

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians while he was in prison, most likely during his two-year house arrest in Rome. Despite Paul's circumstances, Philippians is known to be a joyful letter. Although there is exhortation and instruction in the letter, Paul was not writing to the church in Philippi because of a bad report or heretical belief he needed to address. Rather, he was responding with gratitude for a gift they had sent him (Philippians 4:10–18).

Paul's general tone in Philippians was uplifting and encouraging. He began by letting them know that he thanked God for them and prayed for them joyfully. He appreciated their support in the ministry and their work for the Lord (Philippians 1:3–6). He prayed that they would abound with love and be filled with the fruit of righteousness (Philippians 1:10–11), not as if they had been lacking but that it would continue to increase.

Paul wrote of his imprisonment, encouraging the brothers through his words and his tone. He rejoiced in his imprisonment because it had given him ample opportunity to share the gospel. Not only was the Word spreading among the imperial guard and everyone else who would listen, but fellow believers were being emboldened to proclaim the gospel without fear (Philippians 1:12–18). Paul was confident that he would be delivered from his imprisonment and that he would not be ashamed in life or death, knowing that Christ was honored. He spoke to the Philippians as dear friends, explaining that he

desired to depart this life and be with Christ, but he felt the necessity of remaining for the sake of the brothers. He wanted the Philippians to progress in the faith and to rejoice in Christ at his coming (Philippians 1:19–26).

Of course, Paul couldn't let an opportunity pass to include some theology and practical instruction. He encouraged the Philippians to live in a manner worthy of the gospel, a theme throughout Paul's writings. Paul reminded them that they were to strive together for the gospel, not shrinking from opposition or affliction for the sake of Christ (Philippians 1:27–30). He emphasized the need for unity, pointing to the selfless humility of Christ, who humbled himself, though he was God, to take on the form of a servant and become obedient to the point of death. But God exalted him, and every knee will bow to him (Philippians 2:1–11).

For this reason, Paul exhorted the Philippians to be united and selfless, imitating Christ and shining as a light in the world, rejoicing even in the face of sacrifice (Philippians 2:1–17). Paul explained that joy is found in the Lord and the hope of resurrection from the dead. We do not hold confidence in the flesh but strive to reach the goal of the upward call of God. Our citizenship is in heaven, and so we can find joy despite difficult circumstances as we see God working in us for his good pleasure (Philippians 3:1–4:1, 2:13). Finally, he urged them to rejoice in the Lord, pray faithfully, and practice the things of God—what is true, honorable, pure, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:4–8).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The church at Philippi was established by Paul during his second missionary journey around AD 50. The city was a Roman colony, and many veterans from the Roman army settled there after retiring. When Paul arrived, there was not a synagogue, indicating that there were likely very few Jews. Paul found a group of women at a place of prayer near the river and shared the gospel with them. Lydia was the first convert in Philippi (Acts 16:13–15), and the jailor who guarded Paul and Silas was saved after God miraculously delivered the apostles from their chains (Acts 16:25–34). Paul visited the church again during his third missionary journey.

The Philippians had supported Paul in his ministry since early on (Philippians 4:15–16), and when they had heard of his imprisonment, they sent Epaphroditus to bring him aid. On the way or shortly after arriving, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness. Epaphroditus had recovered but was concerned that those in Philippi would be worrying about him. So Paul decided to send him back for their mutual comfort. By explaining the issue in his letter (Philippians 2:25–30), he praised Epaphroditus' service and ensured that the Philippians would not think he was being sent back because of unsatisfactory service. Paul also wrote the Philippians to thank them for their gift (Philippians 4:10–18), to encourage unity

(Philippians 2:1–2, 4:2), and to warn against false teachers (Philippians 3:1–4:1).

