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Theme: Pressing Forward in Jesus Christ



**GRANT HILL MISSIONARY
BAPTIST CHURCH**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL
ADULT LESSON GUIDE**

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Unit 12 Theme: The Joy of the World

The Bible verse “The joy of the Lord is my strength” is found in Nehemiah. In this powerful verse, Nehemiah exhorts the people of Israel to celebrate and rejoice in the Lord, for it is through His joy that they find strength. Jesus himself was a joyful person, and to his disciples he said, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full.” John 15:11 (ESV).

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Unit Theme: The Joy of the World

Lesson Topic: The Joy of the Lord

Lesson Scriptures: Proverbs 17:22; Philippians 1:1-5; 4:11-13; Nehemiah 8:10

Key Verse: A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.
-Proverbs 17:22

Essential Questions: Can you describe what the joy of the Lord looks like, what it feels like? How does one find this joy?

Lesson Aims

At the end of this lesson the participant will understand

1. That we all need to have some joy in our life.
2. That true joy comes from the Lord.

Introduction

Proverbs 17:22 says that... “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.” The Proverbs are wise sayings written by wise men such as King Solomon of Israel, inspired by God Himself. God has made us in such a way that joy and humor are meant to be vital parts of our lives. Jesus promised us in John 15:10-11 that, “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.” These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full

Exposition

At the heart of joy is an unshakable awareness that we possess good things from God. Joy is a part of God's kingdom.

James 1:17 tells us that every good thing comes from the father. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our father, who created all the lights in heavens.

Harmony and painless being are spiritual qualities, and expressing joy brings these qualities into view in our lives. Sometimes, it may seem like hard work to feel a spiritual, consistent joy.

Joy comes when we trust the Lord. Placing our trust in God brings joy. We have a God who loves us more than we can imagine. A God who is more powerful than we can comprehend, and who has promised to help us if we put our trust in Him, He will always be there for us. Settle it in your heart, God wants to help you!

A Word about Joy From the Apostle Paul

In the opening of Paul's letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy" - *Philippians 1:4-5*

Philippians is often known as the "Epistle of Joy" because of Paul's attitude in prison. Rejoicing in every circumstance and finding joy amidst trials is a major theme. Paul has every reason to be discontent and upset by the world's standards, as he's in prison for preaching the Gospel.

So, what is the secret to finding real joy in life Paul?

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned to be content no matter what state I am in.

Psalm 32:11- Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! You might asked yourself this question. Which of Jesus commands gives joy to your heart? "The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." Psalms 19:8

For God's children, the power of joy is never-ending. Although not one attribute of the fruit of the spirit is more important than another, joy enables us to experience the other gifts in the way that Jesus did.

Nehemiah 8:10 says "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. The world that we live in can be challenging and draining. We face trials, temptations, and hardships that can easily weaken our resolve. But when we find our joy in the Lord our strength is renewed and invigorated. When we fully trust him and rely on his promises, our hearts are fill with joy.

In the English Standard Version of the Bible, the words "joy," "rejoice," or "joyful" appear a total of **430 times**, compared with "happy" or "happiness," which appear only ten times. Happiness is fleeting, it can be here today and gone tomorrow, or here one minute and gone the next, (what are you going to do on the days when happiness don't show up?)

Joy is lasting, and it satisfies the heart in a unique and marvelous way.

The Lesson Applied

How can we feel Joy in the Lord? We can...

- Discover the Lord's Purpose for us. We are more than ordinary.
- Find Joy in Your Circumstances. One of the keys to finding joy is to recognize God's hand in your life, even during challenging moments when we feel all alone.
- Remember That Joy Multiplies. Pass it on to others.
- Look for God in the Ordinary and Simple. He doesn't always come in the midst of a whirlwind
- Seek God's wisdom. When you feel like you are sinking ask Him to throw out a lifeline. Ask him for guidance when things are not going well in your life. Sometimes you are going to need a lifeline.
- Instead of cursing the storm, learn how to dance in the rain.
- Find your passion and make it your ministry. When your passion is your ministry, it is never cumbersome or burdensome. It just brings joy to your heart.

Unit 2 Theme: The Joy of The World

Lesson Topic: Joy Grows out of Real Worship

Lesson Scripture(s): John 15:11; Philippians 4:4;

Key Verse(s): “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15:11.

Essential Question: How do you describe having joy?

