

Semicontinuous

Exod. 32:1–14

Ps. 106:1–6, 19–23

Complementary

Isa. 25:1–9

Ps. 23

Phil. 4:1–9

Matt. 22:1–14

Filled with Joy

**Goal for
the Session**

*Children will enter into Paul’s joy as they also rejoice
in God’s presence.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Philippians 4:1–9

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Annette Weissenrieder

Synergōn [coworker] and *synēlthēsan* [struggle along with] have one thing in common: they express an active participation of the coworkers in the mission. Cooperation in the mission signifies an active fight, no quiet or passive participation. The choice of agonistic language deepens this background further: participants in a competition never fight only for themselves or for their family, but are always nominated as envoys of a city. Their service is to be interpreted as a service for the city. Paul’s encouragement is clear: nobody fights alone; we always fight together.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” David B. Burrell

What difference does becoming a follower of Jesus make to one’s daily life? A follower familiar with the Gospels would, of course, readily cite Matthew 25, the charter of the Christian life, yet Paul is even more specific: “help these women, [Euodia and Syntyche], for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life” (v. 3). So followers of Jesus are enjoined to assist one another “in the gospel,” that is, to encourage each other to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as outlined in Matthew 25.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jill Y. Crainshaw

Seasons of identity exploration and maturing hold the potential to remind communities of the profound extraordinariness of what seems merely ordinary. Keep on with your everyday works of gentleness and prayerful living, Paul counsels the Philippians (v. 4). Bake a loaf of bread for the woman down the street whose husband just died, Paul might say. Take a bag of groceries to the food closet. Visit a church member in the nursing home. Seemingly ordinary acts bear extraordinary gifts of God’s love. Ordinary Time teaches communities about the persistent, everyday powerful, promises of God’s grace in Christ.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Nathan Eddy

It comes naturally to Paul that prayer should be intimately associated with joy in the Lord. Prayer here is relationship with God, not a technique. By perceiving and rejoicing in a living, unexpected presence in the world even in difficult situations, one lets go of being one’s own savior. Instead of worrying about “anything,” the Philippians are to bring “everything” to God (v. 6). The “anythings” and “everythings” of life can be sources of endless worry—or the stuff of prayer. Either way they are important. Like joy, prayer is not an escape but a practice of regarding the same painful situation from another angle, one still open to multiple resolutions that God permits us to consider.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Phillipians 4:1–9

Focus on Your Teaching

When children are happy, they cannot hold back their joy. This ease of expressing delight will help them connect with Paul’s message to the church in Philippi. But a child’s life is not all rejoicing. Think about the children in your class. What unhappiness have they or are they experiencing? Perhaps some have lost a grandparent or others may miss a parent in the military who is stationed far from home. Prepare yourself to hear their words of sadness and offer your love and support. Canadians will find this session appropriate as they celebrate Thanksgiving on October 12.

*God of joy, fill me with your love so I can rejoice as I teach the children.
In Christ’s name. Amen.*

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- votive candle and matches or battery-operated candle
- Bible
- offering basket
- newsprint
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 5, 10, 11
- Resource Sheet 1
- pastel construction paper
- marker

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, variety of art supplies, hole punch, yarn, scissors
- option 2: streamers; *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- option 3: computer with Internet access

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, print the opening lines from Gathering on poster board if you have not done so, and save to use in future weeks. Print the response for Closing on newsprint. Place a marker at Philippians in the worship table Bible. For option 3 in Responding, practice the signs for the words to go with Psalm 106:1. For option 4 in Responding, arrange for a date when the children can be greeters on Sunday morning.

As the children arrive, play “The Whole World Is in God’s Hands” (track 19 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Invite them to help set up the worship table with the green cloth, candle, Bible, and offering basket. When everyone is present, recall that the green cloth indicates that the church is in Common Time or Ordinary Time. In this case, it is the weeks after Pentecost until Advent.

Light the candle, and lead the following:

Leader: *During these weeks, we gather to praise God and study God’s Word.*

Children: *We want to be faithful followers of God’s Word and of Jesus.*

Everyone: *Loving God, thank you for our group and our church. May your Spirit show us the way. Amen.*

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle.

To prepare the children for the Bible story, ask:

✠ When have you felt really, really happy about something? Why?

Suggest that they listen for why someone was really, really happy in the Bible story.

Children who may not be able to read *Philippians* may figure out the word because they remember hearing about this letter in previous sessions.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and open it to the marker. Hold the Bible so everyone can see the title page for Philippians and ask the group to say the name of this book of the Bible. When it has been identified, encourage the group to tell you what they know about this letter and the Philippians. Help them recall by locating Philippi on Color Pack 5. Ask a child to hold the Bible open to Philippians as you tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Rejoice!).

