joy and contentment no matter the circumstance.

WORD OF WONDER: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. —Galatians 5:22–23 (ISV)

- Play Stations:
 - Party Time
 - Fruit Sensory Bin
 - Joy Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: Emoji Matching
- Word of Wonder: Galatians 5:22–23a
- Circle Time: Balloon Bop
- Craft: Joy Picture
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: Be a Light, Your Love for Me
- God's Big Story: Joy and Contentment
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Game: Joy Jump
- Responding in Worship: Drum Worship
- Prayer and Blessing
- Closing Game: Joy Jump and Drum Worship





LESSON 3 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Gives Us Joy

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2–4

WORD OF WONDER: Galatians 5:22–23a

In our lives as followers of Jesus, it's easy to give lip service to being joyful or content. We know that we should be joyful in everything, but we so often find our moods dependent on our finances, our relationships, or our circumstances. We know that we should be content—but we also feel that if we just get the right car, or the perfect job, or the latest fashions, our contentment would soar.

Do you struggle with joy and contentment? Where do you see this conflict in your life?

Read through Philippians 2–4 and imagine Paul sitting in a dirty prison cell. Paul had no reason to be joyful, given his circumstances. And somehow, through his painful experiences, he learned the secret to true joy and contentment. No matter his circumstances, he could trust that God was with him, that God loved him, and that God would give him strength when he needed it. Paul recognized that true joy and contentment come directly from the Lord.

As you prepare to lead kids through these truths this week, seek out the Lord. Ask Him to fill you with His joy and to give you deep contentment in your circumstances—so that you can be more like Jesus and bring glory to His name.

—Denise Morris Snyder

Spiritual Formation Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Paul wrote the Letter to the Philippians. After Paul gave his life to Jesus, he traveled throughout the Roman Empire telling God's joyful big story to everyone he met. He had once persecuted Jesus' followers, but now he himself experienced persecution as a follower of Jesus.

WHAT?

In Philippians 2–4, Paul encourages the Philippians to rejoice in all circumstances, whether good or bad. In Paul's case, he has joy despite his imprisonment and apart from the gifts of financial support he was sent. He has a contentment that comes from Jesus.

WHERE?

Paul wrote this letter to Jesus-followers in the Roman colony of Philippi, located in modern-day Greece. He was in prison in Rome at the time. Roman prisons were dirty, dank, and often crowded, and the only food and supplies prisoners received were those brought by friends or family.

WHEN?

Paul most likely wrote this letter around AD 62. By all likely accounts, Paul would be executed two years later by the Roman emperor Nero.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

Paul's letter to the Philippians echoes the Habakkuk's message of joy and contentment in the Old Testament. Even if the fields are barren and nothing remains, Habakkuk declares, "I will still be glad because of what the LORD has done. God my Savior fills me with joy" (Habakkuk 3:18).



LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Gives Us Joy
SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2–4
WORD OF WONDER: Galatians 5:22–23a

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: party supplies (balloons, crepe paper streamers, party hats, party blowers, large confetti, etc.), sturdy fruit with peels (lemons, pineapple, apples, oranges, etc.), bin or bowl, coloring utensils, exotic fruit (dragon fruit, papaya, horned melon, pitaya, star fruit, jackfruit, fig, etc.; optional)

RESOURCES: [Joy and Contentment Coloring Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas what we'll be learning about today?

Play Station: Party Time

Set up: Set out various party supplies, such as balloons, crepe paper streamers, party hats, party blowers, large confetti, etc.

Play: Let the kids play with the party supplies and decorate the play area for a party. Encourage them to jump, celebrate, and make noise.

Allergy Caution: Be aware of any latex allergies or sensitivities among your kids and volunteers before doing this activity!

Play Station: Fruit Sensory Bin

Set up: Set out toy fruit or real “sturdy” fruit (with peels) in a bin or bowl. You can also set out exotic fruit that the kids may have not seen before, such as dragon fruit, papaya, horned melon, pitaya, star fruit, jackfruit, or fig.

Play: Let the kids play with the fruit. Invite them to pretend to cook with it, serve it to one another, sort it, and observe it as they tell you about it.

Allergy Caution: Be aware of any allergies or sensitivities among your kids and volunteers before doing this activity!

Play Station: Joy and Contentment Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out coloring utensils.

Curiosity Activity: Emoji Matching

RESOURCES: [Emoji Matching Sheets \(1 set/SG\)](#)

Ahead of time, print the Emoji Matching Sheets.

Does anyone know what an emoji is? Pause for answers. **It's a picture that describes how someone feels. How you feel is an emotion. Today we're talking about two things that are more than just feelings and emotions, because emotions come and go. We're talking about joy! Joy can always be inside us because it comes from God.**

Joy is a deep sense of happiness. Hold up the joy emoji sheet.

