

JOY

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our web site. For more information and other Cell resources, visit salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources



INTRODUCTION

YCMU's All Terrain Podcast explores Alexander Shaia's Quadratos – an ancient, but new to us, way of looking at the Gospels. Written about in 'Heart and Mind,' Shaia suggests that each Gospel is written to a particular question. Matthew asks, how do we face change? Mark, how do we move through suffering? John, how do we receive joy? And finally Luke, how do we mature in service? As we face a global pandemic, we have seen all four questions become significant to us all. Our dedication is to help our young people in how they do discipleship; when everything has changed, when suffering feels all around us, when joy feels far away and when service looks like never before.

Before starting we would recommend listening to a few episodes of the All Terrain Podcast to give you a better and deeper understanding of this framework. You can find it on most podcast platforms. Click for direct links on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#) and [Podbean](#).

The special edition episode with Alexander Shaia would be an excellent listen as you prepare yourself to delve into these questions with your young people, available [here](#).

Reading through each session well in advance will give you time and space to ensure you are comfortable with the technology you choose to use and make sure you and your young people have everything you need to participate.



JOY

WELCOME

Ask the group members to go around their house and collect three items that start with the letters J.O.Y (one item for each letter). The first person back with all three items wins!

WORD

- * Ask the group to go and look out of the nearest window for one thing that makes them happy. When everyone returns to their screen have each person share what they saw and why it makes them feel happy.

 Read John 21:1-7

(You could ask group members to look this up in their Bibles or display the passage on your screen.)

Explain: *This takes place in the midst of the roller coaster of emotions that the disciples have all just been through: the grief, confusion and loss of the crucifixion and the shock that Jesus is alive – and, for Peter, the additional guilt of his betrayal. Perhaps returning to fishing, something that was so familiar for them, was a calming and reassuring thing to do in these turbulent times, rather than sitting around feeling anxious or afraid.*

We are going to focus on Peter's reaction when he realises it is Jesus on the shore calling out to them in verse 7.

- * Ask the group to reflect on the emotions that they think Peter was feeling at that moment, the emotions that led him to jump straight into the water when he realised it was Jesus. You can either ask group members to write their words down on a piece of paper and hold it up to the camera, write it all up on the whiteboard or in the chat box, or simply ask each person to share their thoughts. Hopefully you will have some responses such as excited, happy, joyful etc.

Summarise: *After Peter had been through such a tough time, he was so overcome with joy and excitement at seeing Jesus again that he literally jumped out of the boat to get to him as fast as possible!*

Joy

Share your screen and watch this very short video – just for fun.

 [Inside Out – Meet Joy](#) (24 seconds)

What is joy?

Ask the group for some feedback to this question. You could display the word 'Joy' on a whiteboard and ask group members to write their answer on it.

Then watch the following short video.

 [What is Joy?](#) – (2 mins)

Explain: *Joy is a deep-seated sense of happiness in what God has done and what he is doing – like the final line in the video we just watched:*

“ Joy is a way of living, knowing that we are loved by God.’

Joy isn't based upon external circumstances or whether things are going well or not. It is a consistent feeling of wellbeing, coming from the 'inside out'. The joy that the world offers can be a pale imitation of the true joy only God can give us, and not as long lasting.

We can find and experience joy even in difficult times, as joy is not dependent on what is going on around us, but on our faith in Jesus and his love for us. At this time in our lives, a lot of the activities that make us happy may have been taken away from us, but we can still experience joy. Joy transforms our difficult circumstances into times of blessing. Perhaps, like Peter who didn't at first recognise Jesus, we sometimes miss or overlook Jesus' presence of joy in our lives.

SESSION ONE

- * Ask the group to each say one thing that has brought them joy during this time of social distancing.

We can experience joy from noticing and being thankful for God's love and grace at work in our lives; from noticing beauty and creativity around us; from being in community with each other; and by sticking close to and keeping our focus on Jesus. We will think some more about this next month.

- * Ask for a moment of quiet reflection. What people, places, activities, things do you think can bring you real, lasting joy? Share together if appropriate.

At the time of writing, a new C4 TV show called *Reasons to be Cheerful* is seeking people's videos of the good things going on in their lives during this time of social distancing and how they have been keeping themselves entertained. If, at the time you are running this cell group, this programme is being aired, there may some interesting points to be made – or at least some fun videos to bring us more joy!

More info [here](#).



