

SESSION 5: CHOOSE JOY

PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON [ACTS 16]

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."



DAILY DEVOTION: ACTS 16

Paul and Silas had every right to despair when they were wrongfully beaten and imprisoned. They had every right to rejoice at the opportunity to escape. But they were not ordinary men, because they had a relationship with Jesus. Their relationship with Jesus gave them unwavering joy, even in ever-changing circumstances.

Paul and Silas placed their measure of success, self-worth, and happiness in God. They were confident in His care; therefore, they were able to sing and speak of Him even while wearing chains in the darkness of the inner prison. And, from the darkness of the prison, God heard their worship. There is no place on earth, no circumstance, in which we cannot rejoice in God.

At this time, Roman guards who lost their prisoners were sentenced to die in the same shameful manner their lost prisoners would have died. Instead of leaving their jailer to die, Paul and Silas chose to stay. Imagine the jailer's confusion! He had listened to their songs from the inner prison. Now the men were staying, when they easily could have escaped! Because they were confident of Christ's care for them, Paul and Silas were able to care for others more than themselves. They were able to share the joy of Christ with a jailer, who had likely mistreated them.

Sharing Christ is sharing joy. Unlike happiness, joy is not based on circumstances. Paul and Silas were not happy to be in prison, but they were happy to be included in the family of God. They chose to focus on the eternal joy that comes from the surety of our hope in Jesus. True joy comes from having a relationship with our unchanging God.

In **Philippians 4:4** Paul says to a persecuted church, "**Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice!**" In ever-changing circumstances, you may find it difficult choose joy. When hardship is all you can see, look up. Choose to focus on the eternal, rather than the temporary. In Christ, we have many reasons to rejoice!

Personally list the reasons you have to be joyful in all circumstances. Then prayerfully consider the things that attempt to steal your joy. Like Paul and Silas, choose to rejoice always and in every circumstance. As Nehemiah said in **Nehemiah 8:10**, "**... the joy of the Lord is your strength.**"

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INDOOR ACTIVITY: HAPPY OR SAD

Materials: None

Directions: Designate one area as the “sad side” and the one as the “happy side.” As you give scenarios, kids decide whether that scenario would make them feel happy or sad by moving to the appropriate area. Ask kids to give explain their decisions. No one is allowed to stay in the middle!

Example Scenarios:

- You win a million dollars, but half of the money is stolen.
- You get a new puppy.
- You fall off your bike and scrape your elbows.
- You break your arm, but now everyone is nice to you.
- Your favorite show has a marathon, and everyone in the family watches it with you.
- It rains.
- It doesn't rain.

MAKE THE CONNECTION:

We will always have many reasons to be happy and many reasons to be sad. Our happiness changes based on what happens to us. Today we are learning about joy. Joy is different from happiness, because real joy comes from knowing Jesus. In any situation - good or bad - we can choose to remember and share the joy of Jesus.





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INDOOR ACTIVITY: HEADPHONE KARAOKE

Materials: Music, Music player, Headphones

Directions: Choose one contestant at a time to play this game. Give the contestant headphones. Play a clip of a well known, appropriate song. (*The game works best if you start a few lines before the chorus or most well-known part of the song.*) The contestant must sing along to the song clip until someone guesses the song.

MAKE THE CONNECTION:

Only one person could hear the music. When they sang, they let everyone else know what song was playing, and everyone was able to sing along. Today we are learning about Paul and Silas from Acts 16. Even though they were in a bad situation, they chose to sing about the joy in their hearts. Because they chose to remember the joy of Jesus, other people were able to join God's forever family.



SESSION 5: CHOOSE JOY

CRAFT: BROKEN TO BEAUTIFUL MOSAIC

Materials: Colorful paper, White paper, Glue

Directions: Rip several pieces of colorful paper into various shapes. Arrange the broken pieces into mosaic art on the white sheet of paper. Once the paper is arranged the way you like it, glue the pieces down. If you have trouble deciding what to make with your mosaic pieces, consider writing your name with one color. Fill in the paper with all the other colors.

MAKE THE CONNECTION:

We all have sinned. Although we all deserve to be separated from Him, Jesus offers us the gift of forgiveness and forever family. Jesus takes our brokenness and makes us beautiful! Let this mosaic art remind you to choose joy in every situation. Your situation may be broken, but nothing can break Jesus' love for you. We always have reason to rejoice!

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OUTDOOR ACTIVITY: ALL TIED UP

Materials: Bandanas or yarn, Small toy (from home)

Directions: Help everyone grab a partner. Tie their legs together for a three-legged race. Teams go down in a relay to grab a small toy. The first team to bring the toy back to the starting line wins!

Alternatively, tie individual's feet together. Kids must hop to retrieve the toy.

MAKE THE CONNECTION:

Our Bible lesson today is about two men who were tied up in prison. Even though Paul and Silas were in prison, these men still had joy. Sometimes we get tied down by our situation. We have a bad day or someone hurts our feelings. No matter what happens, people who know Jesus can have joy. So no matter what happens, people who know Jesus can always choose joy.



SESSION 5: CHOOSE JOY

MEMORY VERSE: SING IT!

Materials: None

Directions: Review the verse, then try to put music to the verse. Sing the words in the verse to your own tune.

MAKE THE CONNECTION:

Jesus came from heaven to earth, so we could spend eternity with Him, as part of His forever family. Even though we all have sinned, Jesus loves us. Because of Jesus' great love, we always have reason to choose joy.

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

SESSION 5: TALK ABOUT IT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Why do you think Christians can have joy?
2. What is the difference between happiness and joy?
3. Do you think it was hard for Paul & Silas to be joyful when they were in prison? Why/why not?

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

1. **John 15:9-11 says, “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!”**
 - How can we be filled with joy?
 - How much joy does Jesus want to give you?
2. **Philippians 4:4-7, 11-13 says, “Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. ... ¹¹ Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. ¹³ For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”**
 - According to verse 4, when should we have joy?
 - Will there ever be a situation in which it is impossible for you to have joy?
 - Where does the strength to choose joy come from?

SESSION 5: TALK ABOUT IT

3. Acts 16:29–31 says, “The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ ³¹ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.’”

- What came from Paul and Silas’ decision to remember the joy of Jesus while in jail?
- Do you know what it means to be saved? Have you decided to believe in Jesus, to make Him the Captain of your heart?

WHAT CAN I DO?

1. How can you share the joy of Jesus with others like Paul and Silas did?
2. Choosing to remember the joy of Jesus doesn’t mean you will feel happy all the time. What can help you choose joy even when you are sad?
3. What should you do when you feel like something or someone is trying to “steal” your joy?