Although there is little debate to the authorship of this letter, some scholars disagree on when and where it was written. Philippians is clearly a prison epistle; Paul referred to his imprisonment and even discusses his hope for deliverance (Philippians 1:7, 1:12–26). While the traditional view holds that Paul wrote the letter during his first Roman imprisonment, some have suggested it was written from Caesarea or Ephesus. However, in Caesarea, Paul had little hope of release unless he bribed Felix or agreed to stand trial at Jerusalem. Also, that ruling would not be final since Paul could—and did—appeal to Caesar

(Acts 24:22–27). In Philippians, Paul indicated that he expected the result to be final and was optimistic about being released (Philippians 2:23–24). There is even less support for the Ephesus view because there is no indication that Paul was ever imprisoned in Ephesus. Further, there is no reason to reject the traditional view that the prison epistles were written from Rome. On the contrary, the letter mentions the imperial guard (Philippians 1:13) and Caesar's household (Philippians 4:22), details which support the traditional view, and the historical details in the prison epistles match the account recorded in Acts 28.

Review Questions

K–1st Review Questions

1. Which of Paul's letters did we learn about today: Ephesians, Philippians, or Galatians? *Philippians.*
2. Where was Paul when he wrote the letter to the Philippians: a prisoner in Rome, on vacation at the beach, or shipwrecked in Malta? *A prisoner in Rome.*
3. Was Paul's letter to the Philippians sad and gloomy or joyful and thankful? *Joyful and thankful.*
4. Paul wanted the believers to study God's Word so they would grow what kind of fruit: fruit of apples, fruit of truth, or fruit of righteousness? *Fruit of righteousness.*
5. What was Paul's purpose in life: to eat good food, to enjoy visiting with friends, or to glorify God? *To glorify God.*
6. Our memory verse, Philippians 3:20–21, says that our citizenship is where? *In heaven.*
7. A believer in Jesus is a citizen of heaven. This means heaven is where believers what? *Belong; will live someday.*
8. Our bodies will be transformed, or changed, in heaven. What will they be like? *Like Jesus' body, perfect, with no sin, sickness, or pain.*
9. On the Flip Chart, in which picture did the kids show joy? *In both pictures, good and bad times.*
10. Where does true joy come from? *Knowing Jesus.*
11. Where does the world think joy is found? *In things like following your dreams, becoming rich, or having lots of nice things.*
12. What is the difference between happiness and joy? *Happiness is a feeling that doesn't last. Joy stays in your heart.*
13. What should be the believer's purpose in life: be happy, please God, or have lots of friends? *Please God.*
14. What gives a believer true joy: knowing Jesus, wearing cool clothes, or being popular? *Knowing Jesus.*
15. What else gives a believer true joy: having the greatest toys, having the promise of heaven, or having a big house? *Having the promise of heaven.*
16. When can a believer have joy: when everything goes right, when he's feeling happy, or when things are good or bad? *When things are good or bad.*

Pre-K Review Questions

1. Which of Paul's letters did we read from today: Galatians or Philippians? *Philippians.*
2. Where was Paul when he wrote the letter to the Philippians: a prisoner in Rome, on vacation at the beach, or shipwrecked in Malta? *A prisoner in Rome.*
3. Even though Paul was a prisoner, was his letter to the Philippians sad and gloomy or joyful and thankful? *Joyful and thankful.*
4. What was so important to Paul that he wanted to do it every day: eat good food, be with friends, or glorify God? *Glorify God.*
5. Our memory verse, Philippians 3:20–21, says that our citizenship is where? *In heaven.*
6. If you trust in Jesus as your Savior, how long will you live in heaven? *Forever.*
7. Our bodies will be transformed, or changed, in heaven. What will our new body be like? *Like Jesus' body, perfect, with no sin, sickness, or pain.*
8. On the Flip Chart, in which picture did the kids show joy? *In both pictures, good and bad times.*
9. Where does the world think joy is found? *In things like following your dreams, becoming rich, or having lots of nice things.*
10. Where does true joy come from? *Knowing Jesus.*
11. Which of these stays in our heart through good times and bad times, joy or happiness? *Joy.*
12. What should believers try to do every day: be happy, please God, or have lots of friends? *Please God.*
13. What else gives a believer true joy: having the greatest toys, having the promise of heaven, or having a big house? *Having the promise of heaven.*
14. When can a believer have joy: when everything goes right, when he's feeling happy, or when things are good or bad? *When things are good or bad.*

Jump for Joy

Materials

- ☐ Three faces (pages 2–4)
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ One bell

Instructions

Print 3–4 sets (9–12 pages) of the three face pages for each team. On one side of the room, randomly place and tape the face pages on the floor to form a curvy path for each team to use. Make an X with masking tape next to each picture for students to jump on (rather than jumping onto the pictures). Place the bell on the other side of the room. Divide students into teams. Have teams line up at the beginning of their path.