Lesson Aims: The participants are to understand that:

1. To experience joy in suffering as well as in peace and comfort, we have to want Jesus more than anything else.
2. Joy that is rooted in how well life seems to be going, will falter and fade when trials come.
3. Joy in God is not simply a switch that’s flipped the moment we first trust in Jesus; joy in God is a lifelong pursuit and discipline.

Introduction

What is joy? Is it a moment of feeling safe, comfortable, or being successful or liked? Our definition of joy may make us feel joyful, but do that definition line up with the definition given by the One who gives true joy?

Joy is sometimes hard to define, but we know it when we experience it. It shifts our heart to a position of worship regardless of current circumstances as we trust in God and live in His grace. It is comforting, content, and full of peace. Just like the world’s brand of love and peace, the joy the world offers can be fleeting. But as followers of Jesus Christ, we are meant to enjoy lasting “fullness of joy,” complete joy in Christ.

You see when joy is rooted in how well life seems to be going, this kind of joy will falter and fade when trials come. The real joy, the always joy Paul writes about in Philippians 4:4, can feel unfamiliar and distant to us. We tend to think of joy as a fleeting feeling in moments that comes and goes as life allows. But the joy that comes from the Father is strong enough to sustain us during the challenges of life.

Exposition

John 15: There is a connection between love, obedience, and joy in John 15. Leading up to Jesus' statement that "your joy may be full" are these words: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 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" (John 15:9–10). Obedience should be a loving, heartfelt response to God's will, a response that is marked by joy. To understand the importance of John 15:11, we must set our eyes on Jesus, who is the representation of joyful, loving obedience. In the face of fierce opposition, Jesus found joy in fulfilling the will of His Father: "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work'" (John 4:34). The point is that obedience stems from love and is the source of true joy.

Just as Jesus found great joy in obeying the will of His Father, we as Followers of Christ can also have the same joy in obedience: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). Obedience is not a joyless duty or mundane task. To the contrary, it is through obedience in which the joy of the Lord becomes our own joy. And it is not withheld from us; rather, Jesus shares His joy in proportion to our participation in His obedience. By surrendering our will to God's will, we can know the fullness of joy. We can partake in the same joy that Jesus had when He sacrificed His life for ours. This joy is not a fleeting emotion but an enduring quality that overpowers the hold of adversity. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "That your joy may be full."

Philippians 4:4 "Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice!" TLB

Joy can be hard to come by, but the Bible says it is something that not only is constantly available to us, but that we should walk in it at all times. See, in this verse of Philippians, Paul says "always be full of joy in the Lord." The word always is not an occasional word. Always isn't fleeting. It's not about convenience. Always means at all times. Paul is saying no matter what is going on, no matter what our circumstances, we are to have joy. He is commanding us to walk in joy always.

Where, then, do we as children of God find this source of joy, the always-joy Paul writes about? How can the fruit of spiritual joy be produced in our life?

WORSHIP!

Worship is the number one place to sense joy in the presence of God. Because His presence pours out over the soul in times of worship. This is an indescribable feeling that fills our hearts when we come into the presence of God. It is not simply a fleeting emotion or a momentary burst of happiness, but a deep and profound sense of awe, reverence, and gratitude that we are to live in.

It is recognition of the greatness of our Creator and a surrendering of ourselves to His divine will. In worship, we find comfort or relief, peace, and rest for our weary souls. It's a time of communion with God, where we express our love, adoration, and thanksgiving.

Worship is not merely a duty or an obligation. It is our sacred invitation to experience the overflowing abundance of joy that comes from being in the presence of our Creator, our Father. It is a reminder that we are created to worship and glorify Him, and in doing so, we find true fulfillment and purpose in life. We must not let our circumstances or situations of life rob us our joy from God. You see, it is not simply a product of the Holy Spirit, but a part of His nature. And if we are filled with the Spirit, we have joy. So, let's walk in the joy of the Lord. It is our strength!

Conclusion

Let us think about ways we can walk in the "always-joy" Paul speaks about.

1. Recognize that, unlike happiness, joy is not an option. Holding onto joy is a must in order to live the full life that Jesus has promised us. This is a command.
2. Do you see what I see? If it's a command, that means it's possible for us to do. Otherwise, He wouldn't require it of us. We have been given the ability to walk in joy. Study the life of Paul, definitely Jesus demonstrated it for us.
3. It's not possible if we go looking for it anywhere else but God. He's the only place permanent joy resides. To obtain it, we must be walking in step with the Holy Spirit daily.
4. Seek after it in prayer. "Father, You want me to walk in in joy always. Your word says it, and so I desire it and ask for it. You say we have not, because we don't ask for it. It is mine for the asking. Thank You!