Being content means being happy with what we have. Hold up the contentment emoji sheet.

Show the kids the other emoji sheets and ask them to say what feeling or emotion each sheet makes them think of.

I'm going to put these emoji sheets down on the floor and call out some statements. You can run and stand by the emoji that matches what I'm saying! It's OK if your answer doesn't match someone else's or if you're not sure which one to choose.

Lay the emoji sheets on the floor, spread out across your room. Call out the following statements and have the kids run to the emoji sheet that matches what you say. Play multiple times using the following phrases:

- **I feel so happy deep down in my heart because I know God is always with me!** Encourage the kids to run to the “joy” emoji sheet.
- **I feel sad because I got hurt.** Encourage the kids to run to the “sad” emoji sheet.
- **I'm thankful for every gift God has given me and everything I have.** Encourage the kids to run to the “content” emoji sheet.
- **I feel silly and feel like laughing because of something funny my friends did.** Encourage the kids to run to the “silly” emoji sheet.
- **I feel like celebrating and praising God because He's amazing!** Encourage the kids to run to the “joy” emoji sheet.

When they finish the activity, encourage the kids to think of their own statements that match the joy and contentment emoji sheets. For example, they could say: I feel content because I'm thankful to have good food to eat, or I feel joy because I get to come to church today.



Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible, scissors (prep only)

RESOURCES: *Word of Wonder Fruit Pictures (2 copies)*

WORD OF WONDER

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

—Galatians 5:22–23a (ISV)

Ahead of time, print two copies of the Word of Wonder Fruit Pictures and cut apart each picture.

Our Word of Wonder for the Be Like Jesus series is Galatians 5:22–23a.

Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together. Practice the verse with the kids.

Put one set of fruit pictures aside and spread out the other set on the floor across the room (or tape them to the wall, a few feet apart).



In our story today, we learned that Paul says that the secret to being joyful no matter what is to trust Jesus for our strength. God will give us strength for everything, even hard things. God will give us peace in our hearts. Let's say our Word of Wonder together while we jump for joy! I'll hold up a picture of fruit with a word on it, and you'll jump to the matching fruit and repeat the word.

Hold up each fruit picture, one at a time, say the word, then encourage the kids to jump to the matching fruit.

We can jump for joy because the Holy Spirit gives us joy. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit!

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS**—Draw a large “S” into the air.
- **LOVE**,—Pat your hands on your heart.
- **JOY**,—Put your arms up as if celebrating.
- **PEACE**,—Place palms together by cheek and ear to indicate “sleep.”
- **PATIENCE**,—Point to a pretend watch on your wrist.
- **KINDNESS**,—Pretend to give someone a hug.
- **GOODNESS**,—Make a thumbs-up.
- **FAITHFULNESS**,—Make two fists and start with the right fist on top, hitting the left fist, then switch and pound the left fist on top of the right.
- **GENTLENESS**,—Pretend to gently rock a baby.
- **AND SELF-CONTROL**.—Point to yourself with your thumbs.
- **GALATIANS 5:22–23a**—Hold your hands together as if opening a book.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **Who gives us the fruit of the Spirit?**
- **How do we become more loving, peaceful, joyful, patient, and kind?**

Leader Tip: Some kids may be confused about the analogy of fruit to eat versus fruit in our lives. Explain to them that the fruit of the Spirit is the way we live and treat others.

Craft: Joy Picture

SUPPLIES: variety of small items and glue (such as confetti, stickers, pom-poms, craft flowers, craft tape, adhesive jewels, buttons, beads, etc.), glue

RESOURCES: [Joy Craft Sheet \(1 per kid\)](#)

Today's story comes from the Bible and is about a man named Paul. Paul followed Jesus, and he wanted people to understand what really matters most.

Give each child a Joy Craft Sheet and begin passing out supplies.

Paul said that knowing Jesus is better than anything else. He had many things in his life, but he chose to trust Jesus more than anything.

Say this with me: **Jesus is better.** Jesus is better

As kids begin gluing items onto the word joy.

Paul also said that life can be hard sometimes. But even when things are hard, we can still have joy because we know Jesus.

Say this with me: **God gives me joy.** God gives me joy

Continue decorating.

Paul said he wanted to know Jesus more and become more like Him. He kept going and did not give up.

Say this with me: **Keep going. Keep going**

The Bible teaches us that real joy does not come from things we have. It comes from knowing and trusting Jesus.

Paul also said that life can be hard sometimes. But even when things are hard, we can still have joy because we know Jesus.

