

Faith Adventures Youth Resource



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

Embedded in Faith Adventures: Children Together, this youth resource is intergenerational in nature and designed to foster God-connection in church, home 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/How-To-FAYR

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

Let's start our time with God and each other well

Use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Be with us as we learn more about you through stories and people in the Bible.

Help us to walk in your way and follow your path.

Be with us as we make decisions that affect our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Amen.

Alternatively, you may join with the widgeit prayer found in Faith Adventures: Children Together, or else the Lord's Prayer found at the end of this session.

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 2 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

This link takes you to Nehemiah 8:10-12 in the International Children's Bible

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

¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy good food and sweet drinks. Send some to people who have none. Today is a holy day to the Lord. Don't be sad. The joy of the Lord will make you strong."

¹¹ The Levites helped calm the people. They said, "Be quiet. This is a holy day. Don't be sad."

¹² Then all the people went away to eat and drink. They sent some of their food to others. And they celebrated with great joy. They finally understood what they had been taught.

The Holy Bible, International Children's Bible® Copyright© 1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.

You may wish to research different versions of this reading on www.biblegateway.com
Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, *The Message*, NIRV

Watch: The Joy (Feat. Dave Dennis), by The Belonging Co
https://youtu.be/WYcpL6otp_Y?si=3VoHq_Dy1pikoECD

Questions for discussion

- What does this song say to you about the attitude of joy?

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

This is a new way to explore the Bible passage and the theme for this week.

Alternatively, you may wish to use the Explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

Start by joining in together with some laughter yoga.

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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

This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.



Patch Adams – ENG The experiment, by Andrea Alfieri

<https://youtu.be/1zR49wxmIDM?si=kgCa5Vj57x1uURVG>

The experiment in the scene shows how we connect with people through joy. By saying “Hi”, people connect and the world is a more joyful place.

- How do we share God's joy with others?

Group discussion

- What difference does God's joy make in our lives?
- The Bible passage suggests giving things away – I wonder if giving things away give us joy
- What sort of strength do you get from joy?

Personal reflection

- In the Bible passage, they celebrated with great joy. Is this more than “just” joy – does this mean they are even stronger?
- What do you think God wants you to do with the strength you get from joy?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together

Prayers Respond to the theme by writing or saying a short prayer. Alternatively, use the creative prayer from Faith Adventures: Children Together for this session, or use the prayer activity below. Alternatively, light a candle and play some music while you listen and talk to God together.

Creative prayer – 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

Loving God,

We thank you for your promise that "the joy of the Lord makes you strong".

Fill our hearts with your joy and remind us of that joy when we face challenges. Help us to find joy in our everyday lives and help us to share your joy with others by showing kindness, hope, and encouragement.

May your joy be our strength each day, guiding us to make good choices, to persevere through difficulties, and to trust in your loving presence.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Responding together

This is an opportunity for a social justice challenge, some research, craftivism, or a craft or STEM activity. You may have a specific activity chosen but free choice is also an option. Here are some suggestions for this week's theme. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

Joyful, joyful

You may have heard these questions, or thought similar:

"Aren't Christians meant to be cheerful all the time?" "Does nothing ever get a Christian down?" "How can Christians feel joy when the world is in chaos?"

What would your response be to these questions and thoughts? Could you spend a few minutes debating it? Could you creatively create a response to this? Perhaps by pasting pictures of news articles on paper and writing some joyful messages from the Bible over the top. This could also be done digitally.

Did you know there is a saint of comedians – Saint Lawrence of Rome. A 3rd-century deacon, he is recognised for his legendary sense of humour, which he maintained while being martyred on a gridiron over an open fire. According to historical and religious accounts, while Lawrence was being roasted alive by Roman authorities, he famously quipped, *"I am cooked on that side; turn me over, and eat!"*

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.

Challenge

Discipleship doesn’t stop when you walk out of the church door – it is a part of everyday life. Take a challenge with you and try to make it part of your week.

You may think of your own suggestion of what you as an individual or a group might do in the coming week in response to what you have explored today. If not, here are some suggestions:

- Use one of the “conversation starter” questions or the question below to talk with someone of a different generation or from a different setting and share your questions, thoughts and insights together. **Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you about something that brings them great joy.**
- Research something suggested by JPIT Resources (jpit.uk) or *Commitment for Life* (cforl.co.uk)
- Try smiling at people today or inducing a giggle and see how many people join with you.

Thank you for exploring the **Nehemiah** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on www.bit.ly/FACT_FB

  
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

