



ENJOY!

Theme Resource Pack
July 2025
(6 July - 2 August)

Introduction

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

Format

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2025 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, live streams and all sorts of other creative things we get up to! Each week runs Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

Enjoyment springs up (Week 1, 6 July)

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.

Setting the scene: Vibrant flowers springing up in the midst of wreckage and ruin.

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?

- 1. 2 Kings 5: 1-14 The Incredible Sulk.** Despite his riches and status Naaman is unhappy, faced with a problem his money can't fix. He then becomes petulant when the proposed solution isn't on his terms. But all the same the answer is: "Suck it up buttercup!" Often we want to throw money and resources at our unhappiness when the path forward is actually in following simple straightforward steps with humility.
- 2. Psalm 30 God does not 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.
- 3. Isaiah 66: 10-14 As a mother comforts her child.** God is not uncaring and unsympathetic to our sorrow. Sometimes the path to enjoyment is only through the other side of tears.
- 4. Romans 12: 1-8 Get over yourself.** Paul's call to humility and graciousness here can be daunting, these are hard skills to learn. As children, but also as adults, we benefit from learning through games and hobbies the skills of cooperation and humility.
- 5. Galatians 6: 1-16 Bear with one another.** Participating well together is the name of the game, and once again games can be a helpful arena to develop character. It can sometimes be easier to call out constructive and destructive behaviour on the pitch or the tabletop than in real life!
- 6. Jonah 4 Famous biblical sulker Jonah.** Jonah's fed up, he'd had enough. He even says to God abruptly that he is "angry enough to die." It's easy in the heat of the moment, to get caught up in the intensity and lose sight of the big picture. In Jonah's tale he's unhappy most of the time, but does that mean he doesn't enjoy himself? Where do you think Jonah might have found unexpected joy?
- 7. Luke 10: 1-9 Buddies.** Happiness can sometimes seem like a zero-sum game: I want X and you want X, we can't both have X. But true enjoyment always tends towards the mutual, the shared. Christ knows this and sends the disciples off in pairs, buddied up!

Enjoyment wells up (Week 2, 13 July)

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.

Setting the scene: Lifegiving water springing up from dry and cracked earth.

Seeds to sow: What hobbies, activities, games and pastimes do you enjoy?

- 1. Psalm 82 Referee!** In verse 8 the psalmist is calling for the umpire to intervene. "Come on ref!" Many contests rely on an adjudicator who stands apart, observing the play to make impartial decisions. It's an incredibly difficult, and stressful position to be in — having to balance competing cries of injustice. Part of a referee's role is to ensure good sportsmanship regardless of the outcome.
- 2. Deuteronomy 30: 8-14 Welling up within you!** Moses is saying internalise this in your heart so it become a second nature. Let it well up within you! While happiness is something we often strive for there can be an effortlessness to joy rising from deep within us.
- 3. Psalm 25: 1-10 God as guide.** When we discover a new hobby we often turn to mentors and teachers who can guide us: in person, from the page, or on a screen. A good teacher meets us where we are and takes us where we want to go. They show us how to enjoy our hobby not just excel in it. The same is true with God!
- 4. Colossians 1:1-14 Encouraging words.** Paul begins his letter by expressing thankfulness and giving encouragement to the recipients. Sometimes we are only a few kind words away from transforming the world through grace. Life gives so many opportunities to communicate and encourage one another and our shared passions and hobbies give us many wonderful opportunities.
- 5. Luke 13: 10-17 Spontaneous grace.** Acting with grace isn't the same thing as being passive or stepping aside. Sometimes the graceful thing to do is to act — is to not make the suffering have to suffer a minute longer. Here the spontaneity of grace leads to joy!
- 6. John 4: 14: Welling up.** Enjoyment — like our very salvation — is something that bubbles up, that wells up within us, that is always fresh. It is the gift of God who delights in us.
- 7. Matthew 7: 12 In the enjoyment of others, we find our enjoyment.** This rule is a great guiding principle for life. Note the positive formulation — *do* unto others. It's not "*Don't do unto others what you wouldn't want them to do you.*" This commandment is not 'live and let live' — like all good rules, it's a call to participate, to act, to join in. When others are enjoying themselves we often can't help but enjoy ourselves too.

