



ENJOY!

**SANCTUARY FIRST
CONNECT BIBLE STUDY**

JULY 2025

WELCOME TO CONNECT!

A Connect Bible Study is a small group who meet regularly to explore faith and life, growing in the things of God together as we go. Anyone can host one using these materials and contact us for support and guidance. Online or in-person, our heart is that they offer a relaxed space for faith, friendship and fun.

We hope the resources and discussion points encourage, inspire, and invigorate you on your walk with God.

It might be the conversation follows the discussion as laid out or heads in a different direction, both are wonderful and we hope the outline we offer here is flexible and supportive to engage with the Bible and our faith in fresh and vibrant ways as we make our way in the world as 21st century disciples exploring the wonders of life with Jesus!

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

Each week begins with an introduction and a 'seed to sow' conversation starter. These are open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps they will inspire you to write a song or a poem, or to paint, draw, move or explore! (We would love to hear how you get on with this!) We imagine the material for each week would work for 90 minute sessions but feel free to adapt to your group!

There are more songs, videos, podcasts and blogs linked to this theme on our **website** and **App**, have fun exploring it all!

ENJOY!

This month we are exploring what it means to enjoy life. God has created a vibrant world for us to enjoy, to thrill in, to wonder at, to laugh with, to rest upon. Jesus tells us in John's

gospel that he has come so that we may have life and have it abundantly! In you is a tenacious spirit, a powerful human spirit, able to find humour and joy, beauty and wonder, in even in bleakest of circumstances — led by the Holy Spirit who always urges you to light and life.

Enjoyment and happiness are not the same thing. Happiness can be a hard-won thing, a goal that keeps slipping out of our grasp, disappearing beyond the horizon. But *enjoyment* — the ordinary deep joy of living — can and does well up in the most surprising of circumstances. Happiness is often linked to our material resources. Money can't buy happiness but it can buy comfort! But enjoyment springs up whenever and wherever a soul is flourishing in that given moment regardless of money. Enjoyment doesn't rely on what's in front of us, but rather what is *within* us, what has been *given* to us. It's an essential quality of our spirit — to be truly in the moment. Sometimes wealth and comfort take us out of the moment, stop us enjoying ourselves.

Often, for all sorts of reasons beyond our control, happiness can be a big ask. Sometimes there can be little room for happiness with all the other emotions we have to contend with. But *enjoyment* is one of those things that can sneak up on us, even in the midst of sorrow, anger, regret, shame or anguish. A glimmer of life, of a spark of joy, in the midst of life.

Join us as we reflect on the enjoyment that wells up, springs up, and sparks into life in spite of everything. We are going to think about some of the activities, games, and hobbies that 'take us out of ourselves'. Although, really, it might be more accurate to say that they 'give us back to ourselves.'

As it says in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, our chief aim is "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever"!

WEEKLY OVERVIEW

- Enjoyment springs up
- Enjoyment wells up
- Enjoyment sparks into life
- The sheer joy of being alive

Thanks to James Cathcart and Albert Bogle for developing this material.

POEM

LOSS

Someone stole my identity.
They took all my cards, my accounts, my passwords,
my job, my home, my belongings, my clothes,
my family.
Someone who looks just like me
but paler.
I watch, trapped, helpless as this person
pretends to be me.
I am not myself anymore.
And myself is not me.
Someone who looks just like me
but older.
This person stole my identity.
It might have happened at the bank, or online
or when I was on holiday, or maybe when I
was fast asleep and dreaming I wasn't me.
Someone who looks just like me,
but sadder.
This person stole my identity.
They took all my money, all my photos, all my
memories,
all my tears, my laughter, my hopes.
I am not myself anymore.
And myself is not me.
This person looks just like me,
but they can't be.

James Cathcart

PRAYER

LET US PRAY

Deeper, Lord, deeper
Beneath the waves of swirling thought
And anxious activity,
Lead us, Holy Spirit, to the place
Of silent adoration
Before our God of endless Love.