ACTION

- * Using the chat function, ask everyone to post an emoji that symbolises joy to them. You could challenge them to use this emoji in all their messages this week – to remind them about making a choice to live in joy, to look for the good things around them and to thank Jesus that he is in control.
- * We've seen the word 'joy' in lots of headlines recently, for example: 'Children put rainbows in window to spread joy'. People are doing what they can in their community to 'spread joy' in these difficult times, and this is most often being done by some creative activity, such as rainbows, lights, ribbons, clapping, sharing music etc. People are trying to brighten up their little part of the world to enable other people to smile and feel happy.

Challenge the group to engage in some creative activity this week that will bring them joy, and also spread some joy to others in their community. This could be a piece of art to display in the window; something that they share online – for example, maybe an arrangement of flowers, a piece of music that they have written, a poem etc; or something that they can physically share with others, such as baking a cake!

Ask them to take a photo of their 'joy' creation and share it with the rest of the group some time this week.

PRAYER

- 📖 Read Psalm 100: 1-5; firstly, in the *NIV* and then in *The Message*

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his, we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever;

his faithfulness continues through all generations. (NIV)

On your feet now – applaud God!

**Bring a gift of laughter,
sing yourselves into his presence.**

Know this: God is God, and God, God.

He made us; we didn't make him.

We're his people, his well-tended sheep.

Enter with the password: "Thank you!"

Make yourselves at home, talking praise.

Thank him. Worship him.

For God is sheer beauty,

all-generous in love,

loyal always and ever. (MSG)

CELL

SESSION ONE

- * Say: *In the last few weeks the whole country has been applauding, giving thanks to our key workers who are keeping the nation running, especially those carers working in the NHS and in social care settings. Together, let's give God a rousing round of applause and a gift of laughter as we thank him for his love and care, and ask him to fill us, key workers, our family and friends with joy even in this difficult season.*

Encourage your group to clap, or bang things together, to make a joyful noise in praise and thanks to God! Keep it going for at least one minute!

- * Gather the group back together, share the text of this prayer on your screen, and pray it aloud together.

Dear Lord Jesus, there are so many sad and troublesome things to face in the world today, which too often cause our hearts to become weighed down with difficulties and doubts. But I pray that your joy would fill our hearts and strengthen our souls... and that times of joyful laughter would replace those feelings of anxiety and anger. I pray that your joy and laughter may flow through us to others who are facing similar difficulties and hardships. Thank you for your never-ending love! Amen.

I CHOOSE JOY!

WELCOME

Try to create a happy story together. Decide on an order and then take it turns to add to the story – but each person can say only four words at a time! You could start your story with ‘It was a joyful experience when...’

WORD

Watch the following music video together:

▶ For KING & COUNTRY – ‘Joy’. (Official Music Video) (5mins 08secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA7n7TwPDmw

The video is five minutes long but is a perfect watch for this subject. This could be emailed to the group before your meeting, so they have had a chance to preview it.

The lyrics begin:

**Lately, I’ve been reeling, watching the nightly news
Don’t seem to find the rhythm, just wanna sing the blues
Feels like a song that never stops...**

The refrain...

**The time has come to make a choice
And I choose joy
Let it move you, let it move, let it move you
Yeah, I choose joy**

Remind the group that back in Week Three we were thinking about joy, and we discussed how we can experience joy, not based on our circumstances, but based on our relationship with Jesus. Like it says right at the end of the music video:

“ ‘Whilst our circumstances haven’t changed, our perspective can!’

Ask the group if they have been more aware of moments of joy in their daily lives over these last few weeks. How has their perspective changed?

Display the following Scriptures on your shared screen. (You will need to create a word document that you can share – or use the one provided in the ‘June downloads’ pdf.)

Ask individual members to read a Scripture aloud to the rest of the group.

Show the group how to use the stamp setting in the ‘annotate’ function (make sure that the annotation setting is enabled for the group for this part – more info here: [annotation tutorial](#)).

Ask them to use the ‘stamp’ function and then to stamp around any of the Scriptures in places where the words stand out to them. (You may need to do this one at a time.)

- * **Star:** This made me smile
- * **Tick:** I totally agree with this
- * **Question mark:** Don’t get it
- * **Heart:** Love this

Discuss as appropriate and learn from each other.

Say: One common theme that we see through these Scriptures is that we are active participants in joy. We don’t just sit back and wait to feel joyful.

CELL

SESSION TWO

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. A fruit has to be nurtured and cultivated. Joy requires attention, it needs an environment in which it can grow. Like a plant – if you ignore a plant in your house it will eventually wither and die; but if you feed it, water it, care for it, the plant will grow and bloom as it was intended to do.

To find joy we sometimes need to stop and find the quiet space within ourselves. To take a moment of reflection. To be aware of our thoughts and emotions, and to actively look for the good stuff.

