

LESSON 3

JOY AND CONTENTMENT

LESSON AT A GLANCE

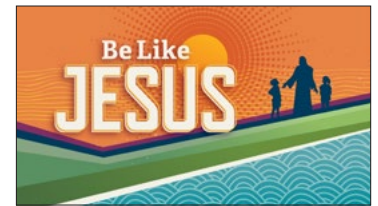
WONDER TRUTH: God Gives Us Joy and Contentment

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 the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy and peace. It is being patient, kind and good. It is being faithful and gentle and having control of oneself. —Galatians 5:22–23a

- PRE-SERVICE GAME
 - OPTION 1 Interactive Game: Candy Dash
 - OPTION 2 Interactive Game: Choose Your Challenge!
- Welcome Question: When are you most happy?
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: This Little Light, Your Love For Me
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Word of Wonder Activity
- Responding in Worship: I Could Sing of Your Love Forever
- Blessing Your Kids



INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Gives Us Joy and Contentment

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 ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN

Large Group

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Gives Us Joy and Contentment

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 2–4

WORD OF WONDER: Galatians 5:22–23a

As kids arrive...

20 minutes before service begins, leaders are in place ready to welcome kids.

Display series theme loop. Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Be intentional about introducing yourself to new parents and kids.

SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN (2min OR 30sec) Start a countdown to begin game 10 minutes prior to service start)

Leader Tip: Kids will be exploring the idea of joy and contentment throughout this lesson. Refer to these definitions as needed: Joy—deep gladness because of Jesus; Contentment—being satisfied and at peace.

OPTION 1 Interactive Game: Candy Dash

SUPPLIES: large bowls (2), small candies (1 handful per kid), paper plates (1 per kid), markers (1 per kid), timer, chair (optional), hand sanitizer (optional)

Allergy Caution: This activity includes possible food allergens!

Ahead of time, pour small candies into one of the large bowls. You'll need about one handful of candies for each kid. Candies that don't melt easily work best, such as round, fruity rainbow candies.

Leader Tip: To minimize the spreading of germs, consider using small, individually wrapped candies for this activity.

Display the **Candy Dash Slide** and gather the kids on one end of the room. Give each kid a paper plate and a marker. Invite kids to write their names on their plates and then set their plates on the floor against the wall. Collect the markers. **Let's play a game called Candy Dash! Sounds pretty delicious, huh?** Show kids the large bowl of candy and set it on the floor or on a chair on the opposite side of the room from the kids and their plates. Set the empty bowl off to the side (it will become the "discard" bowl later in the game).



In a moment, I'll set the timer for an unknown amount of time. Show kids the timer. **Until the timer goes off, you're free to run to the bowl, grab one candy, and bring it back to your plate. You can do this as many times as you'd like before the timer goes off, taking just one candy to set on your plate each time. But here's the catch! You can only keep the candies on your plate if you're touching your plate when the timer goes off, and your plate must remain in the same spot the whole time. If you aren't touching your plate when the timer goes off, you lose all your candy! Any questions?** Answer kids' questions. Consider passing around hand sanitizer before starting the game, especially if using unwrapped candies. Set the timer for about 1–2 minutes (don't show it to the kids!) and begin: **Ready, set, go!**

Some kids will be pretty cautious, only grabbing one or two candies before staying in one spot with their plates. Others will risk it all over and over for one more candy! Both styles of play are OK. Have fun cheering all the kids on! When the timer goes off, instruct all the kids to stop where they are. Those who are touching their plates can eat their candy now or save it for later. Those who aren't touching their plates can return their candy to the bowl (if it's wrapped) or into the empty "discard" bowl (if it's unwrapped).

If time allows, play additional rounds, setting different time limits on the timer each round.

Gather the kids back together. **To be content means to be at peace and satisfied. Some of you were content with a little bit of candy on your plate, and some of you decided to risk it all for one more piece! Are you happy with the decisions you made in this game? Why or why not?** Allow kids to share freely.

