



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Stack-ability

[10 min]

Supplies

- large disposable cups (paper or plastic) (4 per child)
- long tables (1 for every 6 kids)
- upbeat music (optional)
- music player (optional)

Easy Prep

- Make a stack of 12 cups for every group of 3 kids.

Quickly Unstack and Restack Cups

Say: Today we heard about when the Israelites celebrated with a big banquet—that's a big party with food and fun. Let's pretend we're setting a table for a fun party, but we'll make an awesome game out of it!

- Form teams of three, and have each team line up along a long side of a table.
- Give each team a stack of cups to place upside down on the table in front of the first team member in line. This person will be the Stacker.
- Tucking one hand behind his or her back, the Stacker will use only one hand to unstack the cups as quickly as possible along the table's edge without knocking any off the table.
- The Stacker will quickly restack the cups, again being careful not to knock any off the table.
- Then the Stacker will pass the stack of cups to the next person on the team to repeat the unstacking and restacking.
- Any cups that fall to the floor are forfeited. The team's goal is to move as quickly as possible through turns while keeping all the cups on the table.
- Cue the teams to begin. If you'd like, play upbeat music while kids play.
- For additional rounds, try challenges such as stacking 10 cups into a pyramid and then back into a single stack or making two pyramids of six cups each.

Talk About It

Ask: • What made this more fun than just setting some cups out on the table for a party?

Say: There was fun in making a game out of cup-stacking and setting a table. Fun is a part of celebrating, and celebrating brings us joy.

Ask: • What are other things you've celebrated, maybe even with a fun party? Share an example of your own, such as a graduation or accomplishment at school or work. Kids will likely share about birthdays, holidays, or fun events at school.

Say: We celebrate for all kinds of reasons, and one thing you'll find at every celebration is joy. But joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and that means we can have joy every day, whether it's a celebration day, a regular day, or even a not-so-good day.



TALK-ABOUT VIDEO

Joy in Africa

[10 min]

Supplies

- “Joy in Africa” teaching video

Discuss and Watch “Joy in Africa”

Say: **We’re learning that joy is a fruit of the Spirit.**

Ask: • **Tell about something that makes you really happy.** Share your own story first.

Say: **Usually we associate being *happy* with having everything we want. But joy is a little different! Let’s see how God brought joy to a school in Africa...even when the kids didn’t have everything we might think makes us happy.**

Watch “Joy in Africa.”

Ask: • **Which of the things that we said make us happy were in the video?**

• **What were some things the kids experienced that seemed really hard?**
• **How do you think the kids in the orphanage were able to have joy even though they had hard lives?**

• **After watching this video, how would you describe the difference between happiness and joy?**

Say: **We don’t need to have everything we want to have joy. That’s because joy doesn’t come from what we have. Joy comes from God, because joy is a fruit of the Spirit.**



DEEPER BIBLE How Does Joy Make Me Strong?

[15 min]

Supplies

- Bibles
- large bowls of ice (1 for every 3 or 4 kids)
- timer
- “I’ve Got the Joy” handout (1 per child)
- lollipops (2 per child)
- duct tape
- fine-tipped permanent markers

Set It Up

Say: **We’re learning that joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Nehemiah even said the joy of the Lord is our strength. Joy is great, but we don’t always pair it with being *strong*.**

Ask: • **What are words you think of when you think about strength?** Words might include *power, brave, courage, or big*.

Say: **Even though most people wouldn’t think of joy and strength as words that necessarily go together, Nehemiah put them together. So how does joy make us strong? Let’s dig in to that.**

Ice Hands

Say: **I have a challenge for you. It will be hard! I want to see how long you can hold your hand in a bowl of ice.**

Have kids gather around bowls of ice. If the bowls are big enough for multiple kids to put their hands in without touching hands, they can all go at once. Otherwise, have kids take turns. Watch a timer, and make note of how long each child is able to keep a hand in the ice.

When all the kids have their hands out of the ice, let them blow on their hands to warm them up as you discuss these questions.

Ask: • **Finish this sentence: I had to pull my hand out because...**

Say: **When the ice surrounded your hand for so long, your hand started hurting! Think about hard things that surround your life—things that make your heart or spirit hurt.**

Ask: • **What are some of those things?**

Say: **Back to our ice challenge! Let’s see if you can keep your hand in the ice longer with a little trick. This time, we’ll sing “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart” as we do it.**

Have kids try again, but this time, lead kids in singing the song. Your adult or teen helper can note the times. Most kids will be able to keep their hands in the ice longer; scientifically, the distraction of singing will minimize the discomfort caused by the ice.