One way of cultivating joy is with gratitude.

Split the group into pairs using the breakout rooms function and ask each pair to brainstorm as many things as possible that they are grateful for. Which pair can come up with the most things? They will each need a pen and paper to write down their ideas.

Summarise: One well-known phrase says: 'It's not joy that makes us grateful; it's gratitude that makes us joyful!'

A host of recent studies have revealed that the practice of gratitude has dramatic, lasting and positive results – every time. Gratitude is related to a 23% lower level of stress hormones and 19% lower depression level. Gratitude has been found to increase self-esteem, enhance will-power, strengthen relationships, deepen spirituality, boost creativity, and improve athletic and academic performance.¹

Being joyful and thankful are characteristics of the life of disciples; this is how God wants us to live. This doesn't mean that we are to paste a fake smile on our faces no matter what is going on in our lives or the lives of those we love. It means that we are to remain strong in our knowledge that God is our strength and comfort, no matter in what circumstances we find ourselves.

ACTION

Email your group members the weekly 'gratitude diary' and challenge them to complete it every day for at least a week.

You could also email your group a 'Joy' colouring image if you think they enjoy this, something they can fill with lots of different colours to remind them of the joy in their lives. (Simply do an internet image search for 'joy colouring'.) For example:



PRAYER

Finish with the song by For KING and COUNTRY that you played at the beginning, as the refrain – 'I choose joy' – is simple enough to sing along to.

Ask the group as they watch/sing the song to write out on a piece of paper 'I choose joy'. Then to write around these words all the areas of their life in which they will decide to choose joy or will look at things from a different perspective. At the end of the song ask everyone to hold up their piece of paper. Take a few moments to pray for everyone in the group or split into breakout groups and pray for each other.

¹ *The Little Book of Gratitude*. Dr Robert A. Emmons

Scriptures to display

I loved you as the Father loved me.
Now remain in my love.

I have obeyed my Father's
commands, and I remain in his love.
In the same way, if you obey my
commands, you will remain in my
love.

I have told you these things so that
you can have the same joy I have and
so that your joy will be the fullest
possible joy.

John 15:9-11 (NCV)

Why is everyone hungry for more?
'More, more,' they say. 'More, more.'

I have God's more-than-enough,
More joy in one ordinary day
than they get in all their shopping
sprees.

At day's end I'm ready for sound
sleep,

For you, God, have put my life back
together.

Psalm 4:6-8 (MSG)

Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank
God no matter what happens. This is the way God
wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (MSG)

This is what I want you to do:

Ask the Father for whatever is in
keeping with the things I've revealed
to you. Ask in my name, according
to my will, and he'll most certainly
give it to you. Your joy will be a river
overflowing its banks!

John 16:23-24 (MSG)

God's kingdom isn't a matter of
what you put in your stomach, for
goodness' sake. It's what God does
with your life as he sets it right, puts
it together, and completes it with joy.
Your task is to single-mindedly serve
Christ.

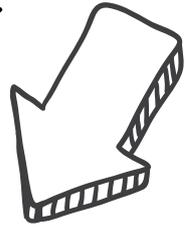
Romans 14:17-18 (MSG)

GRATITUDE DIARY

Each day write three things you are grateful for from that day.

THIS WEEK

There is something good in every day



MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY



Thank God no matter what happens...

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16 (MSG)

SHARING JOY

WELCOME

Dice roll

Ask each person to choose a number between 1 and 6 by holding up the corresponding number of fingers. Roll a dice in front of the camera or you could use this online dice on a shared screen <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/chance-games/roll-dice-online/full-screen/>.

All those group members who chose the number that the dice lands on must stand up – they are ‘out’ of the game. The remaining group members choose another number, and you roll the dice again. Continue until you have a ‘winner’.

Try not to laugh

Recruit a volunteer who thinks they can keep a straight face. Challenge the rest of the group to try to make the volunteer laugh.

The story of Mr Happy

If you have time you could watch this short video (or you could email this link to your group members and ask them to watch it before the session):

Mr Happy – Books Read Aloud for Kids by Roger Hargreaves (4mins 54secs)

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTqZ9OCR0Ok>

WORD

Remind your group about the theme of joy and your discussion points in Weeks 3 and 7.

Show the group this short video:

Why Oprah Believes in Sharing Joy – Oprah’s Lifeclass (Oprah Winfrey Network)

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfWlyBA5lz4> (1min 31secs)

Ask: What experiences can you think of that would be better when shared with others? Can you share with us an experience you have had that became better when you shared it with someone else?

Allow time to discuss.

