

WHAT IS JOY?

Joy comes from the Lord in good times and bad. It is a deep sense of well-being that is not determined by our circumstances. Gratitude and joy go hand in hand as we focus on Him and all that He has done for us.

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
PSALM 126:3

PARENTS / KIDS

BEST USE

A family time activity exploring the difference between happiness and joy

ADVANCE PREP

Food coloring, a clear glass of water, cooking oil, a spoon, and a Bible

Step One

Read John 15:11 and discuss the difference between joy and happiness. Joy is a gift from God that doesn't change with circumstances. Happiness is often in response to happenings.

Step Two

Pour a couple of drops of food coloring in the cup of water and stir with the spoon. The food coloring colors the entire cup of water. The color in the water is just like the joy we have from God when we ask Him to come into our lives. Our joy is found in Him and what He has done for us.

Step Three

Discuss some things that seem to make you happy (e.g. winning a game, a good grade, a special treat, etc.). Happiness is good, but temporary. Pour some oil into the glass of colored water. Notice how the oil just stays on the surface. The oil is like happiness. It is only temporary and is just on the surface. Would you rather have joy or happiness?

Step Four

Talk through the following questions:

- What reasons do we have to be joyful?
- Do others see joy in us even when we face disappointments?

Step Five

Conclude your time together with a family laugh party. Try to make each other laugh. (Consider tickles and watching funny videos, etc.) As the laughter starts it can quickly spread, getting bigger and louder. As we experience God's joy it grows deeper and stronger in our lives and is contagious, spreading to others.

Pray

Ask God to help each member of your family connect to God's joy in good times and in hard times.

PARENTS / TEENS

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens to discover joy from a Biblical perspective and understand it is possible to have joy regardless of circumstances

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible or device that has a Bible and a dry erase marker

Step One

Ask everyone what comes to mind when they hear the word joy. Ask if there's a difference between joy and happiness.

Step Two

Read James 1:2-4. Would a person be happy when they are going through a trial or hard time? (Not likely.) So how could they have joy? What does this passage say about trials or the testing of your faith?

Step Three

Joy is available regardless of circumstances. What are some tough things you or those you know have experienced in the last few years? Did you/they seem to have joy in the midst of those tough times?

Step Four

Joy is not something we can just muster up on our own. We must look to the source of joy in order to receive it and practice it throughout life. Read Romans 15:13. How is God described in these verses? What is God filling a person with?

Step Five

According to Romans 15:13, God is full of hope and is the one who can fill you with joy. Using a dry erase marker, write the word JOY on your bathroom mirror. Every time you see it on your mirror over the next few weeks, remember that God can offer you the gift of joy.