Enjoyment sparks into life (Week 3, 20 July)

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.

Setting the scene: A cold fireplace sparking into a warm glow.

Seeds to sow: "The gracious option is always the most creative option" — Discuss!

- 1. Amos 8: 1-12 Embers turning cold, everybody loses.** When we are motivated by greed, and avarice — wrapped up only in our own personal happiness — the sparks of joy get snuffed out, for everybody. 'Wandering from sea to sea' is a picture of alienation, restlessness, never stopping in the moment with God.
- 2. Psalm 52 Bad winners.** When playing a game a 'bad loser' is no fun, but arguably what's worse is a 'bad winner' who crows over you smugly. The psalmist here calls out such a bad winner who snuffs out the sparks of enjoyment.
- 3. Proverbs 17: 22 Drawing out the positives!** Sometimes we can win well and lose well but *draw* badly, struggling to cope with the frustrating ambiguity of an impasse. For sports spectators an inconclusive draw can be more frustrating than a valiant loss. This proverb uses expressive language to remind us to accentuate the positive. Life often throws us 'draws' where the results of a given situation are ambivalent. Seeing the bright side and 'rounding up' can have a profound affect on our wellbeing.
- 4. Genesis 18: 1-10 Spark of possibility.** Abraham and Sarah throw together an impromptu meal and a spark of possibility takes form. Sometimes taking a moment to stop and rest with others can make all the difference. The enjoyment of sharing a meal is always transformative, especially so here!
- 5. Psalm 15 Player of the match.** Many team sports have a feature where a particular player is celebrated for their contribution. It tends to be given to someone who has played not only proficiently but with integrity and leadership. The psalmist here extols the value of personal honour.
- 6. Luke 10: 38-42 Mary's in the moment.** Jesus calls us to love and serve one another, but he's perceptive enough to know that we can use our tasks and to-do-lists (however well intentioned) to keep us out of the moment, to stop us from taking the time to meet him, to be fully present.
- 7. Colossians 1: 15-28 Deep enjoyment — not hollow happiness.** What keeps Paul going!

The sheer joy of being alive (Week 4, 27 July)

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.

Setting the scene: A no man's land transformed as barricades are torn down and the sound of games and laughter spring up.

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.

- 1. Psalm 85 Righteousness and peace will kiss.** This is beautiful language to express a vision of harmony — everything coming together. The things we enjoy like sports, art, drama, and dance often give us these blissful moments of disparate elements coming together to create the perfect moment — like a glorious goal sailing under the crossbar, a soprano hitting the high note, two dancers leaping in unison impossibly high.
- 2. Psalm 118: 21-29 This is the day that the Lord has made.** One of the gifts of our hobbies and pastimes is that they can keep us entirely, wonderfully 'in the moment' — the moment that the Lord has made!
- 3. Psalm 138 Your steadfast love endures forever.** Even in dark and difficult times God never abandons us. This love is not conditional, temporary, or subject to contract renewal.
- 4. Colossians 2: 6-19 Don't let anyone disqualify you!** We are rooted in God's love.
- 5. 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 focusing on the right things. They tune out distractions and hit the sweet spot — fully committed and enjoying what they are doing — perhaps visualising what it will be like to succeed in order to realise it. Paul here is inviting us into our flow state.
- 6. Luke 11: 5-13 Knock on the door!** Ask for a fish! Push the boat out and ask for an egg! Embrace life, trust in the enjoyment that springs up, wells up, and sparks into life — often when we least expect it.
- 7. Psalm 16 The fullness of joy.** When we turn to God's presence, God's voice, God's word, we will find joy, deep joy.