Say: Joy is something to be shared. A shared joy is a deeper joy. Oprah said that she has so much joy in her own life because she is always giving her joy away. Once you have joy – really have it – you can’t help but share it.

Christians of the New Testament Church were not known for their buildings or denominations or programmes. They were known for their joy.

They ate together in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts. They praised God and were liked by all people.

Acts 2:46-47 (NCV)

These early Christians spread the good news and the love of Jesus wherever they went, and this brought joy to them and to others.

In Acts 13, for example, Paul and Barnabas travelled and ministered to people all over to make sure they understood that true joy could only be found in Jesus, and in doing so they were also filled with joy.

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region... And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:49,52

Again in Acts 15, we read that they spread joy with their stories of good news to all the believers they came into contact with.

They were sent on their way by the church; and as they went through Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported how the Gentiles had turned to God; this news brought great joy to all the believers.

Acts 15:3 (GNT)

We were not created to be alone but to be in community with others, and it is in our community and relationships with others that our joy can be deepened. In giving joy away, our own experience of joy increases. We may not be able to physically travel the world at the moment, but we can share the love of Jesus with family and friends right where we are. We share the joy by picking up on the command that Jesus gives: *'My command is this: love each other as I have loved you'* (John 15:12). And we can find joy, as the disciples did, in doing so.

Discuss: the following quote (an older group may be interested in discussing this, which you could screen share).

“ Sharing the joy will stretch any follower of Jesus. To share the joy may take us to unfamiliar places or people. These places or people may challenge our comfort level. We may witness a level of life and need that calls for our time, energy, and patience. There will also be considerable indifference and even hostility when we share the joy.

Yet folks who have taken the steps to share Christ's compassion in faraway places or right at home have no regrets about doing so. They catch the vision of demonstrating the care of Christ, not hesitating to go back to do more of the same. They do so, not because they thrive on inflicting hardship on themselves. Rather they are compelled to share the joy of the new life that Christ brings. They want to share it whatever the results or even the cost. They want to share the joy because Christ shared the joy by laying down his life for you and me, his friends.

Rev Fred Heslinga (<https://www.crcna.org/resources>)

ACTION

Refer back to the Mr Happy video if you have watched it.

Say: Mr Happy invited Mr Miserable into his house and into his life. He shared his joy and happiness with his new friend, and Mr Miserable's life was totally changed as he too experienced previously unknown joy for himself!

Activity: Ask group members to think about one person they could 'invite into their house' to share joy with, someone whom they would like to see experience a moment of joy. This could be someone who is going through a hard time right now, someone who doesn't know about the joy that Jesus brings us, someone who is always giving and serving others who could do with refilling.

Ask them to note down the person they are thinking of. Then encourage them to think of something that they could do for this person to bring them joy. This could be a nice surprise, something to help out, or something to make them laugh!

Get everyone to write down the people they have thought of, what they plan to do and when they will do it, preferably within the next week or two. Share together if appropriate.

Discuss some small practical ways in which you could share joy in your community. Maybe do a brainstorm and make a list together on the whiteboard.

Here are some examples:

- * When you are out walking or exercising, try to make eye contact and smile at everyone you pass. Keep a count of how many people smile back and report back to the group next time.

SESSION THREE

- * Paint some stones with joyful colours or messages, and then leave them around your community to make others smile.
- * Create a window display for your house to spread joy to all those who walk past – eg, posters, toys, flowers, positive words/phrases etc.
- * Make a short and fun video to share on your social media (is there a community Facebook page you could share it on?). How about creating one of those group videos where everyone throws and catches a paper ball, or dances to the same tune?

Challenge group members to pick one of the listed ideas to put into practice over the next couple of weeks.

PRAYER

- * Read the following Psalms to your group (display on your screen as well if you can).

I'm thanking you, God, from a full heart, I'm writing the book on your wonders. I'm whistling, laughing, and jumping for joy; I'm singing your song, High God.

Psalm 9:1-2 (MSG)

You made me so happy, God, I saw your work and I shouted for joy. How magnificent your work, God!

Psalm 92:4 (MSG)

Ask each group member to write their own sentences like these two taken from the Psalms. They could share it with the group using the chat function. Go around the group and ask each person to pray aloud their sentence. You have created your own psalm of joy!

If you have any artistic people in your group you could ask them to design a poster with their 'psalm of joy' after the session and then email it to everyone. Encourage group members to share the psalm on their social media somehow. If your corps/church is running online services, ask if you could share your psalm at the next meeting – you could even create a group video.

- * Split the group into their pairs and ask them to pray for each other – for increased love and joy, and for opportunities to share joy with others!
- * Pray this final blessing for your group:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13