



JOY

FINDING A WAY TO BE HAPPY, EVEN WHEN THINGS DON'T GO YOUR WAY

DAY 1

Go to Studio252.tv and watch this week's episode of The So & So Show.
(Click on *Fun2Watch!* then *The So & So Show.*)

Even if you already saw it at church, feel free to check it out again!

SO & SO TOP 3

After watching, write one thing that . . .

1) YOU LIKED: _____

2) YOU LEARNED: _____

3) YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW: _____

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

JOY

AND HAPPINESS?



DAY 5

With a parent's permission, go for a short walk outside. Do you see anything blooming? Depending on where you live, you might see some hardy winter plants, but it's likely nothing like the spring or summer when everything's in bloom.

Do you know the difference between a perennial and an annual plant? Perennial plants are plants that grow back year after year. Even if they appear to die off during the winter, they're actually still alive, just under the surface of the ground. Annuals bloom one time, and then they're done. They're beautiful, but their life is short.

It seems kind of impossible to be joyful all the time, when the truth is, some days are just HARD, aren't they? But if it seems impossible, that might be because you're confusing joy and happiness. It actually IS impossible to be happy all the time. But joy, that's something we can maintain even when life isn't going like we hoped.

Happiness is a lot like an annual flower. It's bright and shiny, but it's not going to last forever. Joy, however, has deep roots. Roots like God's never-ending love for you. The truth that you belong to God. And Jesus' promise to make everything right one day. Keep these truths buried in your heart, and you'll find that joy sticks around, even in the dead of winter.

BRING THIS
BACK NEXT
WEEK!

Name _____

Parent Signature _____

DAY 2



READ ISAIAH 9:6-7

As you read through Isaiah 9:6-7, underline the different names given to Jesus.

Those names actually reflect promises from God about how Jesus would rule as our Savior. Write down a couple of names given to Jesus that mean the most to you, and then think about (and write down) why those names have significance to you.

DAY 3



God promised a Savior, and He made good on that promise, as He does with all of His promises! Some of His other amazing promises are that He will always be with us and that one day, Jesus will bring a peace to this world that will never end! That means even when things aren't going exactly the way you wish they would, you can have joy.

What is something right now in your life that you are worried about? Take a couple of minutes to fill in the blanks of the prayer below, and then read the prayer out loud.

"DEAR GOD,
As You know, I am worried about _____
_____. But even though I don't have the
answers right now, I know I can have joy because You have promised
to be with me always, and You keep your promises. Help me to have
joy even while I wait for _____
_____. Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior, and I look forward
to the promise of peace that He will bring. In Jesus' Name, I pray,
Amen."

DAY 4

Joy is finding a way to be happy, even when things don't go your way and **Philippians 4:4** offers one big reason we can do that: because we belong to God!

If you have a meal with your family today, use that time to share some highs and lows from the day (or the day before, if it's breakfast). If you don't normally get to eat together, just take some time before bed to

chat with as many family members as you can about how the day went. Everyone should share a high, then a low, and then together, discuss how you could find joy even when facing the low. (Some hints: think about God's promises about **Philippians 4:4**, and even what you might learn or experience as a result of that "low.")





WHAT'S THE MOST AMAZING THING YOU'VE EVER SEEN?

DAY 5

Yesterday, you gathered stories of how others have seen God do the impossible. Today, you're going to use those stories, plus some of your own, to decorate your own Christmas tree, or in this case, a JOY tree!

Start by making a list of words that represent the impossible things you've seen God do in your life, or the lives of others.

These could be answers to prayer, people's names, or even people or situations from the Bible where God did the impossible. Be sure and include a few situations from your own life. Find a real tree or draw one on a separate sheet of paper.

What the "ornaments" will look like is up to you! If you're drawing a tree, you can just write the words from the list you made on the tree itself. If you have a real tree, design ornaments and cut them to place on your tree.

As you go throughout the month, don't forget to add your words of gratitude for how you see God doing the impossible as you go. Celebrate the amazing things He is doing, and as you see your tree fill up with ornaments, you'll see your JOY fill up too!

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DAY 2



READ LUKE 1:5-17

As you read Luke 1:5-17, imagine that you didn't know the end of the story. Try to pretend that—just like Zechariah—you don't know that God's words through the angel are going to come to pass. Imagine what it must have been like to hear that seemingly impossible news.

WHAT, IN YOUR LIFE, SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE RIGHT NOW? WRITE IT DOWN.

Now go on and read Luke 1:57-58. The impossible was, in fact, possible through God! Only a few verses in the Bible separate the angel's visit and John the Baptist being born, but the truth is, there was quite a bit of time (at least nine months!) between Zechariah learning what God had planned and then seeing it happen. That was a lot of time for Zechariah to wonder if God could really pull off what seemed impossible.

Right now you may be living in the in between, wondering if God can do the impossible. And while God CAN do anything, we certainly don't know what He is going to choose to do in our lives. But while we sit in the in-between, we can have JOY, knowing He does have a plan, and He can do anything, even the impossible!

