

Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4-9



Preparation

Rejoice!

1. INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUNDAY

This Sunday is the conclusion of a series of two passages from Paul's letters. We read Paul's letter to Philemon, in which he writes about the slave Onesimus. And we will read from his letter to the Christians in Philippi, in which he mainly speaks about joy and friendliness.



This Sunday, we will focus on Philippians 4:4-9: on joy because you belong to God, on praying and thanksgiving, and on how God wants to give you his peace. With the **4-8 year-olds**, we will focus on the fact you get to be happy because you belong to God. With the **8-12 year-olds**, we will focus on the things that are good and on the peace God wants to give us.

2. CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE



Paul writes this letter to the Christians in Philippi. Philippi was an important Roman city in the north of Greece, in the province of Macedonia. It is the first European city where Paul shares the Good News.

Paul ends up in Philippi in a remarkable way. He does not intend to go to Europe, but he has a dream in which a man from Macedonia begs Paul to come.

When Paul is in Philippi is, extraordinary things happen (Acts 16:6-40).

Later, when Paul writes this letter, he is in prison (Philippians 1:13). We don't know exactly where and when Paul is in prison at that moment, but it is probably around the year 55 AD in Ephesus, or around 60 AD in Rome. In spite of the fact that Paul is in prison, he writes that he is happy that the Good News is being told. And that he can also tell people about Jesus while he is in prison! But he also keeps saying how happy he is with the church in Philippi (Philippians 1:4, 2:2, 2:17, 4:1, 4:10). In today's passage, Paul connects joy with belonging to God: you get to be joyful because of your union with God.

In addition to joy, there is another important theme in the letter.

In chapter 3, Paul strongly criticizes other preachers of the Good News. Because the subject and the tone of chapter 3 is very different from the rest of the letter, some scholars see this chapter as a separate letter, which was later added to the rest of the letter.

These other preachers say you have to be circumcised and you have to keep Moses' Law. They think external characteristics like circumcision and keeping Jewish Law, are very important for those who want to belong to God. The church in Philippi mainly consists of non-Jews (who are not circumcised and don't keep Jewish Law). But Paul tells the Christians to be an example by living good lives and not spending a lot of time with the way things look (Philippians 2:12-15 and 4:8-9).

3. EXPLANATION OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE



Philippians 4:4-9 is the end of the letter. Paul repeats a number of things he thinks are important for the Christians in Philippi. In verse 4, he says, "May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!"

Paul is in prison, but he still experiences joy through his faith. For him, faith and joy belong together. Twice, he tells the inhabitants of Philippi to be happy and friendly. Even when things are difficult, you can be happy, because you belong to God. People can see that, because of your friendliness (chapter 4:5).

Paul names another important point, "Don't worry." He connect it to prayer: asking God what you need. Paul says: Whatever happens, pray to God. And always thank God, because praying and thanksgiving belong together. And, Paul says in verse 7, (in other words: if you do so), God will give his peace to you. Not human peace, meaning the absence of war or strife. But another peace, which keeps your heart and mind safe.

No matter the circumstances, we can know that God is with us, like Paul says in verse 9: And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

In verses 5 and 8, Paul tells the Christians what should fill their minds. Paul summarizes it like this, "those things that are good and that deserve praise." It is a summary of values for all Christians. The people should be able to tell Christians lead good lives. If you put into practice what you learned and received from me, Paul says in verse 9, God will give you his peace. A peace beyond human understanding. It is that peace that will keep your heart and mind safe from evil.

Preparation

Rejoice!



4. FROM THE BIBLE

4-8 years

For the younger children we focus on Philippians 4:4.

*May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord.
I say it again: Rejoice!*

8-12 years

For the older children we focus on Philippians 4:9.

Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

5. WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

4-12 years

During the Church Service

- music you think the children will find a little jarring

4-8 years

Doing: A Cheerful Nib

For each child:

- the handout with the nib's point
- a kitchen roll

And also:

- strips of colored paper or washi tape
- glue
- black felt tip pens
- scissors or pin prick pens

Doing: Your Own Mosaic Selfie

For each child:

- a sheet of graph paper, 3/8 inch by 3/8 inch inches (1 by 1 cm)
- a pencil

And also:

- mosaic paper squares 3/8 inch by 3/8 inch (for sale online, or make your own)
- glue

Doing: Sweet Joy

For each 4-6 children:

- 16 oz (500 grams) of (frozen) strawberries
- a banana
- a peeled orange
- 16 oz (500 ml) low-fat yoghurt

And also:

- a (hand-held) blender
- a bowl
- glasses
- blunt knives
- plates

8-12 years

To Start Off

- the handouts
- a pair of scissors

Bible Passage

- a bible

Doing: A Dice to Remember

For each child:

- the handout

And also:

- scissors
- glue
- pencil and felt tip pens

Doing: A Protective Layer

- two mandarins
- two bowls filled with water



Building blocks of the Sunday

Rejoice!