Display the **Joy Wonder Truth Slide**. Today in God's big story, we'll learn about a Jesus-follower named Paul who was content even when he faced a situation that was a whole lot harder than anything we faced in this game. Paul discovered that the key to having joy and contentment isn't having enough candy or even being in happy situations. He discovered that, as our Wonder Truth states, **GOD GIVES US JOY AND CONTENTMENT.**



Make It Inclusive: Some children with developmental or neurodevelopmental conditions might experience big emotions when they have to give up the candy they've collected. This could also cause anxiety for any kids who live with food insecurity. Be sensitive to the needs of every kid and consider setting aside candy (or a more nutritious treat) for all the kids to enjoy at the end of the game.

OPTION 2 Interactive Game: Choose Your Challenge!

Display the first Choose Your Challenge Slide and gather the kids. Let's play a game called Choose Your Challenge! Here's how it works ... Two challenges will appear on the screen. They might both be pretty unpleasant, but you need to decide which you would rather do and indicate your choice by moving to that side of the room. Let's get started! Advance to the second Choose Your Challenge Slide and read it aloud: **Choose Your Challenge ... Sleep all night standing up or sleep all night in a squatting position. If you would rather sleep all night standing up, move to this side of the room.** Point to the side of the room. **If you would rather sleep all night in a squatting position, move to this side of the room.** Point to the opposite side of the room. Once all of the kids have made their choice and moved, invite 1–2 kids from each side to explain why they chose that challenge. Then have everyone gather back in the center.

Advance through all seven Choose Your Challenge! Slides. Invite kids to indicate their choices by moving to one side of the room or the other each time and give kids a chance to explain their choices. For your reference,

here is a list of the challenge choices included on the slides:

Sleep all night standing up or sleep all night in a squatting position

Eat crickets or eat (non-poisonous) flowers

Take a bath in slime or take a bath in a tub of (non-venomous) worms.

Drink a whole jar of pickle juice or eat a whole jar of mustard

Brush your teeth with mayonnaise or brush your teeth with ketchup

Eat soup with a fork or eat spaghetti with chopsticks

Gather the kids back together. **How many of you are glad you didn't actually have to do any of these challenges?** Invite kids to respond freely. **Me too! If I had to brush my teeth with ketchup or sleep all night standing up, I don't think I'd be very happy! Today in God's big story, we'll learn about a Jesus-follower named Paul who was content and filled with joy even when he faced a serious and very unpleasant situation. Paul discovered that Jesus gives us joy and contentment in every circumstance, even the really hard ones.** Display the Joy Wonder Truth Slide. **Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD GIVES US JOY AND CONTENTMENT.****



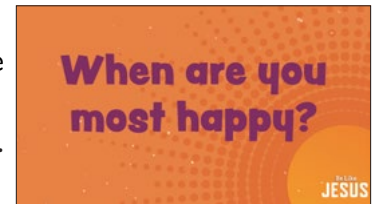
Make It Inclusive: If any kids in your ministry have limited mobility, modify this game by giving each kid a sheet of paper with an arrow drawn on it. Invite them to point their arrow one way or the other to indicate which challenge they choose.

Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, coloring utensils, poster board OR , whiteboard, dry-erase markers (if needed)

SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION

At service start time, draw kids' attention to the Welcome Question. Invite kids to write answers on the poster board or whiteboard. **Being happy is pretty awesome! But all of us know that sometimes life is hard, and our circumstances aren't very happy at all. Today we'll hear in God's big story about how God can give us joy and contentment even during hard times. But first, it's time for small group!**



Small Group

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

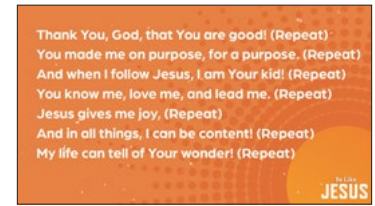
VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"