Point to the heart or chest.

That kind of joy stays with us, even when we feel sad or things do not go our way.

Say this with me: **Joy is in my heart.** Joy is in my heart

Every time you see your joy picture, remember that God gives you joy, and that joy stays with you because you know Jesus!



Circle Time: Balloon Bop

SUPPLIES: inflated balloon

Allergy Caution: Be aware of any latex allergies or sensitivities among your kids and volunteers before doing this activity!

Gather the kids to sit in a circle and hold up the inflated balloon.

When do we sometimes see balloons? Allow the kids to respond. **Yes, we sometimes see balloons at celebrations and parties! In our story today, Paul was in a sad place, but he said that his joy didn't depend on how his life was going. Sometimes he had a lot, but other times he only had a little. Sometimes he ate all the food he wanted, but other times he went hungry for days. But no matter what, Paul learned to be joyful and content.**

Where does your joy come from? What are things that bring you joy? Allow the kids to respond. Write their answers on the balloon with a marker.

We're going to have a celebration and bop the balloon with joy around our circle. When I say, "Stop," whoever is touching the balloon (or the person who is the last one to touch it) will freeze and call out one thing that makes you feel joyful, and then I'll ask a question.

Let the kids bop the balloon around the circle. Call out, "Stop" at various times and encourage the kids to shout out something that makes them feel joyful. Then ask a question from the list below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Where was Paul when he wrote the letter to the Philippians?** (*in jail*)
- **I wonder ... what do you think the prison was like when Paul was there?**
- **When do you feel most happy and joyful?**
- **What do you think it means to feel content?**
- **Who can help us feel joyful all the time—even in hard times?** (*God; Holy Spirit*)
- **Share about a time when you felt sad and then God helped you find joy.**
- **Share about a person you know who is filled with joy.**
- **How can you share joy with other people?**

When you face hard or scary situations, you can ask God to give you joy. Contentment means we're happy with what we have and what's happening. Whether we have a lot of things or not a lot, we can be OK because of God. We talk to God through prayer. He hears us. Let's talk to God now and ask Him to fill us to overflowing with Joy.

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for helping us have joy and contentment. God hears all our prayers!

Declaring God's Wonder

Show the Early Childhood Declaration Slide and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.) Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above and make a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for being here with us. We thank You for the Holy Spirit who helps us be content and have joy, no matter our circumstances. We're excited to hear from You today. We are listening. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll learn that God makes us joyful through His Holy Spirit. Let's sing about joy together! Let's clap our hands, rock the pretend drums, whisper softly, and shout along with the song! Listen closely and follow me as we sing together!

Play songs *Be a Light*, *Your Love for Me* and encourage the kids to sing and dance while following your lead as they praise God.

Leader Tip: Before playing the song, demonstrate hand clapping, air drumming, whispering, and shouting. Some kids may not want to shout. If kids have sound sensitivity, provide noise-cancelling headphones.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible; [Bible Story Picture \(1/SG\)](#)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week with the kids before the Bible story, to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? (Hold your hands together, then open palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

Let's hear part of God's big story, which comes from the book of Philippians in the Bible. Philippians is in the New Testament, in a part called the Epistles. The Epistles are letters written to churches and people.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Bible, brown paper bags (5), marker, dirty socks (1 pair; optional), grape (optional), pen (2, optional), paper (2, optional), party blower

RESOURCES: [God's Big Story Pictures \(1 set/SG\)](#)

Before kids arrive, print the God's Big Story Pictures, if using. If you want to use real props instead, gather the supplies. Use a marker to number the bags 1–5. Distribute the paper or props into the appropriate bags, fold the bags closed, and set them out in order. In Bag #1, you'll need dirty socks (or use the picture provided). In Bag #2, you'll need one grape (or use the picture provided). In Bag #3, you'll need a paper and pen (or use the picture provided). In Bag #4, you'll need a paper with the word "God" written on it (or use the picture provided). In Bag #5, put a party blower.



Do you smell something? Sniff the air with a disgusted look and allow kids to respond. **Seriously! Do you smell that?** Sniff the air again and allow kids to respond. **It smells disgusting—like stinky and dirty. I think the smell is coming from over there.** Walk toward the table, continually sniffing the air and acting like it's a terrible smell.

I found the smell—in this bag! Wow! I think this is the yuckiest smell I've ever smelled in my life! Open Bag #1 (or invite a kid to open it) and retrieve dirty socks (or picture of dirty socks). **I knew it! As soon as I smelled that smell, I knew what our story was going to be about today. These socks will get us started.** Hold up the socks.

Close your eyes and imagine you're in the most disgusting, smelly place you could ever be. Plug your nose. Encourage the kids to plug their noses.