During the Church Service



6. CHILDREN'S MOMENT IN THE SERVICE

Ordered to Be Happy

Today, we will learn that we have to be happy, no matter what happens. This isn't just some advice Paul gives us, it is an order: Rejoice! The children discover this isn't always easy in the next assignment.

What do you need?

- music you think the children will find a little jarring.

Let's start!

- Tell the children you've taken some music that you'd like everyone in church to hear.
- Turn on the music and as you play it, note non-verbal responses, like covering their ears with their hands, facial expressions, sighing et cetera.
- Switch off the music and ask what the children and grown-ups thought of the music. Name what responses you saw as they listened.
- Say that Paul tells us to be happy today. It isn't a bit of advice or a tip Paul gives us here, but an order. We must rejoice. Always! Whatever happens. The children have discovered that that isn't easy when they heard the music.
- During the children's service, the children discover how you can be rejoice in all circumstances after all.

During the Children's Service



7. TO START OFF

4-8 years

Happy – Happier – Happiest

If you are happy, you can hear it, you can see it and you can feel it. Together, the children come up with a sentence they say more and more happily.

Let's start!

- Divide the children into groups of three.
- The first child comes up with a sentence, for example, "Today is such a lovely day." The sentence is said in a happy tone of voice.

- The second child says the same sentence, but tries to say the sentence in a happier voice and makes a gesture to go with it.
- The third child makes the sentence the happiest by showing most emotion and movement, and making the tone as happy as possible.
- The groups take turns saying their sentences for the rest to hear.

8-12 years

Chain Reaction

From prison, Paul writes a letter to the people in Philippi. By paying close attention and responding to each other quickly, the children make a few important discoveries before reading this letter.

What do you need?

- the handouts
- a pair of scissors

Beforehand:

- Cut out the assignment cards (the two handouts are for the entire group).

Let's start!

- The children are sitting in a circle.
- Randomly hand out the cards. If there are more cards than children, give two cards to children.
- At the top of the cards, there is a response given by another child, at the bottom what they themselves have to do.
- The game begins with the child whose card says, "You have the first card in the game." This child does what the card tells them to.
- The other children check whether this act is at the top of their card, and if so, they do what is at the bottom of their card.
- The children try to respond to each as soon as possible.
- The game is over when you get to the child whose card says, "Take a bible and say, "We will now continue by reading Paul's letter to the Philippians from the Bible."
- What have the children found out about this letter without even reading it?

Solution:

1. You have the first card in the game. Knock your fists on your chair a few times.
2. When you hear knocking ... stand up, shout, "Come in!" and sit down again.
3. When you hear someone shouting "Come in!" ... stand on your chair and in a very strict voice, say, "Yes!"
4. When someone says "Yes" ... stand up and take a deep bow.

Building blocks of the Sunday Rejoice!



5. When someone takes a deep bow ... shake hands with someone in the group and say, "My name is Timothy. I am here to see a prisoner." Then sit down again.
6. When someone says, "My name is Timothy. I am here to see a prisoner" ... stand up and pretend both of your hands are handcuffed, and then sit down again.
7. When you see someone who is handcuffed ... loudly say, "I am glad you have come to visit me in prison."
8. When someone says, "I am glad you have come to visit me in prison" ... sit down in a cross-legged position.
9. When you see someone sitting in a cross-legged position ... stand up and write something in the air.
10. When someone is writing something in the air ... go and stand on your chair, shouting "Tip 1"
11. When someone is shouting, "Tip 1" ... you say, "Rejoice!"
12. When you hear someone saying "Rejoice!" ... stand on your chair and look around the group looking as happy as you can.
13. When you see someone looking happy ... stand on your chair and say, "Tip 2: Be kind to people."
14. When you hear, "Tip 2: Be kind to people"... walk to someone in the group and say something kind to them.
15. When something kind is said ... skip around the group, saying, "Don't worry about anything."
16. When you see someone skipping ... take a bible and say, "We will now continue by reading Paul's letter to the Philippians from the Bible." (end of game)

8. PRAYER AT THE START OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE

Faithful God,
We are happy you are here for us
and that you want to take care of us.
We thank you for all the wonderful things
happening around us.
Be with us when our lives are difficult.
When life isn't wonderful,
or when we're not very happy.
When that happens,
give us hope and courage to believe in you.
To do the right thing,
so we can feel your peace.
Amen.



