

North Texas Conference

Holy Spirit

Director Edition

Summer 2018 Conference Camp Curriculum

Monday – Afternoon

Joy

Supplies: Bibles, yellow beads

For the Leader...

The word 'joy' is defined by Merriam-Webster as, "the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires...the expression or exhibition of such emotion...a state of happiness". The joy that the world offers is a pale imitation of the true joy only God can give us. Joy is a prominent feature of the true worship of God in the Old Testament. Wherever people know, love, and worship God, God's love instills a joy, that only God can give, into the hearts of God's worshipers. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, who resides in the heart of the believer. Merriam-Webster defines 'rejoice' in this way, 'to feel joy or great delight'. There are several passages in the New Testament where Paul instructs us to 'rejoice'. These passages (Philippians 3:1, 4:4) carry a sense of urgency or command, as if Paul were saying that a Christian is to be full of joy and he is urging believers to make sure that their relationships with God and others are relationships that produce joy. Paul writes in First Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." This joy, prayer, and thanksgiving should characterize the life of the Christian. This is how God wants us to live. "Rejoicing always" does not mean that we are to paste a fake smile on our faces no matter what is going on in our lives or the lives of those we love. It means that we are to remain steadfast in our knowledge that God is our strength and comfort no matter in what circumstances we find ourselves.

Opening/Centering Prayer – led by Student

Supplies: none

Suggested Time - 5 min

Invite a student to lead the following prayer below.

God of hope and God of joy, be with us during our time together. Make us new creations as we become stronger followers of your son, Jesus. Help us feel the presence of your spirit as it continues to move through our lives to show us who you are and who you've called us to be. Amen.

Activity for Introductions & Re-Introductions: Name Challenge

Supplies: none

Suggested Time - 5 min

Have everyone sit in a different order than they sat in during the earlier session. See if anyone can still name everyone around the group and add what that person told the group that they love.

Hands-on Activity/Game: Extremes!

Supplies: none

Suggested Time - 5 min

In your group's space, create an imaginary line. All the way on the left side is one extreme, and all the way on the right side is the other extreme. Make sure there is enough space for people to stand anywhere along this imaginary line. To play this game, you will ask everyone several questions. Everyone will then respond by standing somewhere along the imaginary line according to how strong of an opinion they have on that item. For example, if you ask people "coffee? or tea?" people will stand far along the left-hand side if they strongly prefer coffee, and they will stand on the far end of the right-hand side if they strongly prefer tea. If they are neutral, they will stand in the middle.

After you ask each question, give students time to find their place either at one of the two extremes or somewhere along the line between them.

Which of these bring you JOY?:

Summer or Winter

Ice Cream or a popsicle

Birthday party or Christmas

Puppies or kittens

Sunshine or rain shower

Watching a movie or reading a book

Feel free to add more options if you have time

Have your group sit down and ask the following questions:

- Describe a time where you have been overcome with joy.
- Can anyone describe the difference between joy and happiness?

"Joy and happiness are wonderful feelings to experience, but are very different. Joy is more consistent and is cultivated internally. It comes when you make peace with who you are, why you are and how you are, whereas happiness tends to be externally triggered and is based on other people, things, places, thoughts and events."

(Psychology Today)

- Read the quote above. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

For the Leader...

Psalms, being the songbook of the Bible, are not written as a narrative chapter to chapter, but are instead each considered a Psalm in itself. Psalms are a different part of the Bible to read because each Psalm brings its own character and meaning from exactly when and where they might have been authored. However, the emotion of each Psalm individually can be easier to find as one connects with the place from which each Psalmist writes.

Scripture Lesson & Discussion

Supplies: Bibles

Suggested Time - 20 min

Divide your group into two smaller groups. Give one group Psalm 100 and give the other group Psalm 51: 10-12 to read. Ask each group to read their Psalm. They will need to come up with a way to describe what joy means and how we experience joy in the context of these passages.

Psalm 100 (NRSV)

¹Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

²Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

³Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 51: 10-12 (NRSV)

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Children's Focus:

- What does a joyful noise sound like?
- How does making a joyful noise help people praise God?
- Who are three of the most joyful people that you know? What do you think makes these people so joyful?
- How can anyone be in the middle of something really sad and still have joy?