DAY 3



Go back and look at what you wrote yesterday—the impossible situation you're facing. Do you think it's something God could do?

God hasn't promised that He'll answer every prayer we prayer exactly as we might want, but He has made some promises we can count on, such as; He'll always be with us, that He works all things together for our good, and, Jesus Himself assured us that He really can do the impossible. Check out Luke 18:27: Jesus replied, *'What is impossible with man is possible with God,'* (NIV).

Take a couple of minutes to pray for the situation you wrote about on Day 2, but after each sentence you say to God, quote Jesus' words out loud. It might look something like this:

"DEAR GOD,

I'm feeling pretty worried about _____. But I know that Jesus promised that, *'What is impossible with man is possible with God.'* I ask You to please _____. After all, *'What is impossible with man is possible with God.'* Please help me to have peace and be brave no matter what. I know I can face the future with joy because *'What is impossible with man is possible with God.'* In Jesus' Name, I pray, amen."

DAY 4

Just like hearing Elizabeth and Zechariah's story encourages us because it reminds us that **anything is possible with God**, hearing the stories of your friends and family members who have also seen God do the impossible can help you have joy!

Grab a pad of paper and a pen, or a mobile device with a voice memo app, and get ready to do some

interviewing today. Pick at least three people who you know follow God and ask them to share a story with you where God did something in their lives that seemed impossible until He did it! Record the details, either on a voice memo or sheet of paper. Make sure they're okay if you share their story with others, and at dinner or bedtime tonight, share those stories you recorded with your family. Then together thank God for these stories that show you that **you can have joy because anything is possible with God.**





WHAT ARE SOME WAYS
TO FIND **JOY**

JOY

WHEN YOU'RE
AFRAID?

DAY 5

There's a name for Jesus that you probably don't hear all that often, except at Christmas:

EMMANUEL.

It literally translates to, "God with us."

What a great name for Jesus! It's the perfect description of who Jesus is and what He did—He came to be God among us.

But even though you may only hear this name for Jesus at Christmas, it's true all year long. God is indeed with us always. Remembering that God is with you even when you're afraid can help you be brave and even have JOY!

Grab some colored pencils or markers and color the word "Emmanuel." Then cut around the word and hang it somewhere you'll see it through the week (maybe even on your Christmas tree?) as a reminder that even when you're afraid, **you can have joy because God is with you.**

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DAY 2



READ LUKE 1:26-28

Mary was about to receive some pretty wonderful, yet likely terrifying news. First of all, the news was coming from an angel, which already meant this was a pretty big deal. And the angel's news? That she, a young, unmarried woman was going to be the mother of the Son of God.

Whoa.

God knew this was going to be big news. So He gave the angel the perfect words to say to prepare Mary for everything that was going to come her way. Read Luke 1:28 again and underline what you think those words are.

Five words.

"The Lord is with you."

Those words would prove true throughout Mary's life and allow her to walk with joy through the plan God had for her. The best news? Those same words are true for you too!

YOU CAN HAVE JOY BECAUSE GOD IS WITH YOU.

DAY 3



GOD IS WITH YOU.

That is not only a promise from God that brings us comfort, but it can also bring us joy, knowing that the same God who made us—who made the whole world—is with us. He loves us that much that He promised to never leave us!

Think about your day ahead. **What is one place or time that remembering God is with you would be especially helpful?** Maybe you struggle with getting out the door on time for school? Maybe you have a test in math? Maybe there's someone on the bus ride home that's always giving you a hard time? Whatever the situation is, take a minute to talk to God about it. Start out your prayer by thanking God for always being with you. Then talk to Him about the specific situation you're facing today. End your prayer by thanking Him again for always being with you, and asking Him to help you feel Him with you today.

DAY 4

What is one of your favorite Christmas activities to do with a friend? Carve out some time to spend a few minutes doing that activity today.

MAYBE IT'S . . .

- o Sipping hot cocoa
- o Decorating your house or tree
- o Buying presents
- o Wrapping presents
- o Making Christmas cookies

While you spend time with your friend or family member doing the Christmas activity, share with them what you've been learning this week about God being with you. Ask them about times when they feel afraid and how it makes them feel to know God is with them, and share your own experience as well. Brainstorm together how you can find joy even when you're afraid.



WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR?



DAY 5

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Have you opened all of your Christmas presents already? If you have, what was the best present you got?

And did you give anyone a present? If so, what was the best present you gave?

Of course, not everyone exchanges presents at Christmas, but if you did, there's a good reason for it. We give gifts to each other because Christmas reminds us of the best gift any of us will ever receive: God gave us Jesus!

If you haven't already taken some time this week read the Christmas story, gather your family together and do it now! Take turns reading Luke 2:1-20. If you'd really like to step it up, act out the story with props and costumes, or even your nativity set. If you have a younger brother or sister, be sure and include them—they might have a baby doll or favorite action figure you could use to play baby Jesus!

After you've finished reading the first Christmas story, take some time as a family to share with each other:

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR?



