

# Growing in Joy

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:4-20

**Bible Truth:** My joy can grow.

**Bible Story:** Luke 2:4-20

**Bible Verse:** “You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” (Psalm 16:11, NIV)

## FOCUS

### Learning Activity: “Happiness or Joy?”

#### Preparation

Make two smiling faces out of yellow paper. Write “joy” on one of the them and “happiness” on the other.

#### Presentation

Say: **Have you ever said, “I feel so happy I could scream!” or “I could jump for joy!”?** Show the two smiling faces. **Sometimes we use the words happiness and joy as synonyms, as if they both had the same meaning. Do they mean the same?** Allow children to answer.

Say: **Your happiness may depend on what’s happening around you. Your happiness may depend on the way people treat you.**

Show a picture of a children playing together. **How do you feel when others are nice to you?** Allow children to answer. **How do you feel when they don’t treat you well?** Allow children to answer. **Even people we love can hurt us or disappoint us.**

Say: **Your happiness may depend on things that happen in life. How do you feel when you get good grades?** Allow children to answer. Show picture of an award. **How do you feel when you win an award?** Allow children to answer. **How do you feel when you are sick?** Allow children to answer. **How do you feel when your parent doesn’t have time to take you to the park?** Allow children to answer. **Feelings change, don’t they?**

#### Materials

yellow construction paper  
marker  
picture of children playing together  
picture of an award  
small amount of local currency  
small mirror  
small cross  
“Christian” tree poster from Lesson 1

Show children some money. Say: **Your happiness may depend on the things you have, like money, a bicycle, or clothes. But you can run out of money. Toys break or wear out. You grow out of your clothes.**

Show children the mirror. Say: **Your happiness may depend on the way you look. If you think you are pretty or handsome, you may feel happy. But your physical appearance is constantly changing. That's why you can't expect to be happy all the time based on how you look.**

Use the two smiling faces as visuals. Say: **Joy is different from happiness because it doesn't depend on what happens around you. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.** Show children the "Christian" tree poster from Lesson 1. **Joy comes from God. Only those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior come to know true joy.**

## **SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION: Psalm 16:11**

### **Preparation**

Write Psalm 16:11 on a piece of poster board.

Cut out a small yellow circle. Draw a big, happy face on the front, and write the word "joy" on the back.



### **Explanation**

Read Psalm 16:11 with the children. Say: **What does this verse say**

**God will make known to us?** Allow children to answer. **The path of life is the way God wants you to act and what God wants you to do. How can God let you know what He wants you to do and how He wants you to act?** Allow children to answer and then explain that God reveals His path to us through Bible reading and prayer.

Say: **The second part of this verse uses a word that means to be with someone. Can anyone find that word?** Allow a child to underline "presence." **When we read our Bibles and pray, we are in God's presence. What does our verse say will happen when we are in God's presence?** Allow a child to answer. **Yes, we will be filled with JOY!**

### **Memorization Activity**

Play the game "Who's Got the Joy?" to help the children memorize Psalm 16:11. Ask the children to sit in a circle. The child that's "it" will sit in the center of the circle and close his eyes while the happy face is passed around the circle. When you give the signal, the child that has the happy face must hide it behind him/her. The child that's "it" opens his eyes and guesses who has the "joy." Each time the "joy" is found, say the memorization verse together.

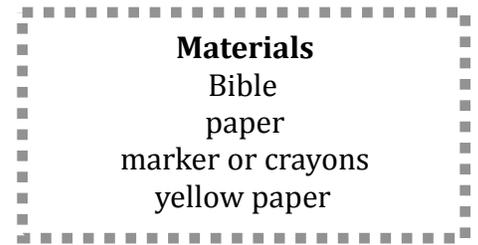
## INSTRUCT

### Bible Story: "Jesus' Birth Brings Joy," Luke 2:4-20

#### Preparation

Read and study Luke 2:4-20.

Make three big smiley faces out of yellow poster board. Write one of the following names on each smiley face: Mary, shepherds, wise men.



Draw pictures of Mary, the shepherds, and the wise men on separate pieces of paper. Use these pictures as visuals to tell the Bible story.

