

# Share Others' Joy

LUKE 15:11-32; ROMANS 12:15

3



## GOAL

Youth learn what the Bible tell us about rejoicing in the blessings of others; they consider how rejoicing with others leads to deeper empathy and joy in their own lives.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



## PRAYER

Gracious God, help me, and everyone who gathers in this group today, find joy in the blessings of others.

## THIS SESSION

When we are blessed, the joy we feel is immediate and obvious, but this joy is not only a private, interior experience. As part of the Christian community, we are urged to share this same enthusiasm when anyone in our family of faith receives grace. As Paul writes to the church in Rome, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

## THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus calls us to rejoice in the blessings given to others. This call also pushes us to rejoice even when we do not believe that the blessings others have received were deserved. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the younger brother squanders his inheritance. He is prepared to confess his sins, but as he returns, his father runs to welcome him home, not even waiting for a confession. The father is so filled with joy that he holds an extravagant party for his son.

But an older, responsible brother is appalled that his father would welcome his younger brother home. This story presses us to wonder whether we can rejoice when someone we believe to be unworthy of forgiveness is offered mercy. As we practice rejoicing in the blessings God extends to friends, strangers, and sometimes even enemies, we grow in empathy. Rather than a zero-sum game, others' blessings deepen our own appreciation of God's grace, which helps us to trust God even more.

## CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Our culture is quick to celebrate personal successes, but it also breeds competition. Youth have likely experienced this competition with grades, sports, and other social activities. Today's session will challenge them to grow in empathy by considering how rejoicing in the blessings of others can be an act of faith. Learning to celebrate others' blessings draws us closer together as the body of Christ and helps us become joyfully aware of the way God is at work in not only our lives and the lives of those we love but also the lives of strangers and even those we consider enemies.

## SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Rejoicing with Those Who Rejoice” (p. 26): Prepare a sheet of newsprint with this passage: “Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.” —Romans 12:15. Save this sheet for use in session 4.
- “Thinking Forward and Looking Back” (p. 27): Obtain the *Practice Joy* infographic poster ([bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters](http://bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters), Year 1 Set).
- “Maya Angelou” (p. 28): Prepare a sheet of newsprint with this quotation from Maya Angelou: “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

# GETTING STARTED

- Copies of Resource Page 1
- Pens

## NAMING BLESSINGS

C CT

As participants arrive, give them a copy of Resource Page 1. In the first column, invite youth to list the blessings they've received over the last year. In the second column, ask youth to list blessings that have been received by family and friends in the last year. Give participants time to write down several responses in each column. Once everyone has had enough time to respond, ask for volunteers to share their lists if they feel comfortable. Once everyone has had the opportunity to share, ask the group to discuss the following questions:

- ➔ Which list was easier for you to make—the list of your own blessings or the blessings of others?
- ➔ Why do you think it's important for us to notice and celebrate the blessings of others in our daily lives?

Explain that today's session will focus on how rejoicing in the blessings of others can help us grow in empathy and understand God's joy in a way that is less individualistic and more communal.

- Bibles or copies of Philippians 4:4–6

## SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER

QC

Provide each participant with a Bible or a copy of the Scripture text. Read Philippians 4:4–6 in unison. After reading, pray this prayer or one of your choosing:

God, today we celebrate that you have called us all to be members of your church, the body of Christ. Open our eyes to the blessings of others and help us to rejoice, even when doing so may be difficult. Amen.



## INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Prepared newsprint
- Markers

## REJOICING WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE

C

Direct participants' attention to the passage from Romans 12:15 on the sheet of newsprint. Invite a volunteer to read the verse. As you use the following questions to reflect on the passage, have a volunteer write notes about the conversation on the sheet of newsprint.

- ➔ What did Paul mean by this statement?
- ➔ Can you think of and share a time when you either wept or rejoiced and someone came along to share in that moment? What did it feel like?
- ➔ Can you think of and share a time when you did the same for someone else?

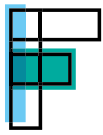
Explain that, when we really try to be present with someone and understand what they are going through, whether good or bad, we are cultivating empathy. Sharing this connection with a brother or sister in Christ can be one of the greatest sources of joy we ever know.

## THINKING FORWARD AND LOOKING BACK

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Gather at the *Practice Joy* infographic poster and invite youth to focus on the images and passages that relate to today's theme, "Share Others' Joy." Have them imagine what this session will explore.

*Practice Joy* infographic poster



## FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

### PRODIGAL SONS & DAUGHTERS

AM D

Ask for a volunteer (or multiple volunteers) to read Luke 15:11–32 aloud to the group. Then form two groups and ask participants to reimagine this parable in a modern setting. Encourage each group to be creative. The story doesn't need to take place among family members; the prodigal can be a prodigal daughter or friend. Allow each group adequate time to plot out their scenario and then rehearse their skits. When youth are ready, have them present their retellings to one another. After each group has presented, invite them to share if they noticed anything new in the story by creating their own take on it.

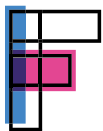
Bibles

### JOURNAL ENTRIES

QC AT C

Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and provide Bibles for reference. Ask participants to imagine that they are one of the characters in Luke 15:11–32, either the father, prodigal son, or older son. Following the prompt on Resource Page 2, have them write a journal entry in first person about how they feel at the moment the prodigal son returns home. When participants have finished, invite anyone who is willing to share part of their journal entry. Close by reminding participants how *empathy*, learning to understand a situation from someone else's perspective, can help us find joy in the blessings of others.

Bibles  
 Copies of Resource Page 2



## FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

### THE YEAR OF JUBILEE SIMULATION

G C

Form three groups. Designate one group "landowners," another "merchants," and the third "servants." Every member of the servant group should receive three pieces of currency; merchants receive seven. Distribute whatever is left evenly among the landowners so that they each have ten or more pieces of currency.