Declaring God's Wonder

Display the [Joy Declaration Slide](#). Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)
You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)
And when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)
You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)
Jesus gives me joy, (Kids repeat.)
And in all things, I can be content! (Kids repeat.)
My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Lead kids in a prayer of invitation before entering into worship and God's big story. **God, thank You for this time together in the Bible. Help us to understand how much You love us. We invite Your Holy Spirit to guide us to live like Jesus and to fill us with the joy and contentment that only You can give. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Today we'll hear how God gives us joy and contentment, even during hard situations. Let's praise God now for loving us and for always being with us through His Holy Spirit! Play songs [This Little Light](#), [Your Love For Me](#) and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story

Display the [Joy Title Slide](#) and gather the kids together. Explain that today's story comes straight from the Bible, God's Word, and can be found in the book of Philipians, one of the letters the apostle Paul wrote to Jesus-followers in the early church.

Today we are learning where true joy comes from. As you watch, think about why Paul says knowing Jesus is better than anything else and how that kind of joy is different from happiness that comes and goes.

[Watch God's Big Story Video](#)



LESSON 3 JOY AND CONTENTMENT

EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid), cardstock, brown paper lunch bags (7), permanent marker (prep only), dirty gym socks (2), bite-sized cracker or bit of bread (1), pen, paper, single-serve bag of chips, empty ice cream carton, small gift box, money (such as a single bill), table

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [God Sheet \(1.LG\)](#)

Allergy Caution: This activity includes possible food allergens!

Before kids arrive, print the God Sheet onto cardstock. Gather brown paper lunch bags and props. Number each bag 1–7 with a permanent marker, distribute the props in the appropriate bags, fold the tops over to close, and place them on the table in numerical order.

Bag #1—dirty gym socks

Bag #2—bite-sized cracker or bit of bread

Bag #3—pen and paper

Bag #4—single-serve bag of chips

Bag #5—empty ice cream carton

Bag #6—small gift box with money inside (such as a single bill)

Bag #7—God Sheet



Gather the kids and explain that when you point to them during today's part of God's big story, they can repeat what you just said.

After the Holy Spirit came as a powerful helper to Jesus' disciples, Jesus appeared to a man named Paul and changed his life completely! Paul went from being an enemy of God's people to being a devoted follower of Jesus who traveled many places sharing the good news of Jesus and starting churches. Paul often wrote letters to the people in those churches, and many of those letters are now books in the Bible.

At the time of today's story, Paul was in prison. Pause to sniff the air with a disgusted look on your face. **Do you smell something?** Allow kids to respond. **Seriously! Do you smell that?** Sniff the air again and allow kids to respond. **It smells disgusting—stinky, nasty, and old. You don't smell it?** Pause for kids to respond. **It seems like the smell is coming from over there.** Walk toward the table, continually sniffing the air and acting like you smell something terrible.

Here it is—right here in this bag! Wow! This sure stinks! Open bag #1 and pull out two dirty, smelly gym socks. **This smell reminds me of an ancient Roman prison! Those prisons were horrible places.**

Close your eyes and imagine you're in a Roman prison cell long ago. It's the most disgusting, smelly place you can imagine. Everyone, plug your noses! Pause for kids to plug noses. They can unplug them after a few moments. **Roman jailers rarely took care of the prisoners, and prisoners only got food if their friends visited and gave it to them.** Invite kids to open their eyes.

I'm hungry! Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing them to respond.

I'm thirsty! Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing them to respond.

Maybe we should check out the next bag to see if someone brought us some delicious food! That would beat the smelly socks! Set down the socks and invite a volunteer to come up, open bag #2, and pull out the one bite-sized cracker or bit of bread. **It looks like no one is visiting us in prison today. One measly bite for dinner.**

In circumstances like this, most people would lose hope. But despite these horrible circumstances, Paul was content or satisfied. What do you think Paul was doing while he sat in his prison cell? Allow kids to respond. **Let's check our next bag and see if it'll give us a clue.** Open bag #3 or invite a volunteer to do so and pull out a pen and paper. **I knew it. Paul wasn't griping or complaining about the smell or the food. He was writing letters!**

Paul's letter to the Philippians is filled with joy!