Hold silence...

Wider, Lord, wider
Beyond the borders of self-interest
And the acts of cautious kindness
Lead us, Holy Spirit, to the place
Of open-hearted generosity
Before our God of endless grace.

Hold silence...

Deeper and wider, Lord, deeper and wider
Till our lives reflect the image
Of the God we worship
Changed by the Spirit from glory to glory
Into the image of Jesus Christ,
our Lord and our Brother.

Hold silence...

Peter Neilson

WEEK 1: ENJOYMENT SPRINGS UP

INTRODUCTION:

We can sometimes cheat ourselves of happiness. We sulk, get miffed, huff, nitpick, dig our heels in, or throw a tantrum. We are human, this is going to happen. We all blow things out of proportion, take things personally, misinterpret the motives of others, and lose perspective. But what do we do with all these feelings? Do we use them to push us back towards community or do they drag us away towards bitterness? The good news is that there is a tenacious human spirit within us — given to us by God — that tends towards humour and joy, beauty and wonder — even when we'd rather just have a good sulk. If it's human nature to sulk it's also God's nature to draw us back out of ourselves.

SEEDS TO SOW:

While it might be tempting to think of *unhappiness* as the opposite of *enjoyment* that's not really true. Even in the midst of unhappiness our resilient souls can find fragments of joy. The true opposite of enjoyment is *alienation* — becoming detached and strange to ourselves and our surroundings. What can we do to help others who feel alienated through powers or circumstances beyond their control?

READ 2 KINGS 4: 1-14

The Incredible Sulk.

Discuss the significance of a personal recommendation when it comes to faith. Here an unnamed child wields great influence. Do we often have more influence than we might imagine?

And what do you think was really going on in the mind of Naaman when he was told to wash in the Jordan?

READ PSALM 30

Does God Sulk?

In verse 5 the psalmist tells us that God feels anger but does not nurse resentments. Even if we sulk, our God doesn't bear grudges against us. If it's human nature to sulk it's also God's nature not to, to leave the door wide open, to draw us back out of ourselves, for the Holy Spirit to meet our spirit and lead us to hope.

Discuss what might make God angry and why God still doesn't hold on to grudges.

What is the best way to deal with human anger and disruptive moods?

READ ROMANS 12: 1-8

Get over yourself.

What do you think Paul means when he talks about 'renewing your mind?' (See verse 2)

What is the difference between having self-respect and and arrogance?

Do you think we take seriously Paul's suggestion that we all have gifts that compliment each other?

WEEK 2: ENJOYMENT WELLS UP

INTRODUCTION:

Acting with grace doesn't always lead to happiness, at least not immediately. Taking the high road, turning the other cheek, going high while they go low, usually comes with a cost. But with grace comes a deeper enjoyment, which is more fulfilling than the quick hit of happiness we get from taking the low road. Learning to play, win, lose and draw well in our games and hobbies can be a useful place to learn these skills in wider life. God wants us to enjoy life and uses the things we enjoy to bless us.

SEEDS TO SOW:

What hobbies, activities, games and pastimes do you enjoy?

READ PSALM 82

Referee!

What do you think lies behind God's questions about justice? Is God saying to us: How can you enjoy life when you do nothing to help the weak and destitute?

Discuss the difference between God's global perspective and our often narrow local perspective — for example the idea that "charity begins at home" or "family first".

READ COLOSSIANS 1: 1-14

Encouraging words.

Discuss the importance Paul suggests fruitful Christian lives have on the actions of others. (See verses 1-8)

Can you share a story about a faithful life that has inspired you?

Here's a suggestion — why not take the words of Paul's prayer and pray them every day this week for someone you'd like to see grow in their faith?

Discuss what you think the outcome would be if we prayed such a prayer. More enjoyment?

READ MATTHEW 7: 7-12

In the enjoyment of others, we find our enjoyment.

What does this famous text tell us about the nature of God and what does it tell us about the nature of humanity?

