



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*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:

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Philippians 4:4-7 - Rejoice in the Lord Always

Theme: Every day's a celebration day with God

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

Philippians

Paul the Apostle wrote to the church in Philippi (which was in Macedonia, now Greece) while he was imprisoned in Rome. A term in prison wasn't a punishment in Roman times, it was where you were sent to await either trial or execution. The upbeat message Paul sends to the Philippians is all the more remarkable given he likely knew his fate – but his message is the theme for this week: always rejoice for everything God has given to you.

We need to remember, though, that children are not always as good at processing emotions as older people can be. While this session is all about recognizing the good things that God has given, and done, for us there may be children in your group who are feeling sad or finding it difficult to be joyful.

As leaders we need to be aware of these tensions and emotions, and provide opportunities for children to talk and share – either with the group or, if more appropriate, in a one-to-one conversation. If a child wants some 'alone time', or isn't joining in as you would hope, facilitate that (whilst maintaining Good Practice guidelines).

You might find it helpful to designate another member of the leadership team as 'pastoral carer'.



Together

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

In-person game

Split the group into pairs, each participant sitting opposite their partner. The object of the game is to maintain a straight and solemn face while trying to make the other person laugh or smile. You can speak, gesture, pull faces, but must sit on the chair at all times and cannot touch your partner – so no tickling! The winner is the one who refrains from smiling, laughing or giggling the longest. You could then have a play-off with the winners from each pair forming new pairs to play and the other participants taking the role of judges to spot when someone starts to smile or laugh.

Online game

The game of fortunately/unfortunately is a story telling game. Each person takes their turn to add a sentence to the story. The first person starts the story with one sentence, the second person then adds a sentence which starts with "Unfortunately...". The third person starts their sentence with "Fortunately..." And the story continues, alternating between unfortunately and fortunately until the game runs out of steam and the leader rounds it off. E.g. Three children went for a picnic. Unfortunately they had only taken food in cans and had forgotten the can opener. Fortunately George had a keyring with a can opener on it. Unfortunately Alex tried to grab the can opener and ended up with a cut finger. Fortunately they had remembered to pack a first aid kit....



Experience

For this story we recommend using the New Century Version

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=philippians+4%3A4-7&version=NCV>

Where can I find the story online?

Under Fives: Little book of Joy by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu

<https://youtu.be/7HYwTVpqbdg>

Five plus: Phillipians 4:4-7 by Covenant Church <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMclYOLIXxk>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: The joy of the Lord is my strength by Dale Reichel <https://youtu.be/noyalVySb3E>

I've got the joy joy joy – Sunday School Songs <https://youtu.be/xoOyjO1sbXo> (You may want to stop this shortly before the end depending on your feelings about the last verse!)

Five to elevens: Joy of the Lord by Rend Collective <https://youtu.be/x3gLeCiMJqI>

JOY – Kids Version <https://youtu.be/09eE8eva0bk> (More suitable for older children)

Explore

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

A new story to share

This passage reminds us that every negative situation can be turned around into a reason to celebrate.

We had some fun creating Limericks that do this too.

Limericks are short poems that tell a humorous tale. They have been around for hundreds of years and even Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling enjoyed writing them. They usually poke fun at someone or a situation but we have used them to turn a possible problem into seeing the positive, creating a short story.

Take about a story about a person who is riding an old moped. They have an accident one night, which is awful. But then we see that due to the accident they now ride a brand new Harley Davidson. Here is the limerick:

There once was a person called Charly,
Who owned an old bike called Marley
On an old foggy lane
Off Charly came
And now rides a new bike called Harley

We based many of ours on true stories, taking a negative and finding the positive in it.

There once was a young man named Mike
Who lost a wheel off his bike
But he found it quite fun
To ride with just one
And now he's called unicyc Mike



There was a young girl in a race
 Who fell, right onto her face
 But she didn't give up
 Kept her eyes on the cup
 And ended up coming third place (which is bronze)

There was a bookworm called May
 Who never went out to play
 But her mum made her go
 To a literary show
 Where she had a fabulous day

Outside the window was rain
 And William thought this was a pain
 But inside wasn't so bad
 He played with his Dad
 And won at every game

In an exam one day, sat Steve,
 Who wanted to get up and leave
 But he took a deep breath
 And gave it his best
 And achieved all that Steve could achieve

Why not try to write some yourself, its sometimes easier to write them in a group.
 Use the first line to introduce the person or situation,
 The second line to introduce the problem
 Using the last 3 lines to turn it around for good or humour

Discussion Activity – Rose, Thorn, Bud

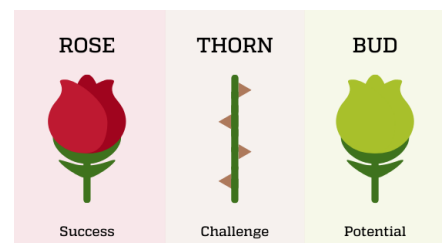
Guidelines for group leaders

The aim of this activity is to enable discussions around emotional wellbeing. No-one should be forced or pressured into sharing. Using the image of a rose bush, the rose flower reminds us of our joys and successes; the thorn reminds us that situations can sometimes be prickly and uncomfortable, thinking of the challenges of the past week (listening to others share their own challenges can help us recognise that everyone can face challenges, we are not alone); the bud reminds us of the potential for good things to come in the near future. Even when we're in prickly, uncomfortable challenges, there is still the hope of good things to come.