Resource(s): www.gotquestions.org/joy-may-be-full; **The Biblical Definition of Joy**
Living Bible (TLB); The New King James Version (NKJV)

Unit Theme: Joy to the World

Lesson Topic: When the Holy Spirit Controls Our Life

Lesson Scriptures: Galatians 5:16-26; John 15:4-7

Key Verse: This I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Essential Question: There is a war going on. Whose side are you on? (Choose you this day)

Lesson Aims

At the end of this lesson the participant will understand that:

1. That we must decide whether we are going to serve God or Satan.
2. Dependent upon which choice you make, you will either receive a reward or suffer the consequences.
3. Good will always overcome evil.

Introduction

Today's discussion is centered around the topic, **When The Holy Spirit Controls Our Life**. While we would like to think that the holy spirit is controlling all of our lives, we know through our dealings with other people, that it does not? Why is this? Well, as we delve into today's lesson we will discuss some of the reasons why the spirit is not in control of some of our lives. The bible tells us plainly that light and darkness cannot co-exist, and that man cannot serve two masters. You will hate one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise the other. All of this lets us know that there is a fight going on in the inside of us and we have to make a decision. One of the key ingredients involved in making good decisions is making sure that you have all of the information necessary to lead you to the right conclusion. In the bible there are many scriptures that gives us instructions on how to win this fight. Today's lesson will present to you, from the apostle Paul and the gospel of John, some vital information that you can use to make your decision (see lesson Aim # 1). The question is simple and so is the answer if we use the right source to help us reach our conclusion. Speaking for myself, I have decided to follow Jesus because he told me that he will fight my battle if I just keep still.

So be still and listen, turn on your GPS, and let God fight for you.

Exposition

Who is in control, the spirit or the flesh? (Galatians 5:16-26)

But I say, walk by the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (VS 16-17)

16. The flesh wants what it wants, but the flesh is not of God. The soul is of God. Paul said there is a war going on inside. Flesh against spirit, mind vs soul; earthly desires vs heavenly desires. We must decide every day which side we are on. Either we going to walk with the Lord or walk with Satan. You decide, but as for me and my house.

17. The spirit and the flesh is at war with each other, and for this reason you cannot do everything you want to do, but if you are led by the spirit you are not subject to the law (in other words you will do the right thing). The purpose of the law is to punish those who are wrong.

The practices of the sinful nature (VS 17-18)

The practices of the sinful nature are clearly evident: they are sexual immorality, impurity, lack of self-control, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, anger, envy, drunkenness, and other things like these. Paul is talking to the church at Galatia when he says "I am warning you just as I have before, but he is also talking to us. He said that all who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom. There is no striding the fence or being in today and out tomorrow; you are either in or out. Only the pure in heart shall see God.

How do we win this battle? (VS 22-26)

Only good can conquer evil. The battle is not yours, it's the Lord. No weapon formed against me shall prosper (Feel free to insert your favorite victory scripture here). The Lord goes before me into every battle. God has equipped us with what we need to win this battle against evildoer, all we need to do is use the weapons that he has given us. Our weapons are given to us by God once we decide to accept him as our Lord and Savior. The fruit of the spirit which is the result of His presence within in us allows us to overcome anything that the enemy can bring against us.

The fruit of the spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience (not only the ability to wait, but to know how to act while we are waiting), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. That's why Paul said in verse 18 that we are not subject to the law. There is no law against doing good. Those who belong to Christ have crucified their sinful nature. If we claim to live by the spirit we must walk by the spirit with personal integrity, godly character, and moral courage. Our conduct must be empowered by the holy spirit.