#### Presentation

Divide the children into three groups and give each group a prepared smiley face. As you tell the Bible story, ask them to listen for the reason why the person/people listed on their smiley faces felt joy.

Show the picture of Mary. Say: **One day, something amazing happened to a girl named Mary. An angel appeared to her and told her that she was going to have a baby. Her baby was going to save the world from their sins. This baby was Jesus. At first, Mary was frightened by the angel's appearance. But after she heard his message from God, she rejoiced that God has chosen her for this special job. She told God she was willing to be Jesus' mother.**

Show the picture of the shepherds: Say: **Several months after the angel appeared, Mary traveled with her husband Joseph to Bethlehem. While in Bethlehem, she gave birth to baby Jesus in a barn. That very night, there were shepherds out in a field near Bethlehem taking care of their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared to the shepherds and told them about the birth of Jesus. They explained that Jesus, the Savior, had been born and was lying in a manger in a barn. Then the sky was filled with a large group of angels, and they began to sing praises to God. When the angels left, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see baby Jesus. They rejoiced and praised God for letting them be part of this special day. When they left the barn, they told everyone they met about Jesus.**

Show a picture of the Wise Men. Say: **At the time of Jesus' birth, God put a special star in the sky. A group of wise men saw the star and began to follow it. It may have taken them as long as two years to reach Bethlehem. When they got to Bethlehem, the star was directly above the house where baby Jesus was living with Mary and Joseph. The Bible says that the Wise Men were overjoyed because the star had led them to Jesus. They presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus.**

After the story, ask each group to share their answers to the questions below. Possible answers are included below each question.

Why was your person/group of people filled with joy?

Mary: She was chosen to be the mother of Jesus.

Shepherds: They got to see Jesus on the night he was born.

Wise Men: A star led them to Jesus.

How did they express the joy they felt for Jesus and His birth?

Mary: She told God she was willing to do what He asked.

Shepherds: They told others about baby Jesus.

Wise Men: They gave gifts to Jesus.

Say: **How do you feel when thinking about the birth of Jesus?** Allow children to answer. Read John 3:16 with the children. **This verse gives us a reason to feel joy because of Jesus' birth. What is that reason?** Allow children to answer.

## APPLICATION

### Learning Activity: Game, "Increase My Joy"

#### Preparation

None

#### Presentation

Say: **When Mary, the shepherds, and the wise men were in Jesus' presence, they felt true joy. Our Bible memory verse today tells us that we will also feel joy when we are in Jesus' presence. Let's play a game to remind us to remain in Jesus' presence to feel true joy.**

Directions for the Game:

Place the "Christian" tree from Lesson 1 on one side of the room. Children should line up in a horizontal line a long distance away from the poster. Read the sentences below to the children. If they think the sentence lists something that would cause them to be in God's presence and feel joy, they should take one giant step toward the tree. If the action would not put them in God's presence, they should take one step away from the tree.

1. You read your Bible every day.
2. You pray every night before going to sleep.
3. You complain about doing your chores.
4. You tell God you are sorry for your sins.



5. You are unkind to your little brother/sister.
6. You tell a friend about Jesus.
7. You go to church.
8. You tell a lie to your parents.
9. You trust God even when you are having a bad day.
10. You sing a praise song to Jesus.

When the children have reached the tree, say: **As you spend time with Jesus and follow His commands, you will be in His presence and your joy will grow.** Take any fruit-shaped papers with the word “joy” written on them (located at the bottom of the poster from Lesson 1) and move them from the bottom of the poster into the tree.

## MINISTRY TIME

### Preparation

Choose a worship song with which the children are familiar. Play the song on a CD player or ask someone to be prepared to play it on an instrument. You can also choose to do this activity without music and just allow the children to sing a favorite song.

**Materials**  
worship CD  
CD player

### Presentation

Invite the children to participate in a time of praise and worship. Remind them that as they enter God’s presence, He will fill them with joy. At the end of the song, let the music continue playing and ask children to find a quiet place in the room to pray and talk with God.