

### LESSON 3

## JOY AND CONTENTMENT

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

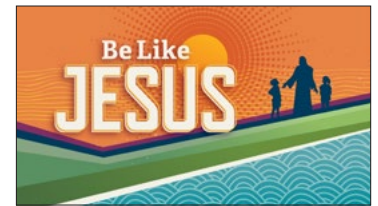
**WONDER TRUTH:** God Gives Us Joy and Contentment

**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

- Welcome Question: When are you most happy?
- 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: Tell God About Everything
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Dear God ...



### 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

#### Small 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

#### 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 ...

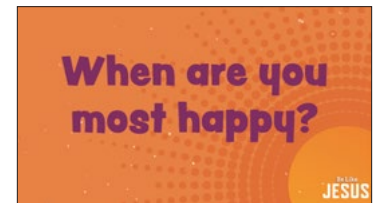
Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

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:

- **Does anyone know what it means to be content?** (If needed, help kids understand that to be content is to be at peace and satisfied.)
- **Can you think of a time when you had a good attitude even though nothing was going your way?**



**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.

#### 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

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 (NIRV)

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid), paper (1 sheet per kid), coloring utensils

**Our Word of Wonder for the Be Like Jesus series lists the fruit of the Spirit, which are the good traits the Holy Spirit grows in us when we follow Jesus. Paul talks about one of them in today's part of God's big story: the fruit of joy! Let's say the verse together.** Open your Bible to Galatians 5:22–23a. Practice saying Galatians 5:22–23a with the kids by reading it several times together.

Hand a sheet of paper to each kid and assign each a different fruit of the Spirit. Invite kids to draw a picture or symbol on their paper to represent their assigned fruit. For example, if a kid has the fruit of love, he might draw a heart. (If a group has fewer than nine kids, some kids can draw more than one fruit. If it's larger than nine, assign some of the fruit to pairs.) After kids finish their drawings, practice saying the Word of Wonder together, having each kid stand and hold up her drawing when the group says her fruit.

## God's Big Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles (1 per kid)

Explain that today's story comes straight from the Bible, God's Word, and can be found in the book of Philippians, one of the letters the apostle Paul wrote to Jesus-followers in the early church. Invite everyone to turn to Philippians 3. Encourage volunteers to help kids find this passage.

**Let's start by reading part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we'll watch and experience more of the story!**

Read Philippians 3:1; 4:4–7, 10–13 aloud while the kids follow along or invite three confident readers to each read one section of the passage.

## Elementary Questions

- **Where was Paul when he wrote his letter to the Philippians?** (in a Roman prison)
- **According to Paul's letter, what can we do instead of worrying?** (pray, "tell God about everything" [Philippians 4:6])
- **What was Paul's attitude like when he was in prison?** (Paul was joyful, thankful, and content.)
- **What (or who) did Paul say is the secret to being satisfied and content in every situation?** (Possible answers: Jesus, God, letting Jesus be the source of our strength.)
- **When things aren't going your way, what can you do to have joy and peace like Paul had?** (Possible answers: Pray, ask God for help, tell God everything, think about the good things God has given us, ask God for peace, etc.)
- **What is something you must do that is hard where you need God's strength to do it?**

Sometimes we find ourselves in hard situations. Thankfully, God can give us joy and peace just like Paul had when he was in prison. Let's thank God in prayer for giving us these good gifts.

**Leader Tip:** As kids explore what it means that God gives us joy and contentment, refer to these definitions as needed: Joy—deep gladness because of Jesus; Contentment—being at peace and satisfied.

## Preteen Questions

- **What situation was Paul facing when he wrote his letter to the Philippians?** (Possible answer: He was in a dirty, unpleasant Roman prison cell.)
- **If you were in Paul's situation, do you think you would've been content? Why or why not?**
- **What was Paul's attitude like when he was in prison?** (Paul was joyful, thankful, and content.)
- **Why was Paul able to be content even in a horrible prison?** (Possible answers: Jesus was Paul's source of strength and joy; Paul prayed to God about everything; God filled him with joy.)
- **If you could ask God for help to be content in one area, what area would you ask Him for strength?**

God is a good God who can give us joy and contentment. He hears us and will help us to be content in every situation, even the hard ones. Let's talk with God in prayer now.

**Leader Tip:** Sadly, some kids in your ministry may be experiencing trauma or abuse. It's important to help kids understand that being content in every circumstance does not mean that every situation is OK or permissible. Hurting or mistreating another person is always wrong. God loves every one of His kids very much and is especially near to us when we're hurting. If you suspect a child may be in danger, talk right away with your ministry leader.

## Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids into a time of prayer. Give kids a chance to volunteer to pray for each other and those areas of their lives where they would like God to give them joy and contentment. If kids are slow to volunteer, you can pray for each kid and her requests. End by praising God for giving His joy and contentment to those who ask!

