

FIGHT BACK WITH JOY



CELEBRATE MORE. REGRET LESS.
STARE DOWN YOUR GREATEST FEARS.

Margaret Feinberg

CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED AUTHOR OF *WONDERSTRUCK*

Viewer Guides with Answers. *Fight Back With Joy* Bible Study

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GROUP GETTING STARTED: (10-15 minutes)

SESSION ONE: SECRETS OF JOYFUL PEOPLE

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY: **BUILD A PARTY HAT**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Several sheets of colored paper for each person
 - Assorted stickers
 - Markers
 - Tape
 - A stapler
 - Ribbon
- 1 Invite each person to decorate a party hat. The design can take any shape or form, so invite participants to be wildly creative. Use ribbon to accent or to create a tie to keep the hat atop the head. Add stickers. Use colors to embellish.
 - 2 Write words or draw pictures of things that bring joy. This can include anything: people in their lives, encouraging words, activities, memories, gifts, interactions. Ask participants to cover their party hats with sources of joy. When they've completed their hats, ask them to place them atop their heads.
 - 3 Discuss the following:
 - Briefly share what was drawn or written on each hat.*
 - Where are some of the places you've looked for joy and found it?*
 - Where are some of the places you've looked for joy and not found it?*
 - Reflect on what everyone shared. What are some of the most common sources of joy among the group?*

 PLAY THE SESSION ONE VIDEO: [18:25]

Follow along with Margaret and fill in the blanks for each statement below. Take additional notes in the space provided when you hear something that resonates with you.

Joy emanates out of the abiding sense of God's fierce
love for us .

Tactic 1. Marinate in the truth of God's fierce love
for you .

Tactic 2. Live on high alert that God is here .

Tactic 3. Bravely believe God is for you .

VIDEO DISCUSSION

- 1 Turn to page 168. Over the next six weeks, we're asking God to expand our capacity to experience joy. One of the ways to do this is to make daily entries in the Joy Bomb Journal. Begin today by listing three joy bombs in your life. Consider sharing with the group if your responses are different from the experiential activity.
- 2 I list some of the less than desirable declarations I had been making in my life. What declarations have you been unintentionally making with your life?
- 3 Invite someone to read John 15:11 aloud. When was the last time you prayed for God to give you more joy? What prevents you from praying for joy more often?
- 4 When you look at Scripture, *joy* is "a spectrum of emotions, actions, and responses that include gladness, cheer, happiness, merriment, delighting, dancing, shouting, exulting, rejoicing, laughing, playing, brightening, blessing and being blessed, taking pleasure in, and being well pleased." Which among these come most naturally to you? Which are more difficult?
- 5 Joy emanates out of the abiding sense of God's fierce love for us. On a scale of 1-10, how much joy do you have right now? On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your awareness of God's fierce love for you? Do you see any connection? Why or why not?
- 6 In what situation in your life do you most need to say, "God loves me. God is here. God is for me."?

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close in prayer ask:

- God to expand each participant's capacity for joy;
- the Holy Spirit to awaken a deep sense of God's fierce love;
- that each participant would be able to recognize and joyfully receive all the good gifts God gives each day.

GROUP GETTING STARTED: (10-15 minutes)

SESSION TWO: THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF JOY

HOMEWORK GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Share with the group three moments you recorded in your Joy Bomb Journal on page 168 in which you encountered gifts and joys from God this week.
- 2 In your homework from Day One, you were asked to spend time reading and reflecting on the passages of God's fierce love for you. How did this exercise affect your attitude, actions, and outlook on life this week?
- 3 How was your understanding or definition of joy challenged or deepened through Day Three's homework?
- 4 On Day Four you were asked to reflect on your favorite creational and redemptive gifts. What did you list as those you're most thankful for?
- 5 Share an example of something you did to litter the world with joy this past week as described on Day Five.

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY: **COLORFUL SPLASHES OF JOY**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Black markers
 - Paint chips from a local hardware store in a variety of colors
 - Scissors
- 1 Invite participants to record meaningful Scriptures about joy on several paint chips. Some may want to write a Bible verse across the whole paint sample—they make great bookmarks. Others may prefer to cut out the squares to make mini-reminders.

