

**How does the apostle Paul describe having joy in the midst of troubling circumstances (Philippians 4)?**

- + Who in your life or is someone that you know who expresses joy even at times you don't expect?
- + What could it look like to have joy, even in a world that has so much pain?
- + Do you remember a time in the Old Testament of unexpected joy?

**What is the correlation between surprise and joy? Is there one?**

**Nehemiah 8:10 says the joy of the Lord is our strength. What does this mean for us personally and has a community?**

- + Where do you see others who have the joy of the Lord?

**GROWTH:**

**JOURNAL PROMPT**

God, help me to live intentionally this fall as I learn more about your Holy Spirit and the attributes of a life rooted in you. Nourish me through my study of your word, community with my small group, and worship in church. Show me clearly the tasks, relationships, and work to which you are calling me. Amen.

**CALLING PROMPT**

God is inviting you to participate in his ministry by answering the unique call on your life. How can you actively respond to scripture and God's presence this week?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Let's prepare for the week ahead, shaped by our time together today.**

Gracious God, we trust that you go with us in the week ahead. We are changed each time we gather to learn more about you and your Word. Please give us boldness to proclaim your good news in the coming week and bring us back safely together again in this community. Amen.



**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, help us to feel your presence during our gathering as a community today. As we do life together and learn more of your Word, help us to grow in faith. Help our time to be fruitful and the fellowship within our group to flourish. Thank you for the gift of today and of this small group study. Amen.

**COMMUNITY**

**Time to build relationships: mix + mingle!**

- + What specific point resonated with you from the weekend's sermon?
- + If you couldn't attend, ask others in your group what stood out to them. (Note: Links to both video and audio versions of previous sermons can be found at <https://standrewmethodist.org/worship/sermons/>)
- + Where did you see God's presence in your past weekend?

**VIDEO – WEEK 2: JOY**  
**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE NOTES**

**SCRIPTURE**

**A great starting place is always in God’s word. This week we are in:**

**LUKE 15:11-32**

*“<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: ‘There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So, he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> ‘Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> ‘When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.*

*“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> ‘The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> ‘But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So, they began to celebrate.*

*<sup>25</sup> ‘Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has*

*him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> ‘The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> ‘‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”*

**LUKE 15:7**

*“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*

**SITUATION**

Consider a time when you have seen God do something extra-ordinary or surprising. The joy and elated nature of witnessing something only God can do is truly motivating and something that we all need to pause more often to witness happening all around us. The father in the prodigal son story, expresses his joy in celebration and uses his resources to point to this significant redeeming act of God!

**QUESTIONS:**

**What is something new that stands out to you today in reading the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15)?**

- + Have you ever felt like the father in the story of the prodigal son? When and with whom?
- + How many people in the story of Luke 15 with the prodigal son express joy?

**What do you think is the difference between joy and happiness? Is one better than the other?**

- + Is joy found or given? Who gives this gift?
- + What do you think brings God joy?