If we want good things for our children and God wants good things for us — why do bad things happen to us? Do you think there is a link between disappointment and fulfilment?

How could the 'Golden rule' of verse 7 help us to enjoy our lives?

WEEK 3: ENJOYMENT SPARKS INTO LIFE

INTRODUCTION:

When we act with grace, when we go against the grain of bitterness and resentment, that friction will create a spark. In that spark of possibility comes transformation, enjoyment and the opportunity for growth.

SEEDS TO SOW:

“The gracious option is always the most creative option” — Discuss!

READ AMOS 8: 1-12

Embers turning cold, everybody loses.

Do you think God still brings judgement on nations that seek to steal the fulfilment of others?

Who and where are the prophets today speaking out for justice?

Do you think there is a positive way of looking at verses 11-12? Will seeking eventually be rewarded?

READ LUKE 10: 38-42

Mary's in the moment.

Take a moment to reflect on what you know about the role women played in the ministry of Jesus? (Luke 8: 1-3 give us a fascinating glimpse!)

This is an interesting story because it contrasts the tension between action and reaction. Mary is in the moment reacting to Jesus, listening to him. While Martha is active but her activity is taking her out of earshot of Jesus. Discuss how when we are active,

completing tasks, we can miss the opportunity to be *reactive* to listen closely to Jesus.

Why is it important to be ‘in the moment’ when we encounter grace, when we come to Jesus?

READ COLOSSIANS 1: 15-28

Deep enjoyment — not hollow happiness.

How do you react to the way Paul describes the identity of Jesus? (See verses 15-23)

What fresh insights, questions or challenges come to you from the text?

Paul had a clear plan in his head regarding his life's work — (see verses 24-27). How do you think happiness or enjoyment factored into his tumultuous life? Where do you think Paul would have found enjoyment?

WEEK 4: THE SHEER JOY OF BEING ALIVE

INTRODUCTION:

In times of turmoil we can quickly sacrifice a sense of fun and stop playing and pursuing our passions despite the fact that games and other pastimes can be a great stress reliever and creative outlet. The hobbies we love and the time to devote to them are invaluable to society as they give us safe forms of conflict and safe spaces to learn about ourselves and others. They have the power to break down barriers and heal wounds across generations geographical borders and gulfs in life experience. God uses what we enjoy to bless one another, because our irresistible enjoyment that springs up, wells up, and sparks into life is a place of grace.

SEEDS TO SOW:

Think of ways that games can be used to defuse conflict and tensions. And how they can help people feel overcome isolation and loneliness.

READ PSALM 85

Righteousness and peace will kiss.

This is beautiful language to express a vision of harmony — everything coming together — like a kiss unites two separate people and makes them one.

‘Peace leads to enjoyment and enjoyment leads to peace’ — Discuss!

READ PHILIPPIANS 4: 4-7

Get in your flow state.

Athletes and performers sometimes talk about a ‘flow state’ when they are mentally in the zone and everything feels like second nature

— like they are doing what they were born to do. They don’t have to force or push or strain, it all just flows.

Could it be that when we rejoice our soul is in ‘its flow state’ because it’s doing what it was born to do? Discuss!

READ COLOSSIANS 2: 6-19

Don’t let anyone disqualify you!

In a highly literate and educated society we have sometimes turned faith into ‘a course’, with seminars and workshops akin to ‘ongoing professional development.’ This doesn’t mean wisdom and learning is unimportant — it’s essential to a healthy functioning body. What isn’t is a pre-entry qualification.

Joining or becoming a member of a church is not what makes someone a Christian. God does not require anyone ever to go on a course, sign up for workshops, or take a series of classes to count themselves as a Christian. All God requires is our sincere hearts. A Baptism is not an exam for a licence to follow Jesus. Baptism is a coming home ceremony — it’s a beautiful opportunity to embrace what we have already been freely given.

Discuss how we can change the story, change the cultural perception of churches as gatekeepers to God. How can we help people understand that while being a Christian can be hard (like all human life can be) *becoming one shouldn’t be.*