

What Is Joy? – Reflection and Discussion Questions

This reflection will help youth think about the difference between joy and happiness. Even when life is difficult, we can still find joy through our faith in Jesus Christ.

For this lesson, you will need a bag of candy and several bowls. Hide the candy around the room before the youth arrive.

Welcome. We are going to divide into groups of three and four. *(If the group is small, you can just skip this and have them play as individuals.)* I have hidden candy in this room. You will have 30 seconds to find as many pieces as you can. The team *(or individual)* who finds the most pieces wins.

Go!

After 30 seconds, gather everyone back together. Have each team put their candy in a separate bowl in front of each group and decide who won. Don't let them eat the candy.

- Did that game make you happy? Why?
- What are some other things which make you happy?

Now take all of the candy away from the losing teams and put it in the winning team's bowl.

- Is everyone still happy? Why or why not?

Finally take away all of the candy from the winning team.

- Now who is happy? Who is unhappy?
- How do disappointments and the unfairness of circumstances impact our happiness?

Read the gospel:

[John 15:9-17](#) (No Greater Love) – the Gospel Reading for the [6th Sunday of Easter – Year B](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

This I command you: love one another.”

[John 15:9-17](#)

In this gospel, Jesus is talking about laying down his life. In fact, Jesus is saying this at the Last Supper, after washing the apostles' feet. He is aware that he is about to be arrested and that those in power will seek to kill him. This is why he talks about laying down his life.

But he also speaks of joy.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.

- Do you think Jesus was happy, when he had a good idea what was coming next?
- How can Jesus have any joy when he knows such a trial awaits him?

Jesus was probably not feeling happiness at this moment. Perhaps even worse that the leaders plotting to kill him, he knew his best friends would abandon him. His disappointment was probably overwhelming.

But Jesus does not tell his disciples that he wants them to know his happiness. He says that he wants them to know his joy.

Joy is very different from happiness. It is a deep peace that comes from knowing that no matter what, we are God's beloved sons and daughters. Jesus trusted completely in his Father. And though he couldn't see exactly how it would work out, he knew that somehow he would not be separated from the love of the Father. That was the source of his joy. He trusted that somehow, in the end, the Father would make all things right.

So joy is very different from happiness. Happiness is a feeling which comes and goes according to what is going on in our life. Joy is a way of thinking and being. It is a state of mind.

- Think of some of the difficult times in your life. Have you ever found joy in those moments, even though you were unhappy?
- How might you foster an attitude of joy in your life?

One way to develop a sense of joy is to practice gratitude. But not just when you are happy. So this week, whenever something does not go the way you had hoped, take a few moments to think of something good in your life and thank God for it. Ask Jesus to be with you during what is difficult.

Remember that joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. So if it isn't easy, spend a few minutes just thinking of how much God loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring you a sense of peace and joy.