



Faith Adventures for Children Together



Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet

Title: Nehemiah 8: 10 - 12

Theme: Gift of God's joy

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Welcome to the final session of looking at the Fruits of the Spirit. Today we shall be focusing on Joy.

In 2024 (the most recent census data available), 88 babies born in the UK were named 'Joy' – the 467th most popular name! The Office of National Statistics estimates that there are 2,286 people living in the UK called Joy.

The reading we have chosen today is often misquoted – and the passage can be taken out of context. The people were weeping – but were told that they should not be sad because God would give them joy, and this would make them strong.

In this session we will explore the difference between the emotion of joy and the joy that God gives us. We will think about how we express the joy of God – and whether Joy is different from happiness.

Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend,

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family.

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN.

(two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

**Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,
adventuring together with you wherever we may go.**

Amen

Active game – Joke Relay

“This is a holy day for our Lord, so do not be sad. The Lord will give you joy so that you can be strong.”

You might need:

- a book of jokes

Split your group into two smaller groups. They should stand in a line at opposite ends of the room.

Invite participants to think of their favourite short joke. (If they can't think of one, let them pick one from the joke book.)

The first person must run to the other end of the room and tell a joke to the first person in the opposite line. Having told the joke, they then go and stand at the back of the line. The person who has heard the joke then runs to the opposite line and tells their joke to the person in the front of that line. Continue until you have run out of jokes.

Quieter game – Pass the smile

This is a fun game which usually ends up in the group getting the giggles. It is simply a bit of fun but does have a nice link to joy and happiness.

Sit in a circle and take it in turns to pass a smile.

The leader begins by looking away from the person on their left, creating a large smile (using the whole of your face and eyes); then turns slowly to the person on their left, holding the smile as they turn.

This person now needs to create a large smile and turn slowly to the next person on their left, passing on a smile.

The aim is to try to pass a smile around the circle without laughing.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the International Children's Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%208%3A10-12&version=ICB>

Where can I find the story online?

Under-fives: Joy, joy, joy (Nehemiah 8:10), by The Scripture lady

<https://youtu.be/j8SrJgED5L8?si=0091cYPdWfo5X-GX>

Five-to-elevens: The joy of the Lord is your strength, by Bibleblinks-3105

<https://youtube.com/shorts/MXPtQfskR2I?si=HFnDEabDOUsgDSLq>

Songs to support the story

Under-fives: I've got the joy down in my heart, by Hi Heaven

<https://youtu.be/hpDrndhk1ko?si=5TcIW-wlWJrlmsbQ>

Five-to-elevens: Joy (What the world calls foolish), by Martin Smith

<https://youtu.be/1c3uibrPcVs?si=5vTXHn6qovquMmzt>

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

Start by joining in together with some laughter yoga.

Introduction to theme – Laughter yoga

Create a moment of pure joy with a time of laughter yoga.

You will find that it quickly turns from pretend laughter to real laughter.

Stand in a circle and follow the activities below. They will increase the level of laughter exercise each time.

Getting going.

Clap your hands saying 1,2, 1,2,3 with each clap, then replace the numbers with Ha, Ha, Ho, Ho, Ho. This is the action you do in between each laughter activity.

Bigger!

Imagine you are taking a drink of juice. Whenever you drink you will make a laugh sound, getting bigger each time:

Hold an imaginary thimble in between your thumb and finger, a little bit of juice, give it a little swirl round as you say ooooooh, then bring it to your mouth and knock your head back as you do a little laugh out loud – Ha Ha Ha.

Now take a cup in your hand, swirl it round as you say ooooooooooh, then bring it to your mouth, knocking your head back, a slightly larger laugh.

You get the idea; now get bigger with the juice and laugh each time.

e.g. a thimble, a mug, a pot with two handles, a bucket, a small bin, a large bin, a wheelie bin and so on.

Enjoy and don't forget to smile.

Here is a video so you can see how it goes with a simple starter activity, by imoves
<https://youtu.be/jr3z9KzdtAM?si=mwuTQvS-CgrjMzEI>

Here are some of the basic activities, by Miami Children's museum
<https://youtu.be/zDdnfzpC2s4?si=KIWRRxM-mLPgZbJb>

Have a time of discussion. First ask how that felt to them. Did it make them uncomfortable? Comfortable? Are they more full of joy now?

What induces joy, for you or for others? Is laughter a symptom of joy or is laughter joy itself?

Take a few minutes to explore where else joy is mentioned in the Bible.

As a way to show joy, describe joy using the letters J.O.Y.

J – (something about how Jesus brings joy)

O – (Something about how others bring joy)

Y – (Something about how you bring joy)

- How do we find joy when life is hard?

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).



Joy by Corrinne Averiss (2019: Quarto Publishing PLC)
ISBN -101910277657

Fern decides she will find a way to bring the joy back to her Nanna. She goes to catch the joy and bring it to her.

- How can we find God's Joy in our lives?