Tip

Sit down in a circle for this prayer. You could light a candle.



Tips

- If you have more children, play the game again.
- You could give the remaining children a task: Time the game. Who has the most beautiful response? .

Building blocks of the Sunday

Rejoice!

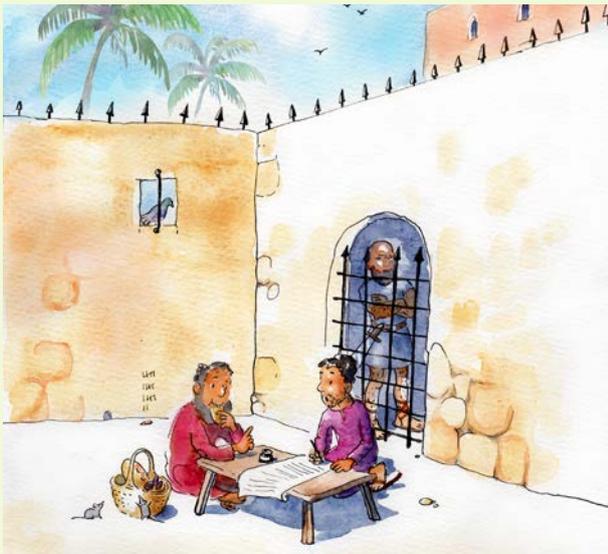


9. BIBLE STORY

4-8 years

Philippians 4:4-9

Tell the story to the children. While you talk or after reading the story, look at the picture together. Ask the children to look carefully and say what they see. You could also use the older children's Fact File for more information.



Happy Because of Jesus

Timothy knocks on the heavy wooden prison door. After a while, a small hatch opens. A soldier looks out.

"Yes?" he says, sternly.

"I am here to see a prisoner," Timothy says.

"Which one?"

"Paul," Timothy says.

The hatch closes again.

Timothy hears how the bolt is pulled back. And then the prison door finally opens.

Timothy steps in.

"What do you have with you?" the soldier asks. "Let's see it."

Timothy shows the things he has taken with him: paper, ink, a few fresh dates, a loaf of bread.

"All right," the soldier says. "Walk on."

Timothy walks into the courtyard, and goes into the meeting room.

Paul is already there. He has a heavy iron chain around his ankle so he cannot run away.

"Hello, Timothy," he says. "So good of you to come. Oh, you've brought me dates? I love those."

"I got them from the people I am staying at. They're fresh, picked this morning," Timothy says. "And I have brought new paper and ink."

"Good," Paul says. "Then we can finish the letter we are writing. The letter to the people in Philippi. Have a seat."

Timothy sits down on the floor opposite Paul, rolls open his paper and dips his pen into the ink.

"Let's go," he says.

Paul puts his elbows on the table and with his head resting in his hands. Then he says,

"Dear people in Philippi. I have nearly reached the end of this letter.

But first I want to give you some important advice.

My first tip is: You should always be happy."

Timothy looks up in surprise. You should always be happy? Is Paul really saying that? That's strange, someone in prison saying that. He doesn't know when he can leave prison again. He doesn't even know whether he will ever be allowed out of prison. Isn't it impossible to be happy in those circumstances?

"Always be happy," Paul continues, "even when sad things happen in your life. Rejoice because you get to belong to Jesus. Because whatever happens in your life, Jesus loves you. He is with you. If you know that, you can be happy, even in a prison.

My next tip is: be kind to other people. Of course, that isn't always easy. Some people are not very nice to you. But try not to get angry. Try to stay friendly. See whether you can help people. Try to listen to people. That way, the people will see you really belong to Jesus.

And my final tip is: don't worry. Don't worry about what could go wrong. Don't worry about what people say about you."

Timothy puts down his pen. "Don't worry?" he says. "But Paul, how can you say that. Of course people in Philippi are worrying. It's perfectly understandable. Life is very difficult for them. Come to think of it, your life isn't easy either, here in prison."