Jr. High Focus:

- What do you think is the difference between happiness and joy?
- If joy is a deeper emotion than happiness, how can happiness become joy?
- It's easy to be joyful when things are going really well or you're having a lot of fun, but how do you think someone finds joy in the midst of a sad event?
- Describe a time you have truly rejoiced in something or about something. How is that a godly thing?

Sr. High Deep-End:

- Why is it important to have joy in your life?
- What happens when we pursue happiness instead of joy?
- Does living joyfully mean you always have to be happy? Why or why not?
- Joy remains elusive for some of us because we do not always pursue joy—we pursue happiness as instant gratification. How do we seek and claim the joy as a way of life?
- What are three of your greatest challenges for living a daily joyous life?

Hands-on Activity: Bracelets

Supplies: yellow beads

Suggested Time - 5 min

Each session, we will add a small colored bead to represent the Fruit of the Spirit that is studied. For this session add a small yellow bead to represent JOY.

Quote/Life Example or Testimony/Relatable Story

Supplies: none

Suggested Time - 10 min

Judi's Story: Joy for life

When Judi walks into a room, laughter and smiles are sure to follow. At 68 years old, she has a certain swagger and a vibrant energy that's matched only by her active grandchildren. She channels that energy into poetry, mentorship, writing, painting and spreading joy wherever she goes. "When you've been diagnosed with stage IV cancer, you have this laser-like focus on the moments that you're living in."

Judi channels this positive focus into everything she does. It shapes her painting and fuels her other creative passions, which include partnering with a former student as an artist-in-residence at her professional dance company.

The journey

Like most people, Judi was shocked when she was diagnosed with stage IV thyroid cancer in 2012. Since then, she's had six surgeries, as well as other treatments. One of the surgeries was to remove a large tumor from the back of her throat. That surgery brought with it the risk that Judi—a spoken word poet, teacher and grandmother—could permanently lose her voice.

The possibility of losing her voice was terrifying. Thankfully, Judi's surgeon, someone she came to know well and trust completely, suggested an innovative alternative: a robot usually used to perform tonsillectomies could remove the tumor through her mouth rather than her neck. Judi was optimistic and agreed to move forward. To her relief, the surgery was successful. To this day, Judi continues to use her powerful voice to speak up, tell her story and spread her light to the people around her.

Getting to joy

Judi has chosen to face the world with joy and courage. So it's surprising to learn that initially she kept her fear and sadness to herself. It's only been in the past few years that she has decided to be truly open about her struggle with cancer. And "live joy—not chase it."

"I recognized that if I could embrace my grief and my sorrow with the same passion that I did the things that I have passion about and that bring joy into my life, then I could get over an emotional hump, and I could be better at being a survivor and move away from being a victim."

Judi's capacity for joy is hard to match, as is her openness about the grief and sorrow she's experienced. It's her mission to accept every part of the cancer journey, and to turn it into something positive and meaningful. With her steadfast optimism and the support of her husband and community, Judi welcomes a life shaped by art, poems, stories and defining moments.

“You get to choose every day who you’re going to be and what you’re going to bring to the table. You can choose to be afraid. You can choose to be filled with grief and sorrow. And sometimes you have to do that. But you also get to choose joy.”

After reading the above quote ask the following questions:

- What do you think about this quote?
- How do you think this relates to the scripture we read?
- How do you think this relates to living out our faith?

How is joy evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit?

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Closing Prayer/Benediction – led by Adult

Supplies: none

Suggested Time - 5 min

Ask students to stand and to raise their arms joyfully into the air. Let them know that you will be reading a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. With this posture, it may help them feel a sense of rejoicing. During your prayer you will pause for them to give thanks to God for something in their lives that brings them great joy and for which they give thanks to God.

Loving Lord, how grateful we are for the many joys in life that You in Your grace have bestowed on us in abundance. Thank You for the simple things in life and those that we so often take for granted – for flowers and food, for lakes and trees, for our senses and the many joys that we gain from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.

Thank you for the joy of friends and family, for the sun and rain, the seasons and the many phases of the weather that bring such variety, refreshment, warmth and healing. Thank you for the joy of singing praises to You and now we all take a moment to give you praise and thanksgiving for those that bring us great joy (*pause for individual silent prayer*)

Thank you for the fullness of joy. And thank you for the Holy Spirit that gives us an abiding joy in all circumstances of life. Amen