Pretend you've been sitting in the same smelly place for days. Nobody comes to help because they think you did something wrong.

Not only was it smelly, but you didn't get food unless you had a visitor. Maybe we should check out the next bag to see if there's something to eat in it. Open Bag #2 (or invite a kid to open it) and pull out the one grape (or picture). **It looks like no one is visiting us today. Only one grape for dinner.**

Most of us would be super sad. Not the person we're learning about in God's big story. He sat in a stinky jail, and something amazing happened ... let's learn about it.

This story happens after Jesus went to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to His followers. The Holy Spirit is God's powerful, wise, and loving presence. A Jesus-follower named Paul traveled around to tell people about Jesus and start churches. After he left, Paul wrote letters to teach and help people there. Paul's letters are in the Bible. Open Bag #3 (or invite a kid to open it) and pull out the pen and paper.

Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Jesus-followers in Philippi. This prison was not a good place to be. Prisoners spent every day in dark and dirty cells. Prisoners were almost always hungry. Even in that bad place, Paul was full of joy!

Paul's letter said to always be joyful because you belong to Jesus! He told the people not to worry about anything. He encouraged people to tell God about everything. Paul told them to ask God for help when things were hard or scary. Paul said to pray for what they need, instead of grumbling or worrying. And Paul said to give thanks to God for what He has given them. When they do that, their hearts will be filled with God's peace. God will replace their worries, so they feel calm. God will care for them when they need help. Open Bag #4 (or invite a kid to open it) and pull out the paper with "God" written on it.

Paul lived like he taught the church to live. Paul could have been discouraged when he was in prison. Instead, Paul chose to thank God and to thank the Philippians for helping take care of his needs. Paul chose joy!

Paul explains that his joy doesn't depend on how his life is going. Sometimes he had a lot, but other times he only had a little. Sometimes he ate all the food he wanted, but other times he went hungry for days. But no matter what, Paul learned to be joyful and content.

Paul says there is a secret to being joyful, no matter what our circumstances are. The secret is to trust Jesus for our strength. God will give us strength for everything, even hard things. God will give us peace in our hearts. God will help us see all the good things He has given us. Open Bag #5 (or invite a kid to open it) and pull out the party blower. **Having joy doesn't always mean life will always be a party, but we can have joy deep down in our hearts. God will help us become more like Jesus. Life will be hard sometimes. But when we trust Jesus, no matter what happens, God gives us joy.**

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD GIVES US JOY. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story?** Allow kids to answer freely.

Hundreds of years before Paul wrote to the Philippians from a Roman prison cell, a prophet named Habakkuk wrote in the Old Testament about being filled with joy in difficult circumstances.

He writes that even if the fields are barren, the crops are dead, and our food and money are gone, "I will still be glad because of what the LORD has done. God my Savior fills me with joy" (Habakkuk 3:18).

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them and thank God for giving us joy.

Let's pray and talk to God. When I say, "joyful" or "joy," you can cheer or clap.

God, thank You for giving us the Holy Spirit. Thank You for making us joyful (cheer or clap) no matter what's happening in our lives. Thank You for joy (cheer or clap)! We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: As Paul wrote to the Philippians, may you "always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!" (Philippians 4:4). **May God give you joy and contentment in every circumstance today and always!**

Active Game: Joy Jump

SUPPLIES: tape (optional), cardstock (optional)

RESOURCES: [Fruit Pictures](#) (from [Word of Wonder Activity](#)), music from the [Be Like Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print the Fruit Pictures and place them on the floor, a few feet apart. To make them sturdier, you can print on cardstock and tape them to the floor.

Today we're learning God makes us joyful, no matter what! Joy is the deep-down happiness we feel in our hearts that comes from God. It doesn't go away or change when something sad happens. The joy from God is always in us, and we can show our happiness by jumping for joy!

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, which means the Holy Spirit makes us joyful.



Let's jump for joy and hop from fruit to fruit while we listen to a song. We'll hop from fruit to fruit until the music stops, then you'll freeze. When the music plays again, hop some more! Who's ready to jump for joy? Allow kids to reply. Play music from the [Be Like Jesus Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) and encourage the kids to hop onto the fruit pictures. Stop the music periodically and tell the kids to freeze. Play a few rounds. You can also have the kids call out one fruit of the Spirit when the music pauses.

Today we showed our joy as we hopped to the music. We can always remember that God gives us joy.

Make It Inclusive: For kids who can't jump, let them toss a beanbag onto the fruit pictures instead. You can print a set just for them in a separate area of the room if that's helpful.

VIEW THE GOD'S BIG STORY VIDEO