You are not of the world (John 15: 4-7)

5. Jesus said that if we abide in him, he will abide in us. We already said that you can walk in the spirit or you can be controlled by the flesh. That is a decision that all of us must make. When
 6. making a decision the first thing we usually consider is what are the possible outcomes of my decision? Am I prepared to live with or die with my decision? God is leaving the decision up to us. He said I put before you life and death. We have to choose which one we desire.
5. If you abide in Jesus, you will bear fruit. If your life seems empty and you aren't bearing fruit it is because you are not connected to the vine. You are walking in the flesh and not in the spirit.
7. Jesus said that if you abide in me, you can ask what you want and I will give it to you. This is what happens when you allow the spirit to control your life. Remember we said that when making a decision you should consider the possible results. Allowing the holy spirit to control your life will put you in a position to receive all of the good things that God has in store for you? So, what is it that is stopping you from giving God control over your life?

The Lesson Applied

How do we allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives?

1. Realize that you are in a battle and that Satan has declared war on you. You must be able to recognize Satan and his followers.
2. Capture your thoughts. Capture each thought and analyze it. If it is good let it enter your mind, if it is not demolished it with the truth of God's word.
3. Confess your sins. When the Holy Spirit reveals sin to you, confess it and turn back to Christ. You know when you have done something that is not pleasing in the eyes of God. Don't try to hide it. You can't fool God, and you can't fool yourself.
4. Pray a prayer of surrender. Pray a prayer of surrender to the Holy Spirit, acknowledging that you are giving him control.
5. Keep a short account with God. Develop the habit of keeping a short account with God and confessing your sins.
6. Trust God's promises of always being with you and always willing to forgive. Know that when you make a mistake, he is a forgiving God and He is there for you, waiting to put you back on the right path. *-Reference: www.biblegateway.com*

Unit Theme: The Joy of the World

Lesson Topic: Everlasting Joy

Lesson Scriptures: John 16:22; Proverbs 17:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Key Verse: John 16:22 (NKJV) “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”

Essential Question: How can we receive everlasting joy?

Lesson Aims

At the end of this lesson the participant will understand:

1. Joy is eternal, not temporary.
2. We receive everlasting joy from the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Sorrow will come, but we gain eternal joy following Jesus.

Introduction

December is notable for the Christmas season. The meaning of Christmas can vary for different people and cultures, but it is generally celebrated as a Christian holiday that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. It’s when Christians celebrate God’s love for the world through the birth of the Jesus Christ. Christmas is a time of spiritual reflection on the important foundations of the Christian faith. The Bible tells of his birth hundreds of years before, fulfilling prophecies. The holiday season is temporary, but having a relationship with Jesus gives everlasting joy. Paul also identifies the course of all Christian joy as being “in the Lord.”

Exposition

Proverbs 17:22: “A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones.” In the original Hebrew, the word for “merry” means “joyful, happy, full of cheer.” The “heart” is a person’s inner self, thoughts, emotions, and will. Since the heart is the center of our inner life, its condition and tone reach the outermost parts of our existence, including our bodies and even our relationships with others. Jesus wanted us to have a relationship with him, and with other people. Perhaps the most excellent way to cultivate a merry heart that does good, like medicine, is to spend time in God’s presence. In God’s company, we experience the fullness of joy.

John 16:22: “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.” Grief experienced by the disciples as Jesus prepares to leave them

is intense in this passage. They are wrestling with the profound sorrow of His impending departure and the turmoil it represents. Jesus anticipates their feelings by assuring them that their sorrow is temporary and will be replaced by joy. His promise of a future reunion encapsulated a powerful message of hope that transcended their current agony. This encapsulates the reality that sorrow is often intertwined with joy, much like the pain experienced during childbirth, which ultimately leads to the joy of new life. This metaphor illustrates that while they would weep in His absence, the joy from their reunion would be overwhelming and permanent.

1 Thessalonians 1:6: “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” This scripture tells us how the Thessalonian Christians had welcomed the truth because they knew the kind of men that Paul, Silas and Timothy were. They were in Thessalonica preaching the Good News not only speaking it but living it. We are to live so Christ is seen through our lives. We people see Christ in us, they will want to imitate us. These Christians at Thessalonica received the good news with much joy, even when they had to suffer. They had a deep joy. This is the joy that the Holy Spirit gives.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:” Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” These three actions—being joyful, praying, and giving thanks—are God’s will for all believers, regardless of situation or circumstances. Jesus showed us that suffering precedes glory. When we adjust to God’s way of thinking and relating to others, we are reminded that, as Christians, we can even rejoice in the midst of trials and suffering because of the pattern established by Jesus Christ. Jesus’ suffering and resurrection have secured a joyous future for all who have been redeemed. Our rejoicing should be in what the Lord has done, continues to do, and will do in the future, regardless of our circumstances or feelings. Our circumstances and feelings should never stop us from rejoicing, praying, giving thanks, showing respect, or acting kindly.