You can find a retelling of this story by searching *Joy* by Corrinne Averiss on Youtube.

Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- How can we have joy even when we are sad?
- I wonder how you would describe joy
- Why does God want to give us joy?

Wondering: ways to reflect on the theme

- What is the opposite of joy?
- If you had to give joy a colour, what would it be?
- Is there a difference between happiness and joy?
- What do you think God wants you to do with the strength you get from joy?

What's in the box? (for under-fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing, "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Some pieces of coloured card – talk to the children about which colour brings them joy
- Some smiling emoji images – I wonder which emoji represents joy, talk to the children about why joy is more than a smile
- A pop-up toy – joy bubbles up in us, and when we laugh and smile with joy other people join in too
- A big smile – why not pass the smile around and see what happens?
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc.)

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity – Pop-up coil prayers

Joy is a deep-down joy which bubbles up inside us and is like a spring that is difficult to contain. Wind a pipe cleaner around your finger to make a spring. Think about all the things that make you bubble with a deep-down excitement; it might be an event, a person or a place. Hold the spring in your hand and say thank you to God. Ask God to fill you until you are overflowing with joy.

Dear Jesus, help us to grow the fruits of your Spirit in us so that we can be more like you in all we do and say. Grow in us joy which is overflowing, that celebrates and rejoices and is visible to others. Amen



Spoken prayer

When I say, "*God of joy,*" please say back to me "*Fill our hearts with joy!*" (You could ask everyone to jump for joy every time the word joy is mentioned.)

Leader: God of joy,

All: Fill our hearts with joy!

Leader: Thank you for the moments of everyday joy. God of joy,

All: Fill our hearts with joy!

Leader: Help us to find joy even when life is difficult. God of joy,

All: Fill our hearts with joy!

Leader: Help us to share joy through kindness, friendship, and encouragement. God of joy,

All: Fill our hearts with joy!

Leader: May your joy shine through us today and always. God of joy,

All: Fill our hearts with joy!

Amen.

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Joy box

What you need:

- small box with a lid
- small pieces of paper
- pipe cleaners
- card
- pen
- tape or glue

What you do:

Start by creating a character or shape out of the card – one that fits inside the box.

Decorate the inside of the lid with the words “God’s joy”.

Next take the pipe cleaner and twist it lightly round your finger to make a coil. The length needs to be enough that it extends beyond the top of the box.

Attach the pipe cleaner to the bottom of the box using tape and then attach the character/shape to the top of the pipe cleaner. Shut the box lid and open again. Hopefully, the character should spring out of the box a little like a jack-in-the-box.

Decorate the outside of the box if you wish. You could also write the Bible verse onto a small piece of paper and tuck it into the box.

This box is to be given to someone else – so that you are sharing God’s joy.



Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we’ve learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

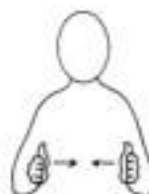
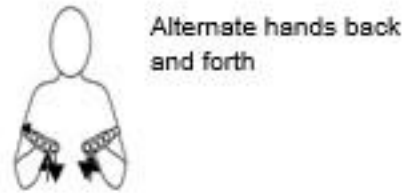
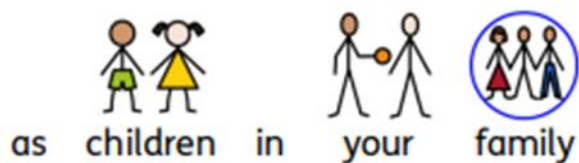
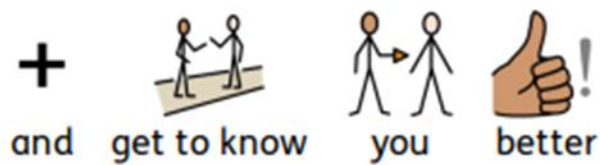
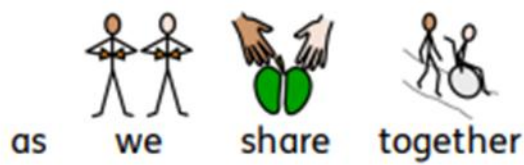
- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you about something that brings them great joy.
- Try smiling at people today or inducing a giggle and see how many people join with you.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Joy** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk

Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group bit.ly/FACT_FB

Why not have a look at next week’s resource on **Fantastic beasts of the Bible**





 The Lord's Prayer

 Our
  Father,
  who art
  in
  heaven,
  hallowed
  be
  thy name.

 Thy
  kingdom
  come,
  thy
  will
  be done





 on
  earth
  as it is
  in
  heaven.

 Give
  us
  this day
  our
  daily
  bread

 and
  forgive
  us
  our
  sins
  As
  we
  forgive
  those
  who
  sin
  against
  us

 Lead
  us
  not
  into
  temptation
  but
  deliver
  us
  from
  evil

 For
  thine
  is the
  kingdom,
  the
  power
  and
  the
  glory

 For ever
  and
  ever
  Amen