When you say, “Go!” the first student on each team will jump through their path, landing only on the Xs beside the smiling faces. They may land on one foot or both feet, but they must try to jump to every smiling face. (You may require them to go back if they miss any.) Once they reach the end of the path, they must run to the other side of the room and ring the bell to signal the next student in line to begin as they run back to the end of their team’s line. The first team to finish wins.

Suggested Discussion

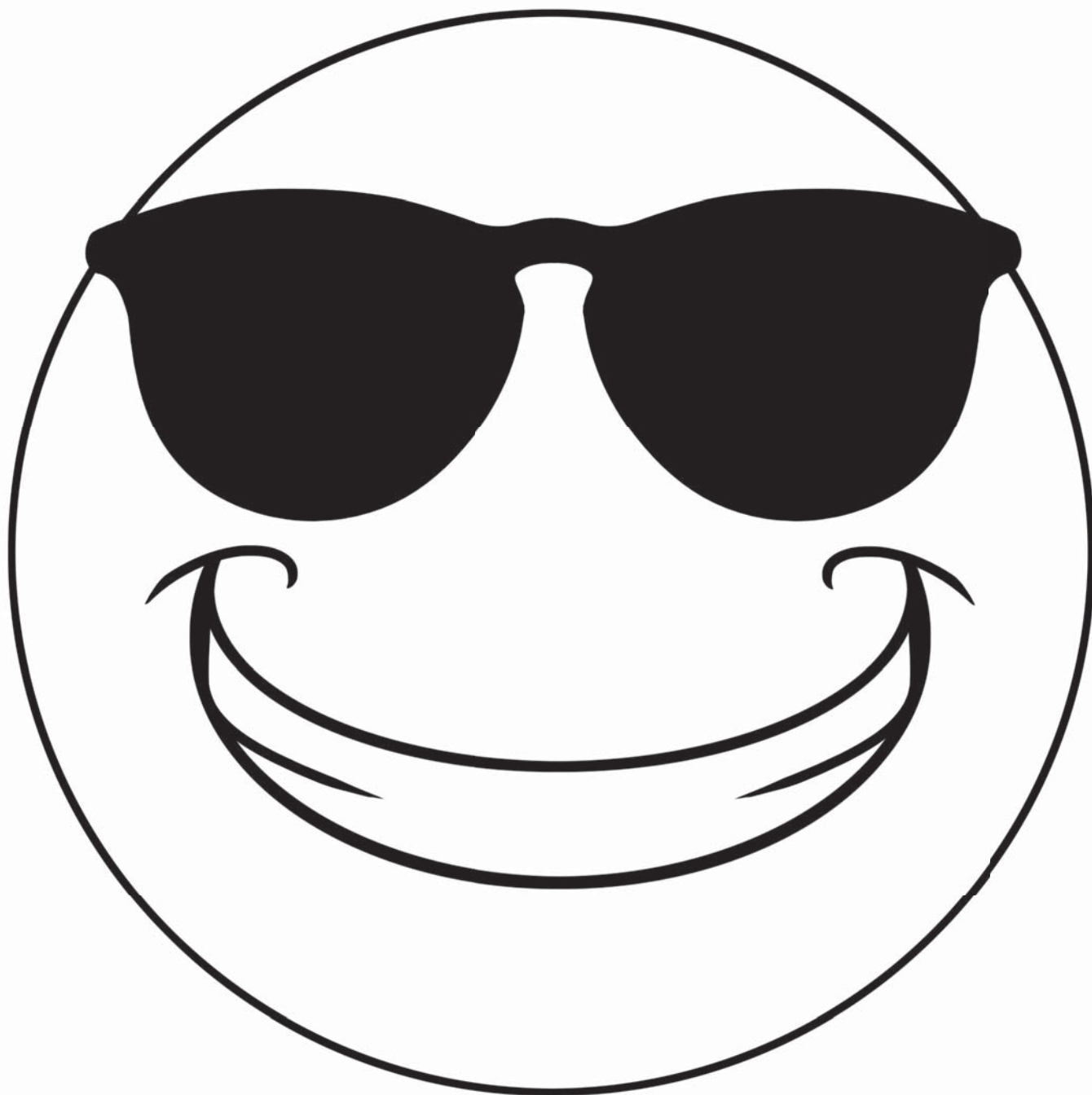
Great job, everyone! Have you ever heard someone say they were jumping for joy? Maybe you’ve been so happy and excited that you just had to jump around. We jumped for joy today, by jumping on the pictures that showed joy.