- 2 Scriptural suggestions include: Proverbs 10:28, 1 Peter 1:8-9, Romans 15:13; Isaiah 12:6; and Isaiah 35:10, in addition to each session's memory verse. Challenge participants to look up some of their own passages and share with each other.
- 3 Encourage participants to place these colorful squares in their car, bag, workplace, or around the house as reminders to fight back with joy.
- 4 Discuss the following:

Which of the Scriptures you recorded on a paint chip is most encouraging to you right now? Why?

Where do you plan to place your joy reminder?

 PLAY THE SESSION TWO VIDEO: [23:40]

Follow along with Margaret and fill in the blanks for each statement below. Take additional notes in the space provided when you hear something that resonates with you.

More than whimsy, joy is a weapon we use to fight life's
battles .

Tactic 1. Joy picks us up when life knocks us down.

Tactic 2. When our countenance falls, joy shouts look up .

Tactic 3. Joy creates a holy ruckus that draws other near.

Foundational Tactic:

Remain suspicious that God is up to something
good.

VIDEO DISCUSSION

- 1 When you find yourself in a difficult situation, is your natural response fight, flight, or freeze? Explain.
- 2 In the past, which unhealthy or unhelpful weaponry have you used to face life's battles? Examples include anger, depression, spite, gossip, complaint, avoidance, addiction, etc. Which one tends to be your natural go-to choice?
- 3 Invite participants to take turns reading 2 Chronicles 20 out loud. Which phrases and details stand out most to you? What encourages you most from Jehoshaphat's response?
- 4 In what situation is it hardest for you to remain suspicious that God is up to something good right now?
- 5 What are three practical ways you can bring joy into that situation this week?

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close in prayer ask:

- God to give each participant strength, grace, and protection for the days ahead;
- the Holy Spirit to unleash creative tactics for how to fight back with joy;
- that each participant experiences a fuller sense of God's joy in his or her life.

GROUP GETTING STARTED: (10-15 minutes)

SESSION THREE: POKE HOLES IN THE DARKNESS

HOMEWORK GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share with the group three moments you recorded in your Joy Bomb Journal on page 168 in which you encountered gifts and joys from God this week.
2. In the homework from Day One, you were asked about the one thing you know you need to do but fear most. Did you do it? Why or why not? What was the outcome?
3. On Day Two you explored what you are fighting for. How can the people in your study group support you in your fight?
4. On Day Four you were challenged to reflect on joy robbers in your life. What is one joy robber you kicked to the curb through the time of prayer?
5. When do you plan to set apart a day of rest as described in Day Five?

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY: A JOY HUNT

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- One balloon per person
 - Colorful permanent markers (at least one per person)
- 1 Pass out one balloon and marker per person. Ask participants to blow up their balloon. Consider bringing a balloon pump for those who are unable or blow some up ahead of time.
 - 2 Using a marker, ask participants to write their answers to the following five fill-in-the-blank statements on their balloons.

When I'm joyful, people can tell by my _____.

My most joyful memory from this year was _____.

I feel great joy when I think about _____.

Surprisingly, I feel joy when I _____.

One idea of something joyful we could do as a group is _____.

- 3 Take time for everyone to share their answers. Then, have everyone throw their balloons on the floor in the center of the group.
- 4 When everyone has shared and tossed their balloons in the center, discuss the following:
 - *How do the balloons represent how much we have to celebrate in our lives?*
 - *In what ways is sharing our responses with one another a means of fighting back with joy?*
 - *How did this activity bring a sense of "party" to everyday living?*

 **PLAY THE SESSION THREE VIDEO: [25:15]**

Follow along with Margaret and fill in the blanks for each statement below. Take additional notes in the space provided when you hear something that resonates with you.

Tactic 1. March forth with Mirth .

Tactic 2. Embrace celebration as a discipline .

Tactic 3. Recognize that your Heavenly Father wants to Speak to you .

VIDEO DISCUSSION

- 1 Who serves as a laugh box in your life, helping you to walk lighter?
- 2 What are some of your favorite go-to sources of comedy and laughter?
- 3 In what area of your life do you need to practice celebration as a discipline?
- 4 Invite a participant to read John 16:13 aloud. Have you ever experienced God speaking to you in the wake of difficult circumstances? What did you sense the Holy Spirit saying? How did those words affect you?

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close in prayer ask:

- for opportunities to laugh and march forth with mirth;
- God to give each participant the strength and courage to embrace celebration as a discipline;
- the Holy Spirit to speak to each person.