Copies of Resource Page 3  
 Small objects to represent currency in the game (enough for at least ten per person—beads, strips of paper, candy)

Distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and ask for a volunteer to read the brief summary in "The Year of Jubilee." Explain that each group is going to take an imaginary trip to the market where they will use their currency to purchase items to provide for their families. Members of each group may pool their resources and share their purchases if they so desire. After each group has decided upon their purchases and recorded them on the back of their Resource Page, declare that it is now the Year of Jubilee! Redistribute the currency so that each participant has the same amount of income, regardless of their class (servant, merchant, landowner). Tell youth that they

may once again visit the market, and this time members of any class are allowed to pool and share their resources. Participants should again record their purchases.

Once everyone has had a chance to shop with their new income, gather the group and process together using the following questions:

- ➔ What was your experience shopping with your income during the first round?
- ➔ When you revisited the market with your new income, how did your experience change?
- ➔ How did your experience of community shift throughout this simulation?
- ➔ How did the practice of the Year of Jubilee challenge those in power to find joy in the blessings of others?
- ➔ How might Paul's words, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) apply to this situation?

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Internet-connected device

## EMPATHY IS ESSENTIAL T C

For those not familiar with the controversy over "taking a knee" in the NFL, use the following explanation to provide context for the YouTube video the group will view:

In 2016, a heated controversy began when NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick began the practice of kneeling during the national anthem played before games as a peaceful protest against racial injustice and police brutality. While some appreciated Kaepernick's example and joined him in the protest, others saw this act as disrespectful and unpatriotic. In the following clip, NFL quarterback Tom Brady talks about what it was like to maintain a sense of community among players with differing opinions.

Show the YouTube video "Tom Brady on Kneeling in the NFL: Empathy Is Essential to Sports | SuperSoul Sunday | OWN" ([bit.ly/FMBradyKneeling](https://bit.ly/FMBradyKneeling), 1:34).

After the video, consider the following questions together:

- ➔ During this controversy, it would have been very easy for players to take sides. How could they cultivate empathy instead?
- ➔ How did this empathy cultivate joy among the team members and help them to build a greater sense of community?
- ➔ How did God cultivate joy through this difficult experience?



## PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

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Newsprint with Maya Angelou quotation

## MAYA ANGELOU C

Share the Maya Angelou quotation you posted on newsprint: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Ask participants to discuss:

- ➔ How does this quotation relate to the story of the prodigal son? (Specifically, how does it relate to the idea of rejoicing in the blessings of others?)
- ➔ Do you think we live in a culture that wants us to compete with each other or celebrate each other's successes? What are some examples in our world today of these things?

## RANDOM ACTS OF REJOICING

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☐ Notecards, envelopes

Ask youth to think of someone in their life who has experienced God's blessings lately: a classmate, family member, church friend, and so on. Have them write a note to this person that they can either hand deliver or that you can mail for them. Once they have had time to write their note, ask if there are any volunteers willing to share whom they wrote to and what blessing this person recently experienced. Have participants reflect together about the following:

- ➔ How does it make you feel to congratulate someone?
- ➔ How does our community draw closer together as the body of Christ when we celebrate one another's joy?
- ➔ How is our community currently celebrating others' blessings? How could we do this even more?



## FOLLOWING JESUS

### CELEBRATING OTHERS' JOYS

QC C

Ask youth to think of a current situation in their lives where they feel the need to be competitive. Challenge them to be specific and discuss topics like academics, athletics, and so on. Invite youth to think about how they can celebrate the blessings of others in this part of their life over the coming week. Ask for volunteers to share how they will try to choose empathy and rejoice over competition and jealousy. Close with the following prayer or one of your choosing:

God of the prodigal, who welcomes each of us and all of us with open arms and a joyful heart, forgive us for the times when we let jealousy and competition win. Help us to celebrate the blessings of our brothers and sisters in Christ so that we might find deeper joy. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.



Imagine you are one of the characters in Luke 15:11–32, the parable of the Prodigal Son. From the perspective of either the father, the younger (prodigal) son, or the older son, write a brief journal entry about what happened on the day the prodigal son returned home.

# PRODIGAL SON



# Year of Jubilee Simulation

## The Year of Jubilee

According to the Levitical law, every fiftieth year was to be considered “hallowed” or “blessed” (Leviticus 25:10–12). Known as “The Year of Jubilee,” during this time landowners were asked not to plant or harvest anything from their fields. Any land they had acquired from other families was to be returned and any Israelites being held as indentured servants were to be set free.<sup>1</sup>

## Starting Income

Servants: 3

Merchants: 7

Landowners: 10+

1	3	5	7
wheat barley figs dates	olive oil nuts vegetables spices wine wool grapes honey	fresh meat (goat, sheep, cow) pottery (for storing food) baskets live animal (goat or sheep for milk)	live animal (cow to work field) silk linen leather boots pre-made clothing

## Year 49:

Imagine you are living in Israel, in the sixth century BCE, as a servant, merchant, or landowner. Your income is determined by your class. You venture off to a day at the market with some of your friends (of the same class) and must decide how you will stretch your money to provide for your family. Use the space on the back of this sheet to record what you will buy. You may share your purchases, but only with members of your own class.

## Year of Jubilee:

When the 50th year arrives, it is the year of Jubilee! Landowners must return ancestral property and declare that servants are no longer indebted to their masters. All available income is now split evenly among all participants. With what you now have in the Year of Jubilee, take another trip to the market with your friends. Again, record what you will buy to support your family now that your income has changed.

1. William K. Gilders, “Jubilee Year”, n.p. [cited 29 Dec 2020]. Online: <http://bibleodysey.org/en/passages/related-articles/jubilee-year>