

newark united pentecostal church**Lesson Title:** ALL Making Disciples of ALL through Play

Key Concept: Our local church has a unique calling within the worldwide body of Christ. We are striving to fulfill our mandate of *ALL making disciples of ALL*. This is **what** we do. In our local assembly we make and are made disciples through four primary actions: we worship, we learn, we serve, and we play. This lesson examines play and how it contributes to our discipleship. Through play we live life with joy.

**Scriptures:**

⁴This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Once again old men and women will walk Jerusalem's streets with their canes and will sit together in the city squares. ⁵And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls at play. (Zechariah 8:4–5 *New Living Translation*)

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!
(Philippians 4:4 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Genesis 2 & 3; Psalm 126:1–3; Ecclesiastes 3:1–8; Luke 6:21; Proverbs 17:22; Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 32; Galatians 5:22–23; 1 Peter 1:7–9; John 10:10; Psalm 45:7

**Lesson Thoughts:**

When you examine the beginning of our story, it is clear we were not intended to live a life of pain and struggle. Because of sin our world is broken: in fact, we participate in this continued brokenness. The brokenness is the source of our pain and suffering (Genesis 2 & 3). This, however, was not God's original plan. And this is not God's plan for us today. We find examples within the scriptures that show, even after sin and its consequences, God intends for us to play and live life with joy. We see in Zechariah that God intends for play to occur in the streets, and the Psalmist writes that we can be filled with laughter and sing for joy because of what the Lord has done for us (Psalm 126:1–3).

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In this life we still have times of trial and seasons of sorrow. The Teacher reminds us that “for everything there is a season . . . a time to cry and a time to laugh” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4a). Jesus reiterates this principle of seasons when he promises “God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh” (Luke 6:21b). But even with these seasons there is a time to laugh. Even in this broken world of sin, God has provided for play and laughter and joy.

It is easy for us to forget to play, but God knows that play is good for us. The proverb writer reminds us that “a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength” (Proverbs 17:22). Even in a broken world, God does not want our spirit broken. He wants us to be strong. The source of this strength is God, and he gives it to us through joy. In the midst of rebuilding Jerusalem after the exile, Nehemiah instructs Israel to “go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). This sure sounds like a party filled with play, laughter, and joy.

We are strong when filled with joy that comes from God. This is part of God’s plan for overcoming sin and our brokenness. The Psalmist reminds us to rejoice in the Lord, be glad, and shout for joy (Psalm 32:11). And Paul writes that the Holy Spirit produces all kinds of fruit in our lives, including joy (Galatians 5:22–23). This is why he instructs the Philippian church to rejoice and always be full of joy. We cannot do this on our own, but the Holy Spirit living within us can produce the joy of the Lord which is our strength.

Life is full of trials and pain and sorrow. But even during these trials, we are to live life with inexpressible, indescribable joy (1 Peter 1:7–9). This joy of the Lord is good medicine for our brokenness and will strengthen us to live overcoming lives. Joy produces laughter. It reminds us to play. And as we play, we are made disciples who revel in the rich and satisfying life our Master has promised us (John 10:10).

Every act of worship creates an atmosphere and example by which other disciples are also called into their own worship of the one true God. An atmosphere of learning is essential so that all disciples are both making and being made disciples through learning. We are also made disciples by our acts of service in which we love God by caring for our neighbor. Finally, we are made disciples through play, in which we live life with joy. We worship! We learn! We serve! We play!



Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you enjoy play? If so, why? If not, why?
- 2) Do you believe that play is essential in the life of a disciple? If so, why? If not, why?
- 3) When given permission to play, what is your response?
- 4) Why do we forget to play? Why do we avoid play?
- 5) Has our examination of play revealed a new aspect of God's character to you? How can we as a community live life with joy?

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Do you really believe that the joy of the Lord is your strength? If not, what are the reasons? Now what does the Bible say about those reasons?
- 2) Jesus stated in John 10:10, "My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." What is a rich and satisfying life for you? Be specific.
- 3) What is stopping you from living that rich and satisfying life? Create a list.
- 4) Make a plan for intentionally challenging and overcoming those things that are stopping you from living a rich and satisfying life.

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Notes and Reflections, cont.