The Lesson Applied

When we truly understand the oneness of the trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a great joy should reside in us. The joy of God is an eternal joy, it will outlast death. This is a priceless gift of the Holy Spirit who resides in us, just as Jesus promised he would leave us a comforter until his return. Knowing the comforter resides in us, should produce indescribable happiness. Keep the faith and trust God. Ongoing belief is the condition for salvation. Salvation is the gift of everlasting joy!

References, Bibliaplus.org, Desiringgod.org, Gotquestions.org, Holy Bible, TheBibleSays.com

Unit Theme: The Joy of the World

Lesson Topic: Make a Joyful Noise

Lesson Scriptures: Psalm 98:4-9

Key Verse: 98:4 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

Essential Question(s): What happens when we make a joyful noise to the Lord?

Lesson Aim(s)

At the end of this lesson the participant will understand...

- How to celebrate the love of God through having a joyful heart.
- That the Lord should always be praised for his great and marvelous works.

Introduction

The meaning of making a joyful noise to the Lord is that we should praise God, and God alone. We can use our own voice, through hymns, and instruments. We can do it loudly so others can hear, or we can bring the noise just in our heads while we worship God. A joyful noise is a **bold declaration of God's glorious name and nature**, with shouts, clapping, and other outward expressions of praise. **Psalm 98:4-9** call everyone in the world to celebrate God with music and instruments. Likewise, even nature itself should express worship of the Lord. These praises anticipate God coming to judge the world and establish His perfect justice as stated in **(Revelation 20:4)**. God has proven His glory through His amazing miracles.

Exposition: Our God is a God who works wonders. Songs are a fitting way to celebrate salvation. Singing new songs is rightful response to a heart that has been moved. While we love timeless truths, we also enjoy experiencing and expressing them in new and fresh ways. Let us go through each one of the verses of Psalm 98:4-9.

Psalm 98: 4 means to exalt and extend the voice to the highest pitch, in the most musical and melodious strains; this heap of words is used to express the intenseness of mind, vehemency of affection, and strength of spirit and exceeding greatness of joy, with which the Lord should be praised for his great and marvelous works.

Psalm 98:5 It calls on people to use their talents, such as singing or playing an instrument, to honor God. The verse emphasizes that worship should be a celebration of God's majesty and works, rather than just a quiet reflection.

Psalm 98:6 using instruments that were traditionally used for significant moments in Israel. The loud instruments symbolize the grandeur and excitement that should accompany worshipping God.

Psalm 98:7 is a reminder that God's presence can be found in the world around us, and that worship is not limited to a church, but wherever we are, we can worship God.

Psalm 98:8 This verse uses vivid language to personify nature, inviting the floods to "clap their hands" and the hills to "sing together for joy". The verse is part of a crescendo of praise that starts with human voices and expands to include all of creation.

Psalm 98:9 It is a source of hope for Christians, and a reminder that God will restore balance and order to a world that is often marred by injustice. This is what all of god's people are looking forward to when God returns.

The Lesson Applied

Psalm 98 is a category of songs rejoicing over when God rules over the earth. Many look ahead to the future when the Lord will reign directly over the earth in person (**Revelation 20:4**). This song may also refer to a particular event, such as a victory in battle. This psalm of praise moves the community of God's faithful worker from a historically rooted expression of joy in God's might to a deeper understanding of God as a God of faithfulness. However, there is a very important factor to praising and that is that no matter the style of praising, it is important to **always put God at the center rather than putting oneself in His place**. Everything should be for the greater glory of God and not for the glory of men as emphasized in **1 Corinthians 10:31** **whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God.** In **1 Thessalonians** we can read that we have to praise God in whatever circumstances that we are in because He is always on our side, **"give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ.**

References

The lessons are based on the Grant Hill Missionary Baptist Church Sunday School Ministry writers understanding of the topics being discussed, and cited references listed and given credit as written.



1. The KJV Bible
2. The Handbook of Bible Application
3. www.biblegateway.com
4. **Resource(s): www.gotquestions.org/joy-may-be-full; The Biblical Definition of Joy Living Bible (TLB); The New King James Version (NKJV)**
5. www.biblegateway.com