

Joy in Jesus

John 15:9-17 NIV

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

More Than a Feeling...



Jesus tells us that He has come to make our joy complete (John 15:11). What does this mean, though? It's important for children to develop an understanding of what joy is and how it differs from mere happiness. This lesson explains that joy is more than a temporary feeling. It is an inner attitude of peace and security, given by Jesus. Happiness fades with circumstance, but joy is deep and lasting!

Genuine joy comes from abiding in God's love. When we rest in His presence and trust Him, we know the peace that passes all understanding and experience lasting joy. This doesn't come from our own power or from circumstances. Jesus is the one who provides it. Joy is more than a feeling. It's an attitude that comes from the Holy Spirit. Out of gratitude for God's love, we can love and serve one another!

Passage: John 15:9-17 (optional: add Psalm 98)

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Construction paper; paper plates; glue; markers or crayons; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; string; items that make someone happy (treats, toys, etc.); musical instruments; Bibles.

More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story "John's Letter About Love"](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible story "Jesus Loves Everyone"](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

Object Lesson (5 minutes)

Greet children and discuss the difference between joy and happiness...

Hello, children of God!

What makes you feel happy? What kinds of things bring happiness for you? *Hold up examples as you describe.* Perhaps you feel happy about a certain toy that you like, or a book you enjoy reading. Do hobbies or games make you happy? Or maybe you feel happy about having a certain kind of special treat, like candy or chips. *Optional: include a "disappointment" of some sort, like an empty container or a candy that's been melted.*

Well, that's pretty upsetting. This one isn't good! That doesn't make me happy at all...

Here's another question: what makes you joyful? Some people think joy and happiness are the same thing, but they are not. Happiness is a feeling, usually based on circumstances or outward things. Joy, on the other hand, goes much deeper than that. Joy is more than just an emotion. It's an attitude that comes from the Holy Spirit. In fact, even when things aren't going our way, we can still experience joy.

In the Bible, Jesus told His disciples that He came to place His joy in them (and us), and so that joy could be complete. He came to bring joy! How do we get this joy, though? In the same passage, Jesus asked His followers to abide in His love. This means living in the knowledge of how much God loves us and obeying Him as a result. Obeying God means loving Him and loving others. There's a special way to remember this: "J-O-Y." Put Jesus first in your life. Put Others next, and put Yourself last. This doesn't mean ignoring our own needs, but remembering that they are secondary to the needs of others and the importance of Jesus.

Jesus loves us so much that He died for us. He chose us to be His friends. We are more than servants or students. Jesus calls us His friends! He cares about us and wants (but doesn't force) our love, too. Knowing this should give us a joy too great to keep to ourselves. We can praise God for His sacrifice and make a joyful noise to Him!

Jesus loves us more than we can imagine. When we rest completely in His constant love, we can have lasting peace and genuine joy. Happiness doesn't quite last. Eventually, the temporary things we think will make us happy will fade away. The only way to have lasting eternal joy is to place our hope in Christ. Even when things are difficult, we can lean on Him and know that He is with us. So regardless of what makes you happy, we can all know that Jesus makes us JOYful!

Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for giving us joy.

Help us to put our hope in your lasting peace.

Please help us to put you first

And share your joy with others.

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)



This passage reminds us of how Jesus offers us lasting joy when we abide in His love and care for one another. Get students thinking with some opening activities. Some possible ideas include:

- Happy, happy, joy: Play this game like the classic “duck, duck, goose”, but with a change of words. When the tagging student calls out “joy” instead of “happy”, that will be the signal to chase.
- Happy/Sad freeze dance: discuss the rapid change of emotions, which contrasts with the lasting joy of Jesus. Have students dance along to upbeat music in a quick and happy manner. Change the music to a slower, sadder tone and encourage kids to freeze or to dance very slowly. Alternatively, play this as a “red light/green light” variation, calling out “happy” or “sad” to move or stop.
- Make a joyful noise: provide students with simple instruments or noisemakers. Invite them to create their own “band” of sorts to make joyful music and noises. Discuss how we are called to praise God out of the joy and love that we have in our hearts.
- Stability versus change: provide students with something that is solid and stable (a rock, a Bible) and something that is quickly altered (ice, a popsicle, tower of blocks). Explore the differences between them, pointing out how some things in our lives change quickly, while other things remain. When our hope is found in the things that don’t change (God and His word), it lasts!
- J-O-Y joy: Have students write the letters “J-O-Y” on a large piece of paper or white board, and look at the acronym “Jesus/Others/Yourself.” Discuss ways that we can focus on each part of that acronym.

Explain to students that this lesson reminds us of the love that God has for us, and how He wants us to rest in His love and share it with others. Understanding that will give us deep joy on the inside, based not in circumstances but in Jesus, who is always with us.

Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)



This passage is part of the conversation that Jesus had with His disciples prior to His death on the cross. It doesn't lend itself as much to acting out, but it is important to recognize that Jesus is talking. You might have students take turns reading these verses, or read them out loud and pause to explain what is being said.

John 15:9-11 NIV *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. (10) If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. (11) I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

Explain to students that Jesus is talking in this passage. It takes place in the upper room where Jesus shared the last supper with His disciples, and He shared important truths with them. These words are for us, too. We see the importance of remaining close to Christ and abiding in His love. Explain how "abide" is a similar word to "live." We are to live in the love of Jesus. Abiding means that we rest in the relationship we have with Him. We also share His love with others. When we do this, our "joy will be full," as it says here.