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BRING THIS BACK NEXT WEEK!

Name

Parent Signature

DAY 2



READ LUKE 2:10-20

The angels got it right: their message was indeed news of great joy! And as soon as the shepherds had seen it with their own eyes—God’s Son was in fact here, just as God had promised He would be—they too were filled with joy and couldn’t help but go around telling everyone the great news.

To whom did the story of the newborn Savior bring joy? Re-read Luke 2:18 to find out, and underline the answer.

“All who heard it were amazed.”

The story of God’s Son coming to earth to be our Savior is incredible, and it can bring joy to anyone who hears it!

YOU CAN HAVE JOY BECAUSE GOD SENT HIS SON. This week as you celebrate Christmas, remember the best part of Christmas—the very reason we celebrate Christmas at all—Jesus, is the cause of all our JOY!

DAY 3



Christmas is such a joyful season, but for people who have had a hard year or are going through some difficult times right now, it may not feel so joyful. You likely know someone who is going through something tough. Maybe you have a friend who lost someone close to them this year, or maybe someone in your family lost their job months ago and still hasn’t found a new one. Or maybe it’s you who is struggling right now.

Write down the name of the person who came to your mind, as well as a bit about their situation, in the prayer below. Then read the prayer out loud. Then find a minute today to tell the person you prayed for that you prayed that they could have joy this Christmas because God sent His Son!

DEAR GOD,

It’s amazing to know that You sent Your Son to be our Savior. Knowing that gives us such joy at Christmas and all year long. But I know Christmas can be a hard time of year for people who are sad. I imagine _____ is having a harder time finding joy this Christmas

because _____ . Please send some joyful reminders his/her way. Help _____ to have joy because You sent Your Son, and please use me to encourage _____ this Christmas season. In Jesus’ name, I pray, amen.”

DAY 4

The Christmas season it’s a great time to share with others the joy you have because God sent His Son!

Just like the angels told the shepherds the joyful news, and then the shepherds couldn’t keep that great news to themselves, when we truly understand the amazing truth that God sent His Son, we will want to share that news with everyone!



Wherever you go today, wish EVERYONE you see a Merry Christmas! (Bonus points if you can hand out a candy cane or other small treat with your Christmas greeting!) And if you get a chance, tell them a bit more about why you’re so merry. Tell them the reason for your joy: God sent His Son!

YOU CAN HAVE JOY BECAUSE GOD SENT HIS SON.



HOW CAN YOU FIND JOY ALL YEAR LONG?



DAY 5

THIS MONTH YOU'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT JOY!

- o You can have joy because God keeps His promises.
- o You can have joy because anything is possible with God.
- o You can have joy because God sent His Son.
- o You can find joy when you search for God.

Which one of these truths is the easiest for you to understand and comes naturally to you? Underline it.

Which one of these truths is the hardest for you to remember, or is the one you want to focus on most in the coming year? Circle it.

Grab a sheet of paper and write out Philippians 4:4, but write it out as a formation of the letters J-O-Y. Then hang the verse somewhere you'll see it every day in the coming weeks and months as a reminder that you can **find a way to be happy, even when things don't go your way.**

parent signature _____

name _____

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DAY 2



READ MATTHEW 2:1-12

As you read Matthew 2:1-12, circle all the words and phrases that talk about looking or searching for Jesus (words like “where” count too!).

Then underline the sentence that explains the wise men’s reaction to finding Jesus. (Hint: it involves a star.)

Yes, the wise men were “full of joy” to see the star stop over the house where Jesus was. They had searched for God’s Son, and they found Him. And when they did? JOY.

Stars are great, but you don’t need one to search for Jesus! You’ve got all you need to search for Jesus (more on that later!), and when you do, you can find JOY just like the wise men.

YOU CAN FIND JOY WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR GOD.

DAY 3



Is it dark outside? If not, ask a parent if you can stay up late enough to try to see some stars tonight. If that’s not possible, just move on to Plan B: grab a flashlight and then get your room as dark as possible and make your own “star” on the ceiling!

As you look up at the stars (or your homemade star), imagine what it must have been like for those wise men, using just a star to lead them to Jesus. Then talk to God, and ask Him for help as you search for Him and His wisdom in your own life, using a prayer like this:

DEAR GOD,
Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. Just like the wise men searched for You by following a star, I want to search for You in my life. Knowing You brings more joy than anything else in this world, so help me focus on searching for You every day. I love You, God. In Jesus’ same, I pray, amen.

DAY 4

WHO DO YOU KNOW THAT FOLLOWS AFTER GOD WITH ALL HIS OR HER LIFE? _____

Figure out a way to connect with that person today and tell them you want to interview them about how they have found God in their lives. Then use these questions (or use some of your own) to find some “best practices” for searching for God.

- 1) How do you best find God?
- 2) What is your favorite way to study your Bible?
- 3) Is there a time in your life you felt closest to God? Why?
- 4) How do you feel when you find God?
- 5) Who encourages you to search for God?
- 6) Can you encourage me in 2020 to search for God?