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See Joy in God's Creation

PSALM 98:4-9



GOAL

Children explore the psalmist's words and practice using their senses to enjoy God's creation.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to be a better observer of your world, more sensitive to those around me, seeing your awesomeness in the everyday, and sharing the joy of your wonderment. Amen.

THIS SESSION

It is often not a lack of faith but mere inattention that impedes our practice of joy. Ordinary things distract us from God's presence. Accustomed to our surroundings and loved ones, we no longer notice them. Faith invites us to *find joy in God's glory*—to notice God's presence. Children practice observation skills by using their senses to find joy in God's world.

THE BIBLE STORY

Psalm 65 is a thanksgiving for a good harvest expressing how God's creation in its fullness shouts and sings for joy. God is given glory in all of the natural accordance of agricultural life. Psalm 98 calls all creation to praise God. In these everyday events and everyday things, shouts of joy are raised.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Some children will be open to the imagery, and others will be trapped by literal interpretation—rivers do not have hands to clap. Joy is found through the sense of wonderment and awesomeness of creation. Depending on the group of children, at times it would be appropriate to talk very literally: "How do cows praise God? By mooing and giving milk?"

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Looking for God" (p. 8): Gather items from nature, such as seashells, bird's nests, rocks, bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, vegetables, and so forth. Have at least one item for each child to observe. Obtain plastic magnifying glasses (optional). Invite a naturalist or environmentalist in your congregation to join you to share interesting facts about the items (optional).

Depending on the options you choose:
- "People Who Find Joy in God's World" (p. 9): Invite a guest who likes nature, such as a forest ranger, a zoo worker, a gardener, a photographer, a bird watcher, a hiker, or such. Ask them to talk with the children about what they do and what it is about God's world that brings them joy. Encourage them to bring items that they may use in their job or interest.
- "Taking a Joy Walk" (p. 10): Plan a route outside the church building, if possible, to explore God's world. Enlist adult helpers and follow any policies about taking children outdoors. Obtain plastic magnifying glasses (optional).
- "Joyful Face Snacks" (p. 11): Gather ingredients: English muffins (regular, whole wheat, multi-grain), peanut butter, honey, or alternative spread, bananas, grapes, peaches, raspberries, blueberries, and kiwi. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.



GETTING STARTED

- Collected items from nature
- Plastic magnifying glasses (optional)
- Naturalist or environmentalist from your congregation (optional)



Welcome a naturalist or environmentalist from your congregation and invite them to share interesting facts about the items.

- Internet-connected device (optional)



To learn the song, invite the children to sing along with the YouTube video “Rejoice in The Lord Always—Bible Songs for Children with Lyrics” (bit.ly/FMRejoiceSong, 0:38).

LOOKING FOR GOD



Display the items from nature on a table where the children can see them and pick them up. Invite children to choose an item and examine it with their senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching (probably not tasting!). Point out the magnifying glasses if you have them. Invite conversation about what the children are seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling. Wonder why the objects are the way they are and how they might have gotten to be that way. Make joyous observations about different items, such as the colors in a rock or leaf, the intricacies of a bird’s nest, the smoothness of a shell worn down by water, and so forth. Provide time for the children to exchange or pick up new items to explore.



If a child is not able to see or hear or is uncomfortable with touching, encourage them to use one or more senses that they prefer.

REJOICING IN THE LORD



Sing together “Rejoice in the Lord Always.”

Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I say, “Rejoice!” (*repeat*)

Rejoice! Rejoice! Again, I say, “Rejoice!” (*repeat*)

Ask the children how they can rejoice with their hands. Suggestions may be clap, wave, snap, and so forth. Sing the song again with the hand motions the children suggested. Ask the children how they can rejoice with their feet. Suggestions may be stomp, run, tap, and so forth. Sing the song again with the feet motions the children suggested. Wonder together what other ways the children can rejoice with their bodies and use those suggestions in another round of the song. Marvel with the children that God has made us so wonderfully that we can rejoice in so many ways!



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Resource Page 1, hymnal with “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” or internet-connected device
- Picture cards cut apart from Resource Pages 2, 3, and 4

ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL



Comment that God gave us many ways to experience the world. Talk together about the five senses, noting that, for some people, one or more senses may not function or be as comfortable as they are for others. Ask the children what are things that bring them joy, or make them happy, that they see, hear, touch, smell, and taste.

Tell the children that there is a church song that has been sung for many years that celebrates God’s creation. Invite the children to repeat after you as you sing or say the words to the refrain from “All Things Bright and Beautiful” using Resource Page 1 or a hymnal. Or, show the YouTube video “Sing Hosanna—All Things Bright and Beautiful—Bible Songs for Kids” (bit.ly/FMAllThings, 3:12), stopping at :27 to hear just the refrain.

Hand out the picture cards cut apart from Resource Pages 2, 3, and 4. If you have more than twelve children, form pairs and have children share a card. Invite each child, or pair, to share what their picture is with the rest of the group.