Ask: What does it mean to be joyful? How is joy different from happiness?

(Discuss this difference, if you have not already).

John 15:12-15 NIV *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (14) You are my friends if you do what I command. (15) I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have*

called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

This is a wonderful and remarkable promise. The Son of God calls us friends! Jesus commanded His disciples (and therefore us) to love one another, not just on a surface level, but in the same way He loves. The blessing attached to this commandment is that following it makes us friends of Christ. We are not just workers or servants, but close friends with Jesus! He cares about us so much that He considers us buddies. We are given that much of a close connection with Him.

Ask: Who are some friends you have? What does it mean to be friends with Jesus?

John 15:16-17 NIV *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (17) This is my command: Love each other.*

This is a wonderful and comforting reminder of how we are known, loved, and chosen by Jesus. Of course, we can make the choice to deny and reject Him, or to follow Him. But He has already chosen us to abide in Him and bear fruit. He wants to be close to us, if we accept that. He wants to love us and He wants us to love one another. Remind students that God chose each of them for a special purpose. He has a plan for our lives! Knowing that should give us an abundance of joy and delight.

Ask: How do you show love to others? Why is it important to remember that we are chosen by God?

Note: the final verses here are an optional follow-up, using a reflection on the Psalms to remember how we can respond to the love that God has for us.

Psalms 98:4-6 NIV *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; (5) make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of*

singing, (6) with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn—shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

The joy we have in Jesus fills us completely. We rejoice in what He has provided for us and in how great our God is. As a reaction and out of thanksgiving for this, we can worship the Lord with our praises and joy. We can sing to Him, play instruments, and celebrate His goodness and grace. These verses (and many others in the Psalms) remind us that God loves to hear from us. Whether we are the next pop star or can barely carry a tune, our joyful noise is still appreciated by God when we give it genuinely to Him. So we should lift our voices (or instruments) and praise Him!

Ask: How do you like to worship and praise? Do you sing or play an instrument?

Happiness is fleeting, and there are things that constantly threaten to take away our circumstantial feelings. But the joy we find in Jesus is more than a passing emotion. Joy is an attitude and fruit of the Holy Spirit. Remind students that joy can always be with us because Jesus is always with us. We have the confidence of His constant presence. No matter what happens to us, we can be joyful because He makes us joyful. That joy can spill over to others and help us to love and care for them, too!

Craft one: "Happy Joy Mask"

You will need:

- Paper plates
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Optional: string and hole punch
- Popsicle stick



Procedure:

1. On one side of the paper plate, decorate to resemble a happy face, using as much detail as desired. Add a verse or caption.
2. On the other side of the plate, place a cross and/or heart to represent the deep joy that we have within when abiding in Jesus.
3. Add a popsicle stick, if desired, to make the happy face a mask, and/or a string or pipe cleaner to hang and display the other side.
4. Embellish with extra captions or decorations. Use as a mask or hanger to recall the importance of happiness versus joy.



Craft Two: “JOY Door Hanger”

You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Decorations (stickers, glitter, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Cut a rectangle out of construction paper or cardstock.
2. Cut a hole at the top of the paper, large enough for a door knob.
3. Along the side of the paper, write the letters “JOY”.
Jutting out from each letter, write the words “Jesus,”
“Others,” and “Yourself.”
4. Add verses, captions, and decorations as desired.
Hang over a doorway to remember the “recipe for joy”!



John 15:13 NIV

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's
life for one's friends.*



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Word Search Puzzle

Father – Son – Abide – Love – Commandment – Love

Servant – Jesus – Fruit – Chosen – Greater – Called

X	L	M	R	L	O	V	E	K	X	K	C
N	L	J	S	O	N	G	S	I	P	A	O
A	S	H	I	V	T	G	E	Y	F	K	M
C	A	L	L	E	D	C	R	C	A	K	M
G	V	B	L	K	Y	Z	V	H	T	W	A
H	O	Y	I	Q	U	N	A	O	H	F	N
T	S	F	E	D	J	V	N	S	E	R	D
O	X	W	G	R	E	A	T	E	R	U	M
T	Z	D	G	U	S	L	A	N	A	I	E
G	S	M	J	C	U	L	O	L	A	T	N
O	L	M	Z	T	S	Q	K	G	F	O	T
P	O	C	D	W	E	N	N	V	I	D	E

Word Search Answers

X	L	M	R	L	O	V	E	K	X	K	C
N	L	J	S	O	N	G	S	I	P	A	O
A	S	H	I	V	T	G	E	Y	F	K	M
C	A	L	L	E	D	C	R	C	A	K	M
G	V	B	L	K	Y	Z	V	H	T	W	A
H	O	Y	I	Q	U	N	A	O	H	F	N
T	S	F	E	D	J	V	N	S	E	R	D
O	X	W	G	R	E	A	T	E	R	U	M
T	Z	D	G	U	S	L	A	N	A	I	E
G	S	M	J	C	U	L	O	L	A	T	N
O	L	M	Z	T	S	Q	K	G	F	O	T
P	O	C	D	W	E	N	N	V	I	D	E