GROUP GETTING STARTED: (10-15 minutes)

SESSION FOUR: A SIDE OF JOY NO ONE TALKS ABOUT

HOMEWORK GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share with the group three moments you recorded in your Joy Bomb Journal on page 168 in which you encountered gifts and joys from God this week.
2. From your Day One homework, what is one illusion you've had shattered by crisis? How has losing that illusion made you more dependent on God?
3. How did you embrace celebration as a discipline as described in your Day Three homework? What was the result?
4. What is one thing you realized you needed to mourn from Day Four? In what ways are you learning to mourn the loss?
5. Share three items on your joy-filled dream list from your Day Five work.

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY: LIVING, BREATHING GIFTS OF JOY

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Several pads of sticky notes
- A marker for each person

- 1 Split the pads of sticky notes apart so each person has a handful.
- 2 Ask participants to write their name on the first sticky note and place it where they're sitting.
- 3 Have participants walk around the room and write down things they appreciate about the other people in the group (a joyful attitude, a spunky hat, a heart for others, a spirit of encouragement, an infectious laugh,

the way they helped by picking up your kiddos after the last soccer game). Deliver each note to the person's chair.

- 4 After spending 5-10 minutes writing notes, have participants return to their chairs and read the notes others left. Encourage them to keep the sticky notes in their workbook or Bible to remind them they are fiercely loved.
- 5 Discuss the following:
 - *Which of the notes on your chair surprised you most? Which brought the biggest smile to your face?*
 - *Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-16 aloud. In the battles of life, why is it so important to have people fighting alongside you?*
 - *What battle are you facing in which you could use some more friends to stand by you, pray for you, and encourage you?*

 PLAY THE SESSION FOUR VIDEO: [22:50]

Follow along with Margaret and fill in the blanks for each statement below. Take additional notes in the space provided when you hear something that resonates with you.

Tactic 1. Rejoice when it makes no sense.

Tactic 2. Pray for Springs in the desert .

VIDEO DISCUSSION

- 1 Habakkuk was a man who wrestled with God and embraced Him more deeply. What do you tend to wrestle with God over? When have you grown closer to God by wrestling with Him?
- 2 According to Habakkuk 3:17-18, under what difficult circumstances does the Old Testament prophet choose to rejoice when it doesn't make sense? Which of the circumstances listed would be most difficult for you? Which have you experienced? Explain.
- 3 In what square inch are you going to choose to rejoice where it makes no sense this week?
- 4 Describe a time when God provided springs in the desert for you.
- 5 In what area of your life do you most need to "get off your donkey" like Aksah and approach your Heavenly Father for what you need in prayer?

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close in prayer ask:

- God to help participants see His handiwork in hard situations;
- God to give each of you extra sensitivity to hear His voice;
- the Lord to renew your hearts with a fresh sense of hope and vision for the future.

GROUP **GETTING STARTED:** (10-15 minutes)

SESSION FIVE: THE HOLY MESS OF JOY

HOMEWORK GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share with the group three moments you recorded in your Joy Bomb Journal on page 168 in which you encountered gifts and joys from God this week.
2. From Day One, in what square inch did you choose to rejoice where it made no sense? How did that choice affect you, your attitude, and your outlook?
3. In your daily schedule, when are you most likely to slip into the victim mentality? What are you doing to stop being a victim and start being a victor from Day Two?
4. From your Day Four homework, what are you feeling most compelled to reclaim?
5. What three situations did you list in your Day Five homework that have helped you become more real? How are you learning to become more comfortable in your own skin?

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY: A BOUQUET OF FAITH

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A flower or two for each person in your group
 - A vase (or two) to hold the flowers
- 1 As group members arrive, hand each person a flower. If you have a smaller group, hand out more than one flower per person.
 - 2 Ask group members to share an area of life in which they're being stretched to trust God. After everyone has shared, ask them to place their flowers in the vase. If you handed out more than one flower per person, you may want to ask them to share an area they're being stretched to trust God for each.

3 Discuss the following:

- *What parallels do you see between the bouquet and what it means to live a life of faith?*
- *What common elements did you notice as members shared where they're being stretched to trust God?*

 PLAY THE SESSION FIVE VIDEO: [21:50]

Follow along with Margaret and fill in the blanks for each statement below. Take additional notes in the space provided when you hear something that resonates with you.