Activity Instructions

Allow some time for participants to reflect on the three questions below. Invite participants to share their responses with the group.

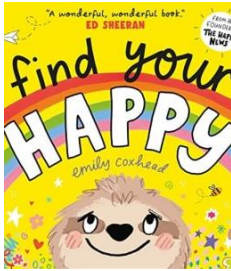
- Rose (Success) – What has been your highlight from the last week?
- Thorn (Challenge) – What have you found challenging in the last week?
- Bud (Potential) – What are you looking forward to in the next few days?





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.



'Find your happy' by Emily Coxhead

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

- It's not always easy to think of celebrating when things aren't going well or we are sad. What can help us to stay positive?
- What are the things that make you happy and what are the things that take your happiness away?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder why we say re-joice? Words that start with 're-' (it's called a prefix) usually mean doing something again. What are we re-doing?
- I wonder whether you'd rather feel happy all the time but not be able to smile OR smile all the time but never feel happy?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and singing "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). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. 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:

- A heart (thinking about how your heart feels at different times: happy sad, worried or excited. Today's theme reminds us it's OK to be sad sometimes but we can be happy too, because God loves us)
- Mr Happy book (when he meets Mr Miserable, the most miserable person in the world, Mr Happy wonders if he can make him happy by taking him to Happyland. This book will help you to explore finding happiness)
- A big smile and a mirror (it is very hard to keep being sad when someone is smiling at you - try having a big smile and see what happens)
- Stress ball with a face on it (when we are feeling angry sometimes it is good to squeeze something which helps us let go some of the angry. Like in the TV programme 'Bing', you can blow away the angry too, why not try that?)
- A wooden spoon or circles of card with a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other side (help us to turn our frown upside-down, God wants us to rejoice in all we have been given, that's hard sometimes, can we turn our frown upside-down, maybe by telling something funny or making the children laugh? It is hard to resist someone laughing)
- Stretchy man (this stretchy man is very happy and the happiness stretches a long way, reflect on the story and how our happiness can go a long way and spread around other people.)
- 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

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Celebration Chocolate Prayers

The Passage from Philippians begins with a call to celebrate 'Rejoice in the Lord' and tells us we can take everything to God in prayer.

Each day can be a day to celebrate and talk with God. Here are some ideas using a box of Celebrations to help you give praise and thanks to God and to ask God to help others.

Decide on a prayer for each of the chocolates and take it in turns to take a chocolate from the box and pray the prayer for that chocolate. When you have completed your prayers, you can eat the chocolates as a celebration together, or share them with someone.

Here are some suggestions for prayers for each of the chocolates in the box but you might like to come up with your own ideas as a group.

Bounty – Pray a prayer of thanks for everything God has given you: food, clothes, church, shelter...

Twix – Pray a prayer of thanks for your family and friends.

Snickers – God wants us to be joyful and happy. Think of something or someone that has made you smile or laugh and say thank you to God.

Milky Way – Praise God for creation and all the wonder and beauty that God has given us in our world. Where you have seen God at work in Creation or perhaps through someone's actions or something that someone has said. Say thank you to God.

Maltesers – Pray that God would show you someone you can help out by spending time with them or giving them something they need. Say thank you to God for that person and ask God to bless them.

Mars – Think about people who are sad, lonely or sick and pray that they will know God's peace and healing and ask God to bless them.

Galaxy – Think about all the countries in the world, countries that may be at war or struggling due to disasters or hunger and drought. Pray for God's peace and pray for the people who are in difficult situations.

Spoken prayer

Praying with the senses.

This is a grounding prayer based on the five senses. Introduce each of the senses and read out the instructions, allowing some time for participants to reflect. Then read the spoken prayer in bold, before moving onto the next section.

Touch

Find a comfortable place to sit and close your eyes. Take time to focus and be aware of your feeling of touch. The feeling of the seat or floor against your body. The pressure of your feet on the ground. The feeling of your clothing against your skin. The movement of your chest as you breathe in and out.

Lord we give thanks for the things that we can feel – help us to be aware of the good ways in which we can use touch to make the world better for those around us.



Hear

Keep your eyes closed and begin to focus on your hearing. What sounds can you hear around you? Notice the quiet soft sounds, louder sounds, sounds that are nearby, and those sounds which are further away in the distance.

Lord, we give thanks for the things that we can hear – help us to listen and to notice the calls of those who are in need of love and support. Help us recognise the voices which may have been quietened or silenced.