Paul nods. "That's right. I understand when people worry. And of course, I sometimes worry. But I don't have to worry, because God looks after me, and when I need something, all I have to do is ask him. Oh, add that,

Dear friends, just ask God when you need something. And thank God for everything he gives. And God will make sure you don't worry, but feel his peace. Even in very hard times.

Friends, this is the end of my letter.

Blessings from Paul and Timothy and the other Christians here. May the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

Building blocks of the Sunday

Rejoice!

8-12 years

Philippians 4:4-9

May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far

beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable. Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

10. FACT FILE

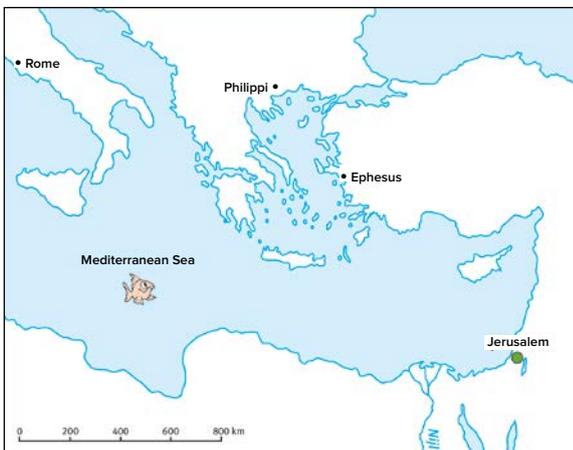


Peace to Keep You Safe

Paul says that hearts and minds are protected by God's peace. The Greek word for "keeping safe" Paul uses here, was also often used for soldiers' protection of a city. For the Philippians, that word was easy to understand: their city was protected by Roman kept safe by Roman soldiers.

Paul in Philippi

Philippi was an important Roman city in the north of Greece, in the province of Macedonia. It is the first city in Europe where Paul shares the Good News about Jesus. Paul ends up in Philippi in a very special way. He hadn't intended to go to Europe, but he gets a dream in which a man from Macedonia begs Paul to come. When Paul is in Philippi, special things happen: just read Acts 16:6-40! When Paul later writes this letter to the Christians in Philippi, he is in prison. We don't know for sure where Paul was in prison. It may have been in Ephesus, it may have been in Rome.



11. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Below, there are two kinds of questions you can discuss: "knowledge questions" and "thinking questions". You can look up the answers to the knowledge questions, for example in the story. But the thinking questions can keep your group thinking. There are no wrong answers in those!

4-8 years

- Paul is in prison and yet he is happy. How come, do you think?
- Have you ever been in difficulty and yet felt happy? When was that?
- Paul gives three tips in his letter to the Christians van Philippi. Do you know which three?
- What is your favorite tip?

8-12 years

- At the end of the letter, Paul gives the Christians in Philippi some more pieces of advice. Can you name a few of his tips?
- Why does Paul think it is so important that the people remember his lessons?
- What will God give to the people who are gentle, who don't worry and who pray for everything with thanksgiving?
- Do you see or experience something of the peace God wants to give us?

Building blocks of the Sunday Rejoice!

12. DOING

4-6 years

A Cheerful Nib

Paul is happy he can write letters to other people who belong to Jesus from prison. The children make a cheerful nib out of a kitchen roll.

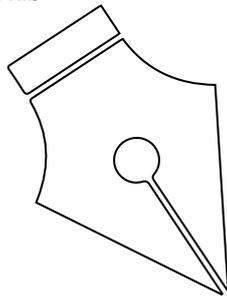
What do you need?

For each child:

- the handout with the point of a nib
- a kitchen roll

And also:

- strips of colored paper or washi tape
- glue
- black felt tip pens
- scissors or pin prick pens



Let's start!

- The children stick colored strips of paper or washi-tape onto the kitchen roll.
- The children cut out the nib's point.
- The children "dip" the nib into the ink by coloring a bit of the point black.
- The children attach the point to the kitchen roll.
- The nib is ready.



Instead of kitchen rolls you could also use thick rolled up cardboard.

6-8 years

Your Own Mosaic Selfie

You get to be happy because you belong to God. The children make a happy selfie out of mosaic pieces.

What do you need?

For each child:

- a sheet of graph paper, 3/8 inch by 3/8 inch inches (1 by 1 cm)
- a pencil

And also:

- mosaic paper squares 3/8 inch by 3/8 inch (for sale online, or make your own)
- glue



Let's start!