_____ Zero _____ is the place where you need God to meet you most.

Joy asks _____ What _____ if _____ God _____ .

Joy declares But if not .

VIDEO DISCUSSION

- 1 What is your “zero”? Where is the place you need God to meet you most today?
- 2 Which areas of your life are you most likely and least likely to ask, “What if God?” Which leads to greater joy?
- 3 Ask someone to read Matthew 9:18-26 aloud. After watching the video and rereading this passage, what stands out to you most from the intersection of these two stories? How does each person lay hold of joy?
- 4 In what area of your life do you need to stop “sizing up the character of God according to your circumstances” and start “sizing up your circumstances according to the character of God”? Explain.
- 5 Which do you think will equip you to fight life’s battles with more joy: “What if God?” or “But if not”? Explain.

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close in prayer ask:

- God to fortify each person’s faith in Him;
- that each person’s heart, mind, and life awaken to the joy that comes with trusting God;
- the Holy Spirit to illuminate any areas where participants may have been holding back in their prayer lives.

GROUP GETTING STARTED: (10-15 minutes)

SESSION SIX: WHAT TO DO WHEN THOSE YOU LOVE ARE HURTING

NOTE: UNLIKE OTHER LESSONS, THE EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY IS DESIGNED TO COME AFTER THE VIDEO. PLEASE PREVIEW IN ADVANCE WHAT YOU'LL NEED FOR THE WEEK.



HOMEWORK GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share with the group three moments you recorded in your Joy Bomb Journal on page 168 in which you encountered gifts and joys from God this week.
2. Recall Becka's story in your homework from Day One. What was most meaningful or encouraging to you? What do you relate to most from her story and the lesson on surrender?
3. From Day Three, when you're in the middle of a storm, where are you tempted to place your trust other than God?
4. In what situations are you tempted to choose temporary pleasure over the more difficult path God has for you from Day Four?
5. Based on Day Five homework, how have you discovered joy and clung to hope in the midst of adversity?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your level of joy today? Circle the number.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Now turn to page 15 and compare your answer today with your answer from Session One, Day One. How has your joy level changed? What actions or circumstances have led to that change over the last five sessions?

 **PLAY THE SESSION SIX VIDEO: [27:25]**

Follow along with Margaret and fill in the blanks for each statement below. Take additional notes in the space provided when you hear something that resonates with you.

Tactic 1. Give the gift of your presence .

Tactic 2. Be slow to speak .

Today, you're in my thoughts, you're in my prayers, and you are loved .

Tactic 3. Think long-term .

Tactic 4. Be practical .

Tactic 5. Ask God how to how to pray .

 **VIDEO DISCUSSION**

- 1 During your times of loss, pain, or crisis, what have been the most helpful things people have said or done? What were the most hurtful or unhelpful?
- 2 Reflecting on the difficult time of a loved one, how do you wish you would have responded differently?
- 3 What reasoning do you use that results in you not giving the gift of your presence to those who are facing hard times?
- 4 Who are five people you need to break the silence with today?

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY: **BREAKING THE SILENCE**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Each participant to bring a snack to share as well as a gift card to a gas station, grocery store, movie theater, etc. that can be given to someone who is going through a tough time
 - A few boxes of notecards or stationery and envelopes
 - Stamps
 - Fun background music
 - Party balloons and fun decorations
 - A pen and sheet of paper for each person
- 1 Decorate the room with balloons, streamers, wildflowers, and anything you can find to create a joyous, celebratory atmosphere.
 - 2 Invite participants to make a list of people in their lives who are going through a difficult time. Encourage them to go through their cell phone contacts for people they may have forgotten as well as to get people's addresses.
 - 3 Hand out notecards or stationery. Ask participants to handwrite notes of encouragement letting those going through challenging times know they are remembered, prayed for, and loved. Include gift cards when available and appropriate.
 - 4 Enjoy laughing, talking, sharing, and catching up as you eat together.
 - 5 Before you close, invite participants to fill out the I Will #FightBackWithJoy By ... on page 183. Take pictures of the group holding up the page and send us your photo at joy@margaretfeinberg.com. We'd love to post your pictures on our website.

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close in prayer ask:

- God to continue expanding each person's spectrum of joy;
- God to continue revealing fresh strategies in each person's life for how to fight back with joy;
- the Holy Spirit to continue creating opportunities to grow closer to Him and each other.