? Where does true joy come from? *Knowing Jesus.*

Many people think that joy comes from following their dreams or having lots of nice things, but that’s not what the Bible says about joy. When you believe in Jesus and trust him to save you from your sins, you can have the hope of heaven as you live each day to please and glorify God. Jesus gives us joy that stays in our hearts whether we’re having a great day or not.







Memory Verse Games

Allow students to refer to the Flip Chart Memory Verse Page during the games.

You may want to cover it up after a few weeks for more of a challenge.

Echo! Echo!

Do what I do—say what I say! Groups will echo each other as they recite the memory verse together.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page

Instructions

Divide the class into two groups. You will say a word or phrase of the memory verse while doing some sort of action—sit down, stand up, spin in a circle, touch your toes, etc. The groups will take turns “echoing” what you say and do as you recite the verse. Repeat several times. You can whisper, shout, squeak, etc. Switch around and let older students take turns leading.

Egg Hunt

Hunt for all the parts of the memory verse hidden in the eggs! This game can be played all year round. The plastic eggs just happen to be great little containers that can be hidden easily.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Strips of paper
- ☐ Plastic Easter eggs

Instructions

Write the memory verse on strips of paper with one or two words on each strip. Put one strip inside of each plastic Easter egg. Hide all the eggs around the room.

Have the students search for the eggs and bring them back to the table. They will open the eggs and work together to put the verse in the proper order.

For a larger class, prepare more than one set of eggs (sorted by colors for different teams). Students can work in teams to collect and construct the verse.

Follow the Leader

Follow the leader around the room. Say the verse and do the motion before moving on.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Follow the Leader Cards
- ☐ Tape

Instructions

Print and cut out the Follow the Leader Cards. Tape each one to a chair or table and randomly place them around the room. You will lead the students around the room and stop at each card. Read the card and lead the children to do what the card says while reciting the memory verse. Then move around to the next one. You may want to repeat this activity or have students take turns leading.

Freeze!

Stomp like a dinosaur or spin in circles, but when it's time to freeze, get ready to say the memory verse.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page

Instructions

Students will move around the room in a specified action you give, such as crawling, skipping, turning in circles, galloping, walking in giant steps, etc. Then when you say, "Freeze!" the students will stop and freeze in position. Recite the memory verse, then begin again with a different action. You may need to show them how to freeze and hold a position.

Funny Voices

Recite the memory verse together using different voices. Be squeaky like a mouse or whisper as quietly as you can. How many voices can you do?

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Funny Voice Strips
- ☐ Container

Instructions

Print and cut out one set of the Funny Voice Strips and put them into a container. Choose a student to draw out a strip and lead the whole class in reciting the memory verse using that kind of voice. Have fun with it and repeat several times choosing a new voice each time!

Sneaky Stickies

Students will try to be sneaky as they cover up the words and pictures of the memory verse!

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Sticky notes

Instructions

Open the Flip Chart to the Memory Verse Page. Recite the verse together then choose a student to place a sticky note over one word, phrase, or picture on the Flip Chart. Recite the verse again, including the part that is covered up. Continue to choose students to place stickies, one at a time, reciting the whole verse between each turn—including the words/pictures that are covered. When all of the words/pictures are covered up, try to say the whole verse together!