Sing or say the words to the four verses, or show the YouTube video in its entirety, inviting the children to hold up their picture card when it is mentioned in the song. When you get to the fourth verse, pause, and invite the children to stand up and point to their eyes and lips as the song suggests, clapping on the last line.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

JOY IN THE PSALMS



Tell the children that people in the Bible looked around to find God in others and in the world. Some people wrote songs and prayers called *psalms*, which praised God for God's presence. Show the children the Bible and point out where the Psalms are. Explain that some of the prayers and songs were joyful, while others thanked God, and others expressed fear, anger, or sadness.

Tell the children that you are going to read a joyful psalm. Read Psalm 98:4–9 from Resource Page 5. Use the following questions for conversation:

- Where did you hear joy in this psalm?
- What was being joyful?
- How were these things expressing their joy?
- How does this psalm make you feel?

Hand out rhythm instruments and tell the children you are going to read the psalm again. Invite them to use the instruments and their own voices and bodies to express the joy they hear in the psalm. Read the psalm again, pausing after each line to let the children express their joy.

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- Bible
 - Resource Page 5
 - Rhythm instruments



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

PEOPLE WHO FIND JOY IN GOD'S WORLD



Tell the children that there are people all around us who find joy in God's creation in different ways. Some work in nature, some study nature, some protect nature, and others enjoy nature. Wonder together what kinds of jobs or interests people may have who like nature, such as a forest ranger, a zoo worker, a gardener, a photographer, a bird watcher, a hiker, and so forth.

Introduce your guest and invite them to tell the children about their job or interest and what brings them joy about God's world. Encourage the children to ask questions. Have the children thank your guest.

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- Guest who enjoys nature

- Internet-connected device

JOY IN GOD'S CREATION

AM T

Wonder together about God's creation and what God has made that is very, very big and very, very small. Talk together about the things God made that are in the sky, in the seas, and on land.

Invite the children to sing and dance along with the YouTube video "A song about God's Creation for KIDS. ALL GOOD by Orange kids music" (bit.ly/FMAllGood, 3:09) and feel the joy of God's creation.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- Adult helpers
- Plastic magnifying glasses (optional)
- Newsprint and marker

TAKING A JOY WALK

AM C

The practice of attending to the joy in God's creation requires attuning ourselves to the world around us. This involves using our senses more, slowing down, and spending time with nature. If possible, take the children on a walk outside the church building to explore God's world. If your location or the weather is not conducive to being outdoors, use windows or doorways to make observations.

Take a slow sensory walk with the children, stopping frequently to wonder about what the children are discovering. Pause to smell the air. Invite the children to use the magnifying glasses if you have them. The object of this walk is to do it slowly and to engage the children's senses.

If you are using a window or doorway, encourage the children to look very closely at what is inside the frame and then move outward a bit at a time. Encourage them to look at little things and the big picture, colors, and shapes.

After your walk or view through a window, return to your meeting space. Guide children in recalling what they saw, heard, smelled, touched, and possibly tasted! Make a list on a sheet of newsprint of their contributions.

Lead the children in a group prayer inviting them to repeat after you for each item mentioned: "Thank you, God, for (*item*)."
If you have a long list, you might want to group some items together.



Don't be discouraged by being located on a city block or stuck inside because of the weather. Noticing God's world just may take a little more careful observation!

- Resource Page 1, hymnal with "This Is My Father's World," or internet-connected device
- Nature items from "Looking for God" (p. 8)
- Glue
- Watercolor painting supplies
- Card-stock or watercolor paper

REJOICE PICTURES

M A T

Tell the children that there is another church song that has been sung for many years that celebrates the joy and beauty of God's world. Invite the children to repeat after you as you sing or say the words to the first verse of "This Is My Father's World" using Resource Page 1 or a hymnal. Or show the YouTube video "This Is My Father's World" (bit.ly/FMFathersWorld, 1:36), stopping at :44 to hear just the first verse, or play it all the way through for two verses (note that the second verse on the video is different from #370 in the *Glory to God* hymnal). If you show the video, invite the children to follow the motions of the children in it and sing along with the words "This is my Father's world."

Repeat the words in the first verse that say "all nature sings" and wonder together in what ways nature sings to God. Provide painting supplies and card-stock or watercolor paper. Point out the nature items you have gathered and invite the children to take one or more, as you have available,

and use the item(s) to make a picture of nature. The children may want to glue their item(s) to the paper first or have them let the paper dry before gluing the item(s).

Display the pictures in your space or in the church with a sign that says, “All Nature Sings!”

JOYFUL FACE SNACKS



Wonder what a happy face looks like. Invite the children to show you different happy faces. Ask them to imagine something or someone that makes them joyful and have their face show their joy. Have the children share what or who they were thinking about when they made their joyful face.