Show Color Pack 10. Suggest that this is a drawing of Paul and one of his friends walking between cities. Ask the children to imagine that they are talking about the church in Philippi. Ask:

- ✧ What do you think they might be saying about the people in the Philippian church?
- ✧ How does Paul feel about the Philippians?
- ✧ How do you think they feel about Paul and his friends?
- ✧ What advice does Paul give the Philippians in this part of the letter?

Show Color Pack 11. When the children recall that Paul told them to rejoice, ask:

- ✧ What does *rejoice* mean?

Print *rejoice* on a sheet of pastel construction paper. Around it print their definition and synonyms. Display it with the words from previous sessions or add it to the class dictionary.

Ask the children to think about people in the church who make them happy, who give them joy. Explain that they are going to plan ways to express their joy and happiness for these people.

RESPONDING

If possible, provide two options so children have a choice. Choose one that is more challenging for children who can work on their own.

1. **Art** Joy can dissolve easily, but this art project will help children recall the joy of being at church. Invite the children to name colors and shapes that feel like happiness or joy to them. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (A Word from Paul) on card stock and a variety of art supplies for the children to decorate the word *JOY*. As they finish, punch two holes in their page and thread yarn through it for a hanger. Encourage the children to hang their joyful art at home as a reminder to be happy in Jesus Christ.
2. **Music** Children enjoy expressing their joy through music and movement. Invite the children to name people and things about the church that make them happy. Accept all their answers and encourage them to consider how God's love and Jesus' teachings bring them joy too. Distribute streamers and have the children practice waving them so they gain a sense of how to use them safely. Play joyful music, such as "Celebration Music" (track 24 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*), as the children move joyfully to the music. Stop the music periodically and invite the children to name people and things in the church what make them happy.

**EASY
PREP**

Some congregations schedule greeters by the month. In this case, ask if the children can take that role soon after this session.

- 3. Prayer of Joy** The book of Psalms, whether seen as a hymnbook or a prayer book, provides many examples of joyful thanksgiving. Teach the children a paraphrase of Psalm 106:1, one verse of the lectionary psalm for this day: *Give thanks to God, for God is good. God's love lasts forever.* Have the children repeat "Give thanks to God" after you three times. Add "for God is good." Repeat four times. Add "God's love lasts forever." Repeat five times and invite a child to lead the group in saying it. When the group can say it easily, teach the signs for *thanks*, *God*, *good*, *love*, and *forever*. The signs can be found on www.aslpro.com using the religious dictionary listings.
 - 4. Spreading Joy** When children are filled with joy, they can pass it on to others. Practice how to greet people warmly so the children can be greeters on Sunday morning. Ask two volunteers to stand at either side of the entrance to the learning area. They will be the greeters. The other children will be people coming to your church for the first time. Model shaking the hand of the visitor and saying, "Welcome to (*name of your church*)."
- Invite other children to take the role of greeter so everyone practices what to do, even if they are unable to be a greeter when the class does. Let parents know when the children will be greeters.

CLOSING

Play "Let Us Love One Another" (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) as the children gather at the worship table. Light the candle.

If the children memorized Psalm 106:1, say it together. Include the signs for the words that they learned.

Read the response for the litany from the newsprint together (*Rejoice!*). Lead the group in the litany, cueing them for the response.

God is with us Response
When we study the Bible, Response
When we worship God, Response
Whether we are happy or sad, Response
When we are playing or working, Response
Wherever we are. Response
God loves us! Response

As the children leave, say to each one: "(*Name*), God loves you. Show God's love to others."

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Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

Rejoice! based on **Philippians 4:1-9**

The people in the church in Philippi heard many happy things when Paul's letter was read to them. They smiled and nodded to each other. They remembered what good times they had with Paul. Paul told them how much he loved them and how happy they made him. This is what he wrote to them at the end of the letter:

I love and miss you, my friends. You are my joy. Be strong in Jesus Christ.

Please help two women in your church, Euodia (yoo-O-dee-uh) and Syntyche (SIHN-tih-kee), to come to an agreement. Both women have served God well with me. I want the best for them.

Rejoice in Jesus every day of your life. Rejoice!

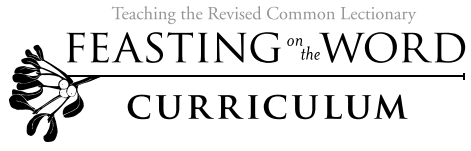
Be gentle to other people. Don't worry, but pray to God about everything. The peace of God is more than we can begin to imagine. Keep your hearts and minds safe in Jesus.

From this very minute, think only about things that are good and true, holy and fair, pure and lovely. Do all that we taught you. The God of peace be with you.

Today, Paul's words are for us too. Be glad and gentle. Pray to God about everything. And the God of peace will be with us too.



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Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 2

A Word from Paul