## LARGE GROUP

### Elementary Responding in Worship: Tell God About Everything!

**SUPPLIES:** cardstock, scissors (prep only), whiteboard or butcher paper, dry-erase marker or permanent marker (prep only), sticky notes (several per kid), writing or coloring utensils, painter's tape (optional)

**RESOURCES:** [Philippians 4:6 Cards NIV \(1 set SG\)](#)

Ahead of time, print one copy onto cardstock of the [Philippians 4:6 Cards NIV](#) for every four kids. Cut the cards apart. Each kid will need one card. Set the cards aside to hand out at the end of Responding in Worship.

Also, on one end of a whiteboard or sheet of butcher paper, write this prayer prompt in large letters: "God, I ask You to ..." On the other end of the whiteboard or butcher paper, write this prompt: "God, I thank You for ..."

Kids will be writing and drawing prayers on sticky notes and placing them near the prayer prompts. If using butcher paper, use painter's tape to tape the prompts to a wall.

**Today in God's big story, a Jesus-follower named Paul was in a very difficult situation. Where was Paul?** Invite kids to answer. **Yes, he was in a Roman prison cell! What were Roman prisons like?** Pause for kids to share freely. **Ancient Roman prisons were horrible, filthy, stinky places. While in prison, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians encouraging them to be joyful! He told them to not to "worry about anything" and to "tell God about everything" (Philippians 4:6). We can do the same thing today! No matter where we are or what we're facing, we can pray and tell God about everything!**

Give each kid a sticky note and set out writing and coloring utensils. **Let's spend time telling God about everything in prayer now. God hears our prayers and loves when we tell Him what we're feeling and what's going on in our lives, and when we ask Him for what we need. I invite you to write or draw a prayer on your sticky note that starts with the words, "God, I ask You to ..."**

Point to these words on the whiteboard or butcher paper. **Tell God whatever is on your heart and what you need from Him today.**

Give kids time to write or draw their prayers. Set out extra sticky notes for kids who want to write or draw multiple prayers. Quietly play music from the [Be Like Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) during this time. After a couple of minutes, invite kids to come up and stick their prayers to the whiteboard or butcher paper near the words, "God, I ask You to ..." As they do so, encourage them to talk with God in prayer by reading their notes and telling Him anything else that's on their hearts and minds.

Next, give each kid another sticky note. **God is so good and loves each of us so much! What would you like to thank Him for?** Pause for kids to respond. **On your sticky note, write or draw a prayer to God that starts with the words, "God, thank You for ..."**



Give kids time to write or draw their prayers. Leave out the extra sticky notes for kids who want to write or draw additional prayers. After a minute or two, invite kids to come up and stick their prayers to the whiteboard or butcher paper near the words, “God, I thank You for ... .” As they do so, they can talk with God in prayer by reading their notes and telling Him whatever’s on their hearts.

Give each kid a Philippians 4:16 Card NIV or NIV to take home. Encourage kids to place the card somewhere they will see it often and to read the verse out loud as a reminder that they can tell God about everything!

**Make It Inclusive:** Provide a variety of drawing utensils to benefit kids of varying fine motor skill abilities. For example, markers require less muscle strength/pressure than crayons or colored pencils. If possible, also have simple and adaptive tools on hand, such as pencil grips.

## Preteen Responding in Worship: Dear God ...

**SUPPLIES:** large cardboard box, scissors (prep only), permanent marker (prep only), writing utensils, letter-sized envelopes (1 per kid)

**RESOURCES:** [Letter to God \(1 per kid\)](#), music from the [Be Like Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Ahead of time, print a copy of the Letter to God for each kid. Carefully cut a slit in the top of the cardboard box large enough for kids to slip their envelopes in. Write “To God” in permanent marker on the front of the box and set the box at the front and center of the room.

**Today in God’s big story, a Jesus-follower named Paul was in a very difficult situation. Where was Paul? Invite kids to answer. Yes, he was in a Roman prison cell! What were Roman prisons like? Pause for kids to share freely. Ancient Roman prisons were horrible, filthy, stinky places. While in prison, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians encouraging them to be joyful!**

**He told them, “Don’t worry about anything. No matter what happens, tell God about everything. Ask and pray, and give thanks to him” (Philippians 4:6). This invitation is for all of us! Let’s spend time writing letters to God, telling Him about what we’re facing in life, asking for His help, and giving thanks to Him!**

Give a Letter to God and an envelope to each kid, then set out writing utensils. Invite kids to tell God about everything going on in their lives by filling out the prompts on the letter or by writing or drawing their prayers to God along the edges and on the back of the paper. Play music from the [Be Like Jesus Spotify playlist](#) quietly during this time.

As kids finish, invite them to fold their letters and seal them in their envelopes. They can bring their letters up and slip them inside the box as a physical symbol of releasing their prayers to God. Or if they would like, they can bring their letters home as a reminder that God invites them to tell Him about everything. During this time, encourage kids to talk with God in prayer about anything that’s on their hearts and minds.



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**Make It Inclusive:** Provide simple and adaptive tools such as pencil grips and jumbo or triangular pencils to help kids with delayed motor skills.