See

Open your eyes. Take a careful look at the things that are around you. Slowly move your gaze around the space starting from the left to the right. What do you see? What stands out for you? Notice the different colours and shapes.

Lord, we give thanks for the things that we can see – help us to keep our eyes open so that we may be aware of the beauty of your creation that is all around us each and every day.

Taste

Think about your sense of taste. What have you tasted today? Was there a particular taste that stood out to you? Spend some time giving thanks to God for the food that you have eaten.

Lord, we give thanks for the things that we taste and eat – help us to savour and taste the richness of the opportunities that you provide for us.

Smell

Think about your sense of smell. Can you think of a smell that is memorable to you? What are your favourite smells?

Lord, we give thanks for the things that we can smell – help us to be aware of when things don't smell right, and to speak up in the face of injustice.

Lord, open our senses so that we are able to recognise your wonders. 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. [See here for more suggestions.](#)

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.

An edible Rose

Just as a rose bush has flowers, thorns and buds, our life has joy, hardships and hope. This craft is an opportunity to remind ourselves of this, while making something tasty to eat!

You will need:

Twiglets or chocolate fingers or long Matchmaker chocolates

A strawberry



Green fondant icing
A knife (not a very sharp knife)
A small tube of liquid icing

What you do:

Form some leaves and thorns from edible icing

Wrap the leaves onto the twiglet. Stick the thorns on with some liquid icing.

Carefully use a knife to cut some marks into the strawberry to make it look like a rosebud. Take care with the younger children when they are using knives, some assistance may be required for this.

Stick the strawberry on the end of the stem to make a rose.

Alternatively:

Create a rose from a twig and some tissue paper, or if you are feeling very creative, form a rose from some tin foil or other material.

Popcorn

When we're filled with God's joy, it can burst out in celebration, even when things seem dull and lifeless. Watch how the popcorn kernels change when we cook them. If you haven't got the facilities for this, you could use a popcorn machine or microwave popcorn.

You will need:

3 tablespoons oil

1/3 cup popcorn kernels

A large pan with a lid

What you do:

Heat the oil in a pan on medium high heat. If you are using coconut oil, allow all of the solid oil to melt.

Put 3 or 4 popcorn kernels into the oil and wait for them to pop. When the kernels pop, add the rest of the kernels in an even layer.

Cover the pot, remove from heat and count 30 seconds (Count out loud! It's fun to do with the children)

(This heats the oil to the right temperature, then waiting 30 seconds brings all the other kernels to a near-popping temperature so that when they are put back on the heat, they all pop at about the same time.)

Return the pan to the heat and the popcorn should begin popping soon. Once the popping starts, gently shake the pan by moving it back and forth over the burner.

As the popcorn pops, try to keep the lid slightly ajar to let the steam from the popcorn release, keeping the popcorn drier.

Once the popping slows to several seconds between pops, remove the pan from the heat:

Remove the lid and put the popcorn immediately into a wide bowl.

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:

- A smile can be very infectious and sometimes people can forget to smile, even though it actually takes more muscles to frown than it does to smile. Your challenge is to see how many people you can make smile this week by sharing a smile with them, or doing something that will make them happy.
- You might have heard the phrase "Count your blessings". Sometimes people use it to mean that you should never feel sad or fed up, but it doesn't mean that. It just means not to forget all the good things God has done for you. How many things in your life are you grateful for? Can you list or draw some of them?



We hope you enjoyed exploring the story from Philippians with us.

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

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Pentecost**.

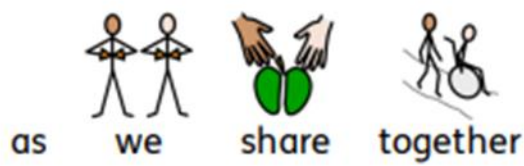




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



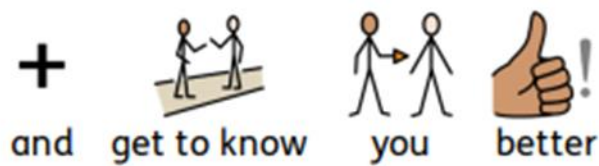
as we share together



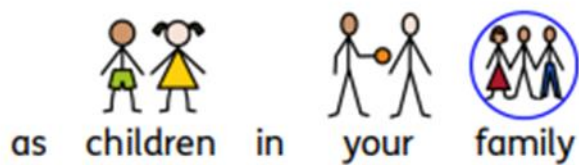
pray together



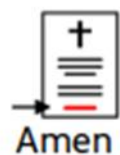
play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen

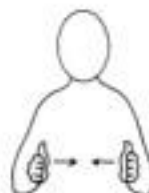
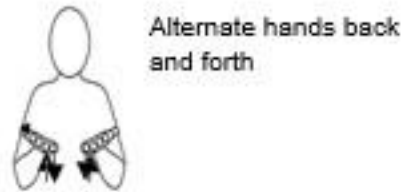




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