Tell the children that they will make joyful face snacks to enjoy. Have them wash their hands and help with cutting fruit as possible. The fruit that would be easiest to cut would be grapes and peeled bananas and kiwi. Distribute the fruit to the paper bowls so each child has an assortment of fruits. Invite the children to describe the sights and smells of the fruits.

Give each child one half of an English muffin, pointing out that the regular, whole wheat, and multi-grain represent differing skin tones. Allow the children to choose the muffin they would like to eat. Have the children spread peanut butter, honey, or another spread on the open-faced muffin and then decorate them with the fruits to make a joyful face. Enjoy eating the joyful treats!

- English muffins (regular, whole wheat, and multi-grain)
- Peanut butter, honey, or alternative spread
- Bananas, grapes, peaches, raspberries, blueberries, kiwi
- Cutting boards, paper bowls, paper plates, plastic knives



Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.



FOLLOWING JESUS

JOYFUL RESPONSE PRAYER AND MARCH



As the group readies to leave and follow Jesus daily, offer a prayer and time of joyful response. Invite the children to name events or things that make them joyful. Write their responses on newsprint. Practice the response with the children: “This brings joy to your world.” Pray the following prayer, prompting the children to respond after each item from the list you mention.

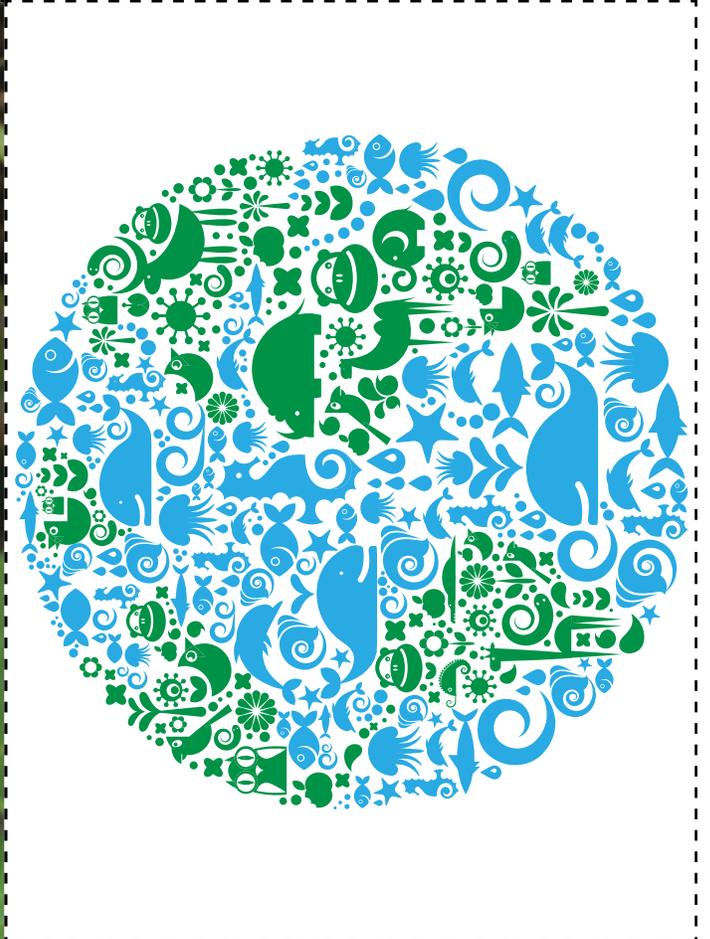
Dear God, thank you for (*item from list*).
This brings joy to your world.
Amen.

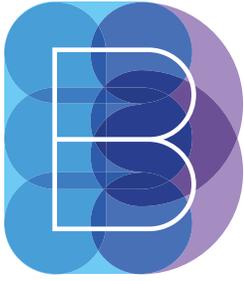
Provide children with scarves or ribbons. Invite them to march, waving the scarves or ribbons as they listen to “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (or “Joy to the World” during the Advent/Christmas season). Play the recorded music or show the YouTube videos “Kids Worship Easter: Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee” (bit.ly/FMJoyfulJoyful, 2:41) or “Joy to the World with Lyrics—Christmas Carol & Song” (bit.ly/FMJoyWorld, 2:09).

- Newsprint and marker
- Scarves or ribbons
- Music for “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (or “Joy to the World” during the Advent/Christmas season) and music player or internet-connected device









BIBLE STORY

BASED ON PSALM 98:4-9

Sing for joy to the LORD, all the earth;
praise God with songs and shouts of joy!
Sing praises to the LORD!
Play music on the harps!
Blow trumpets and horns,
and shout for joy to the LORD, our king.
Roar, sea, and every creature in you;
sing, earth, and all who live on you!
Clap your hands, you rivers;
you hills, sing together with joy before the LORD,
because God comes to rule the earth.
God will rule the peoples of the world with justice and fairness.

—Adapted from the GNT