Say what? Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing them to respond.

You heard it right. In the middle of a nasty jail cell, Paul writes to his friends, "Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!" (Philippians 4:4). He even encourages the people in Philippi not to "worry about anything" and to "tell God about everything" (Philippians 4:6). That's a surprising statement from someone in a Roman prison who didn't know if he would ever be free again!

But Paul wasn't just telling the Philippians to have a positive attitude.

Chin up, sonny! Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing them to respond.

He was encouraging them to ask God for help in their difficult circumstances.

God, please help me. Look up to heaven as though praying. Then point at the kids to repeat the phrase, allowing them to respond.

Instead of grumbling or worrying, Paul tells them to pray for what they need and 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 with a sense of calm and a confidence that He will care for them in their time of need. Then they will be able to endure whatever comes their way.

This might have been a hard thing for Paul's friends in Philippi to accept. Having joy when things are bad—being content, at peace and satisfied—in all circumstances?

Whoa, kid! Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing them to respond.

So, Paul decided to show the Philippians an example of joy and contentment. I wonder what it was. Open bag #4 or invite a volunteer to do so and reveal a single-serve bag of chips. **Do you think this was what brought Paul joy and contentment?** Allow kids to respond. **Maybe this bag will show us what Paul's example of joy was.** Open bag #5 or invite a volunteer to do so and hold up an empty ice cream carton. **Do you think this was it?** Allow kids to respond. **Well, there are only two bags left. One of these has to reveal Paul's secret! Let's try this one.** Open bag #6 or invite a volunteer to do so and reveal a gift box. **Do you think we should open it?** Allow kids to respond. Carefully open the box and reveal the money inside.

Whoa, kid! Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing kids to respond.

While Paul was in prison, the church in Philippi sent him money to help take care of his needs. Paul could have let himself be discouraged. (After all, he was stuck in the worst prison of all time!) Instead, Paul chose to thank God and to thank the Philippians for their generous gift to him. Paul rejoiced despite his difficult circumstances.

The gift of money from the Philippians made Paul very joyful, yet he explains that his joy doesn't depend on the gift. For years, Paul had been taking long journeys around the Mediterranean region. He had experienced times of great need and times of great abundance. Sometimes he taught in the homes of rich people and ate all the food he wanted. Other times he went hungry for days as he traveled the long roads between towns. Some of Jesus' disciples helped Paul, while others ignored him. Through it all, Paul remained joyful and content.

How did he do that? Point at kids to repeat the phrase, allowing kids to respond.

Do you want to know Paul's secret? Allow kids to respond. Open bag #7 or invite a volunteer to do so and reveal the God Sheet. **The secret, Paul says, to being satisfied in every circumstance is to let Jesus be our source of strength. Through Jesus, we can endure and thrive in every circumstance. No matter how challenging our situation is, God will provide the strength to get through it. He will give us peace in our hearts and help us to see all the good things He has given us. He will help us become more like Jesus.** Hold up the God Sheet. **Life will be hard sometimes, but when we look to and rely on Jesus, God gives us joy and contentment.**

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Display the Joy Wonder Truth Slide. **Our Wonder Truth today is GOD GIVES US JOY AND CONTENTMENT.** Where did you see our Wonder Truth in action 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 wrote 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).

In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story.

What surprised you most in God's big story today? Allow kids time to think through the story. If they need prompting, help them review.

What about today's story do you think you'll remember one week from now? What about one year from now? Give kids time to share with a partner before sharing with the whole group.

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson. ***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.

WORSHIP VIDEO: [I Could Sing of Your Love Forever](#)



Blessing Your Kids

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!

