



parenting CHRISTIAN kids



*Service to all as we grow together in
God's love*

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Beyond Happy: Finding Joy in God

In today's society, happiness is often associated with external circumstances, possessions, and wealth. The Bible, however, teaches that happiness is more of an internal condition—and that it results from God's blessing, love, and grace.

Studies show that spirituality is a key factor in children's happiness, even more so than it is for adults. Researcher Mark Holder found that spirituality accounts for up to 16% of children's happiness, more than three times the typical number for grownups. "It's a whopping big effect," he says, admitting that he'd assumed children's spirituality "would be too immature to account for their well-being."

Jesus doesn't promise his followers they'll be happy, but he does give us many reasons to be joyful—even when earthly life is filled with challenges and trials. Scripture reminds us to always rejoice, or "be full of joy in the Lord" (Philippians 4:4).

"Joy," not happiness, is listed as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and true joy comes from following Jesus' teachings. Believing in God, who offers forgiveness and eternal life leads to inner joy and peace, as well as "outer joy" that's evident to others. Living in a joy-filled way, no matter what we're facing, is a powerful witness to other people.

Read on to learn more about cultivating joy among your family members.

Rejoice in the Lord Always



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Attitude Check

Hold up a basketball and say: **Pretend this is you in a really bad mood.** Hold up a tennis ball and say: **Pretend this is a friend who's in a fine mood. But then your friend hangs around you.**

Hold the tennis ball on top of the basketball, putting one hand under the basketball and the other hand on top of the tennis ball. Release them at the same time. (The tennis ball should bounce off the basketball and fly up.)

Ask: **How is this like what happens when you spread a good or bad mood?** Say: **Energy, like our attitude, can be transferred.** Ask: **When you have a good attitude, what happens to others around you? Tell about a time you were a positive influence on someone—or on an entire group.**

Read aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:16. Say: **The Bible tells us to always be joyful. That's part of living for and serving Jesus. With a joyful attitude, we have a good influence on other people.** Close in prayer.

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Attitudes are contagious, as most parents know. A negative attitude can cast a cloud over an entire family. For children, negativity may be a way to seek love and attention. Instead of excluding or punishing a child with a sour attitude, show God's love through your actions and words (including prayer). Immediately stop any negative comments and put-downs before things escalate, but correct children in private if possible. Praise children's efforts to overcome a negative attitude. Most of all, let kids know that God loves them unconditionally.

Spread the Joy Have family members stand in a line behind you. Say: "I'll turn around and show a happy or silly face to the next person, who then turns around and imitates it to the next person, and so on. When the face reaches the back of the line, that person runs to the front and makes a new face to spread." After everyone gets a turn, read aloud Isaiah 49:13a. Talk about why you love God and how he gives you smiles of joy.

Restoring Our Joy Give family members two minutes to each shape a lump of clay into a "joy crusher," or something that gets in the way of their happiness. When time's up, share your creations. Read aloud James 1:2-4 and discuss how we can be joyful during troubles—and why. Then read John 15:11 and discuss how Jesus and his love bring us joy. Without a time limit, reshape the joy crushers into actions or attitudes that can restore our joy.

Rejoice Race Form a circle of chairs, with one less chair than the number of family members. Have everyone else sit while you stand and be It. Explain that It will point to someone and say, "Rejoice in the Lord!" That person must give a reason to rejoice (or be thankful) before It counts to 10. If they can't,

they become the new It. If It says, "Everyone rejoice in the Lord!" all players (including It) must stand and find a new seat. The person left standing is the new It. After playing, read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and discuss why it's important to give thanks joyfully.

Smile-o-Meters Use Fruit by the Foot snacks or tape-shaped bubble gum to measure one another's biggest smiles. Then place all the "smiles" on a clean table. Read Job 8:21. Ask: "What makes you happy or joyful? How big do you think God smiles when he thinks of you?" Unroll a long smile for God and enjoy the treats.

Don't Steal My Joy! Blindfold one person sitting at a table by three beanbags of "joy." Other family members should take turns trying to sneak up and steal the joy. The blindfolded person must listen carefully, then point and yell, "Stop thief!" Give everyone a turn. Then read John 10:10 and ask: "In real life, what are some things that steal our joy (for example, worry, anger, jealousy, fear, lack of sleep)? How does Jesus give us joy that can never be taken away from us?" Read John 15:9-11. Say: "When we remember that Jesus loves us and we obey him, joy stays inside us!"

"The joy of the LORD is your strength."
—Nehemiah 8:10

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Dora & the Lost City of Gold*

Genre: Adventure, Family

Rating: not yet rated

Cast: Isabela Moner, Eva Longoria, Benicio Del Toro, Michael Peña

Synopsis: The bilingual explorer of cartoon fame—now a high schooler—must save her parents in this live-action film. Dora and her friends (including cousin Diego and beloved monkey Boots) head to Machu Picchu to find a mysterious city. Moner, the 18-year-old lead actor, is bilingual and has recorded several music albums.

Our Take: This action-packed movie is geared more toward preteens than preschoolers, so use caution with young children. Compared to the cartoon, Dora's movie adventures contain more slapstick humor and perilous situations.



TV

Title: *Malibu Rescue*

Network: Netflix

Synopsis: In this eight-episode beach-based series, two groups of teenagers from different upbringings work to complete a Junior Rescue program. The down-to-earth underdogs from the Valley face teasing from wealthy kids raised in glitzy Malibu. The characters and plot were introduced in *Malibu Rescue: The Movie* (also on Netflix).

Our Take: Older kids and preteens will be drawn to this summery TV series, which seems like *Baywatch Jr.* But look out for teasing, mild bullying, and lots of stereotyping. Adults aren't great role models, contributing to the strained relationships among the kids. Discussion points include fitting in, persisting, and battling people's preconceived notions.

Games, Websites & Apps

Verlet Swing

In this first-person 3D obstacle-course game, you use an imaginary hookshot to swing through a variety of bizarre landscapes. The graphics have a surreal, dream-like quality, and gameplay requires skill and coordination. The game, available for many platforms, is rated E for Everyone.

Be Internet Awesome

Google's digital safety curriculum for children now covers media literacy, including how to identify fake content and avoid phishing scams. The free online activities encourage children to interact safely, kindly, and responsibly in cyberspace. Lessons are available in numerous languages.

JAM: Courses & Projects

With this subscription-based collection of STEAM videos and challenges, kids are encouraged to try new things, draw, build, conduct experiments, and more. Parents receive updates on kids' activities. JAM offers a free 14-day trial period. Best for ages 6+.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Cartoon Culture Gay characters and same-sex marriages are appearing in a wide variety of children's TV shows, including cartoons. Recent examples include *Arthur* (PBS), *The Bravest Knight* (Hulu), and *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic* (Discovery Family). (*ew.com*)

Classroom Reboots Acknowledging students' need to move around and the many educational benefits of interactivity, schools are rethinking furniture and classroom layouts. More desks and chairs now have wheels, and open, wall-free rooms are back in vogue. (*nbcnews.com*)

QUICK STATS

Adults Behaving Badly A shortage of umpires and refs at youth sporting events is being blamed on unruly parents. Three-quarters of departing officials cite "adult behavior" as their reason for quitting. (*maxpreps.com*)

Empty Shelves In a survey of 1,000+ parents, more than half said they have fewer than 50 books of any kind at home. Many cite cost as an obstacle. (*fortune.com*)

On Ice More than 600,000 frozen embryos are currently being kept in the United States.

St. Andrew's will be closed for the month of August. Families are encouraged to attend Westview for services.

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.