When all the kids have their hands out of the ice, let them warm their hands as you discuss this question.

Ask: • **What made this round different? Why?**

Say: **When you’re focused on the pain caused by the ice, it hurts more. But when you distract yourself by singing, it changes your focus. That helps you endure discomfort longer! It’s not that the ice was any less cold the**

second time; it was that your focus changed.

Ask: • **Think of something that makes life hard or takes away your joy.**

What is one specific way you can change your focus to get through that time?

Say: **Our focus during hard times can change the way we perceive what we're experiencing. When we focus on joy from God, we can make it through the hard time. That's because Nehemiah is right: The joy of the Lord is our strength!**

Jesus used this exact principle when he had to die on the cross. Listen to what he was focused on—and what we can focus on.

Read Hebrews 12:2.

Ask: • **What joy do you think Jesus focused on when he was dying on the cross?**

Say: **Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.** That doesn't mean we'll never face hard times; it means God can help us through hard times by filling us with his joy! **And one way to focus on his joy is by reading the Bible.**

Dig Deeper

Give each child an "I've Got the Joy" handout and two lollipops. Tell kids not to eat the lollipops.

Say: **On your handout, you can read several Bible verses about joy.**

Choose one that means the most to you. Allow time for kids to read and select their verses.

Say: **Now let's make dumbbells to remind us of how joy brings strength.**

Lead kids in the following steps to make dumbbells.

- Tape the stems of two lollipops together, with the heads pointing opposite directions. Wrap the tape around the stems several times.
- On the tape, write the Scripture reference of the verse you chose.
- Practice weightlifting as you read the verse from your handout several times.

Say: **Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.** What an amazing gift from God and a great way to be strong no matter what life brings our way!



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP

Jump for Joy!

[5 min]

Jump and Pray

Say: **Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.** That means prayer doesn't always have to be a boring, kneeling-with-your-eyes-closed kind of thing. Sometimes we can jump for joy as we pray!

- Have kids jump up and down as they thank God for things he's given them.
- Have kids continue to jump up and down as they praise God by describing what he's like.

Wrap Up

Pray: **Spirit, thank you for bringing us joy! Fill us with your joy this week. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Thank kids for coming, and encourage them to come back next week.



ACTIVITY PAGES WITH A POINT

Joyful Noise

[10 min]

Supplies

- “Fruit of the Spirit: Joy” Coloring Page
- pencils
- crayons

Older Kids: Do an Activity Page

Say: **Today we’re learning about the fruit of joy. When Ezra read God’s Word, the people were filled with joy. Let’s fill our room with joy as we do a puzzle.**

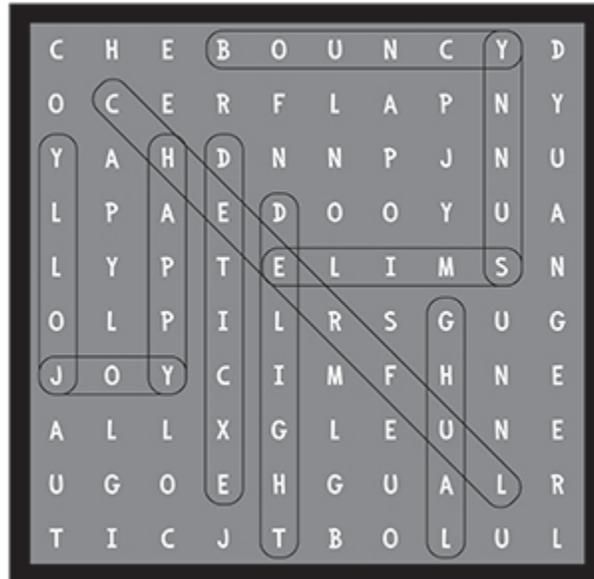
Distribute the activity pages and pencils. Kids will look for words in the word search. When they find one, they’ll announce it by saying something like “I just found happy!” Then everyone will cheer.

Ask: • **Describe how our room felt as we did this puzzle.**

• **What else makes you feel that way?**

Say: **Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. We can rejoice when God brings us good things *and* when God brings good things to others. And we can rejoice when we read the Bible! It’s full of God’s truths that won’t ever change.**

ANSWER KEY:



Younger Kids: Color a Coloring Page

Distribute the coloring pages and crayons. Say: **Today we learned that joy is a fruit of the Spirit. One thing that can bring us joy is the Bible! When the people in our Bible story read God's Word, they were full of joy! Let's color that.**

Allow time for kids to color.

When kids finish coloring, three-hole-punch their pages and put them into binders, if desired.