

ALLEY Rundown July 8-10, 2023

Today's Bible Story: Joyful Noise (Paul and Silas Are Thrown into Prison) • Acts 16:16-40

Today's Key Question: What brings you joy?

Today's Bottom Line: God can help you find joy.

Monthly Memory Verse: *God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift.* Ephesians 2:8 (NIRV)

SLIDE: Theme

Welcome back, everyone! We're off to a fantastic start this month, what did everyone do to celebrate the 4th of July? Have you guys been hanging out doing anything fun with your friends this summer?

I was thinking recently about some of the crazy, made-up games I played as a kid. Those were times that I really enjoyed myself, just hanging and goofing around with my friends! They were some of the most fun times in my whole life, for sure.

Share a personal story similar to the one below about you and your friends growing up. Kids love hearing about when their leaders were kids, so talk about a particularly fun, joyful time.

"There was this one time we were all hanging out on a cold, rainy afternoon. We were so bored! We couldn't really go outside. Nothing was on TV. And none of us wanted to play any of the games I had on the shelf, but then suddenly one of the guys spoke up. He wondered what would happen if we took a few of them, combined the game pieces and game boards, and reimagine a brand NEW game with all of them. Our Monop-Sorry-Risk was a game to behold. Super confusing? Maybe. Super funny? Absolutely! From making up the rules to playing the game as we figured out how it work made for a really great afternoon together. We had so much fun!"

I'm guessing you all have stories like that, where you forget about what time it was, ran around the neighborhood, and had a blast—those times when it's super easy to be full of joy, right?

On the flip side, I'm sure that you all have stories when life didn't seem so joyful. Maybe you were sick in bed, or maybe your friends weren't being the nicest. Life gets difficult sometimes, right? It's not all fun and games and sunshine and summer; sometimes life is way, way harder than we would like.

In those times, where do you find the joy? How do you stay joyful even when the things around you are totally *not*? What do you do when trying to act joyful feels kind of fake?

Great questions. Thankfully, we've got somewhere to look for the answers. Kids, the Bible has a *ton* of wisdom in it. It's the kind of wisdom that you can actually take and apply to your own lives. All of the things people wrote in the Bible, even though it was thousands of years ago, can help us figure things out today. Let's take a look!

VIDEO: The SO and So Show

Now, I don't know Paul and Silas personally—I'm not that old, contrary to popular belief—but judging by what I've read about them and this story in particular . . . I'd be willing to bet that they would say they were glad that happened.

Glad to be beaten? Glad to be imprisoned? No. But think about why they were there—to spread the message of Jesus. Did they do that? Absolutely . . . maybe even to people they normally wouldn't have been able to reach. When they were joyfully singing and praying and praising God in that prison, the entire prison was listening to Paul and Silas, watching them worship God even after being beaten.

I'm sure that made an impression! And then when the earthquake happened, did you see who the jailer went to? *Paul and Silas*. After all of that, they had the opportunity to introduce the jailer and his entire household—family, servants, everyone—to Jesus.

Let's back up for a second. Imagine Paul and Silas having just been beaten and thrown in prison. Now imagine them in their cell complaining and whining about how unfair it is—and how this mission is just too hard, and they don't want to do it anymore. Would that have changed things? It sure would have! But because their joy was not dependent on their circumstances—but rather dependent on the God who was *above* their circumstances, something really positive came out of a pretty dark situation.

I'm guessing from time to time you all find yourselves in a spot where it has been hard to be joyful. It happens to me, too. It doesn't have to be big things—like beatings and prisons and earthquakes—that threaten your joy. Maybe you have put in long hours of practice for that dance recital and you are starting to wonder if it is worth it, and it is hard to hold onto your joy. Or maybe you have been practicing really hard, but you are still not getting the playing time on the team you were hoping for. Maybe life just has got you beat down, one bad thing after another, and you can't seem to get a break.

"When we are able to see beyond the circumstance itself and remember what gives us true and lasting joy, God can help us get through some of the most difficult times."

This is our key question to think about today:

SLIDE: Key Question

What brings you joy? Is it your circumstances or something else? And how does the joy that comes from God, give us what we need to make it through some pretty tough times?

Let's learn our memory verse for this month, Ephesians 2:8. Say it with me.

SLIDE: Memory Verse

"God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift." (Ephesians 2:8, NIV)

Let's pray and ask God to help us experience this kind of joy even today! Let's pray!"

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard.

SLIDE: Theme

OFFERING:

All summer, our offering money will go to families in Kenya. They are experiencing a lack of food because of an on-going drought. And the food that is available costs a LOT of money! As you can see in these pictures, this is an area in Kenya called Turkana that is very rural and the people who live there do not have much money for food.

SLIDES: Kenya 1-4

We are working with an organization called Missions of Hope. Our money will help them make food baskets to bring the families who live in Turkana. The food baskets will be such a blessing to the children and families in this community who have very little resources! If you have any offering you can bring it up now.

****AT YOUR COORDINATOR'S DIRECTION, YOU WILL EITHER DISMISS TO SMALL GROUP OR DO ACTIVITIES TOGETHER.**