- In pencil, the children draw a face on the lines of the graph paper. They cannot draw outside of the lines. That means eyes become square instead of round.
- They can draw their own face or an imaginary face.
- The children fill the eyes, the nose, a smiling mouth, the face, the hair and a piece of t-shirt with mosaic squares.
- The children glue on the mosaic squares.



- Instead of working with paper mosaic squares, the children could also color in the squares on the paper, creating a self-portrait.
- Collect the (self) portraits, so the children can guess who the maker of the portrait is.

4-8 years

Sweet Joy

Paul wants us to always be happy, because we belong to God. To celebrate this, the children make a sweet, joyous smoothie.

What do you need?

For each 4-6 children:

- 16 oz (500 grams) of (frozen) strawberries
- a banana
- a peeled orange
- 16 oz (500 ml) low-fat yoghurt

And also:

- a (hand-held) blender
- a bowl
- glasses
- blunt knives
- plates

Let's start!

- Divide the group into pairs and give each pair one of the tasks below.
- The children wash the strawberries.
- The children who can, remove the greenery from the strawberries and cut the strawberries into pieces.
- The children remove the banana peel and cut the banana into small pieces.
- The children divide the orange into parts.
- Put all the fruit into a bowl.
- Add the yoghurt.
- Blend the fruit and the yoghurt using a (hand-held) blender, creating a smoothie.
- Pour the smoothie into glasses. Enjoy!

Building blocks of the Sunday Rejoice!

8-12 years

A Dice to Remember

In his letter, Paul gives a number of rules about how we could live. He wants us to remember those tips and do those things. The children make a dice so they don't forget Paul's tips.

What do you need?

- For each child:
- the handout

And also:

- scissors
- glue
- pencil and felt tip pens

Let's start!

- The children cut out the dice.
- They color the dice.
- They fold the lines and folding strips.
- They put glue on the folding strips and assemble the dice.
- They allow the dice to dry.
- The children take turns throwing their dice.
- They think of things they can do with the word they throw: I am happy because ..., I choose not to worry about ..., I thank God for ... et cetera.



8-12 years

A Protective Layer

Paul says God wants to give his peace. That peace does not mean that there is no more war or that you never go through anything that is difficult. That peace does protect your heart and mind. Even when things are difficult. The children discover how that works in the following experiment.

What do you need?

- two mandarins
- two bowls filled with water

Let's start!

- Peel one mandarin.
- Place the mandarin in a bowl of water.
- What happens?
- Now place the mandarin with its peel in the other bowl.
- Now what do the children see? What does this have to do with the story?

Explanation:

- The peel is lighter than water, so the mandarin with peel floats.
- The mandarin parts are heavier than water and so the mandarin without peel sinks.

13. BLESSING

In the Bible, there is a blessing for all people. It is a wish that we often hear at the end of a church service. And we say this blessing to each other:

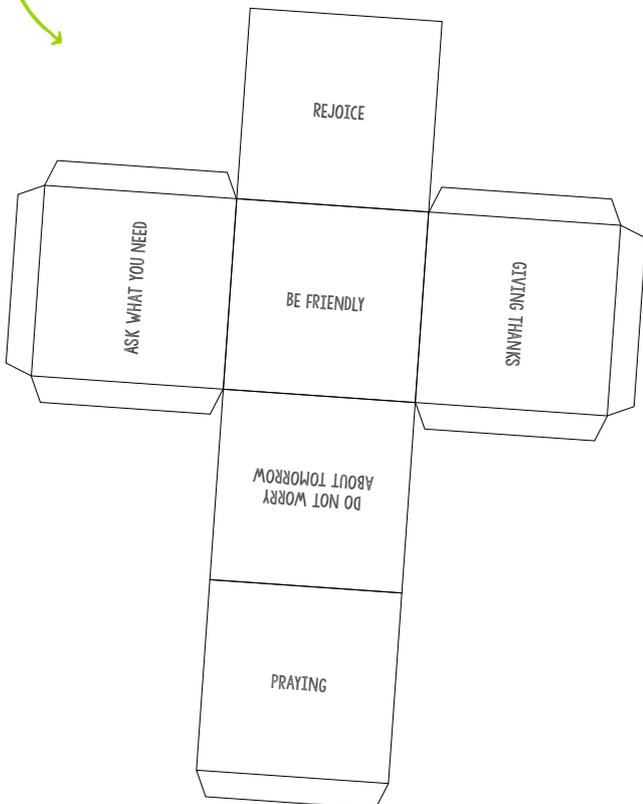
“May the Lord bless you and take care of you; May the Lord be kind and gracious to you; May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26



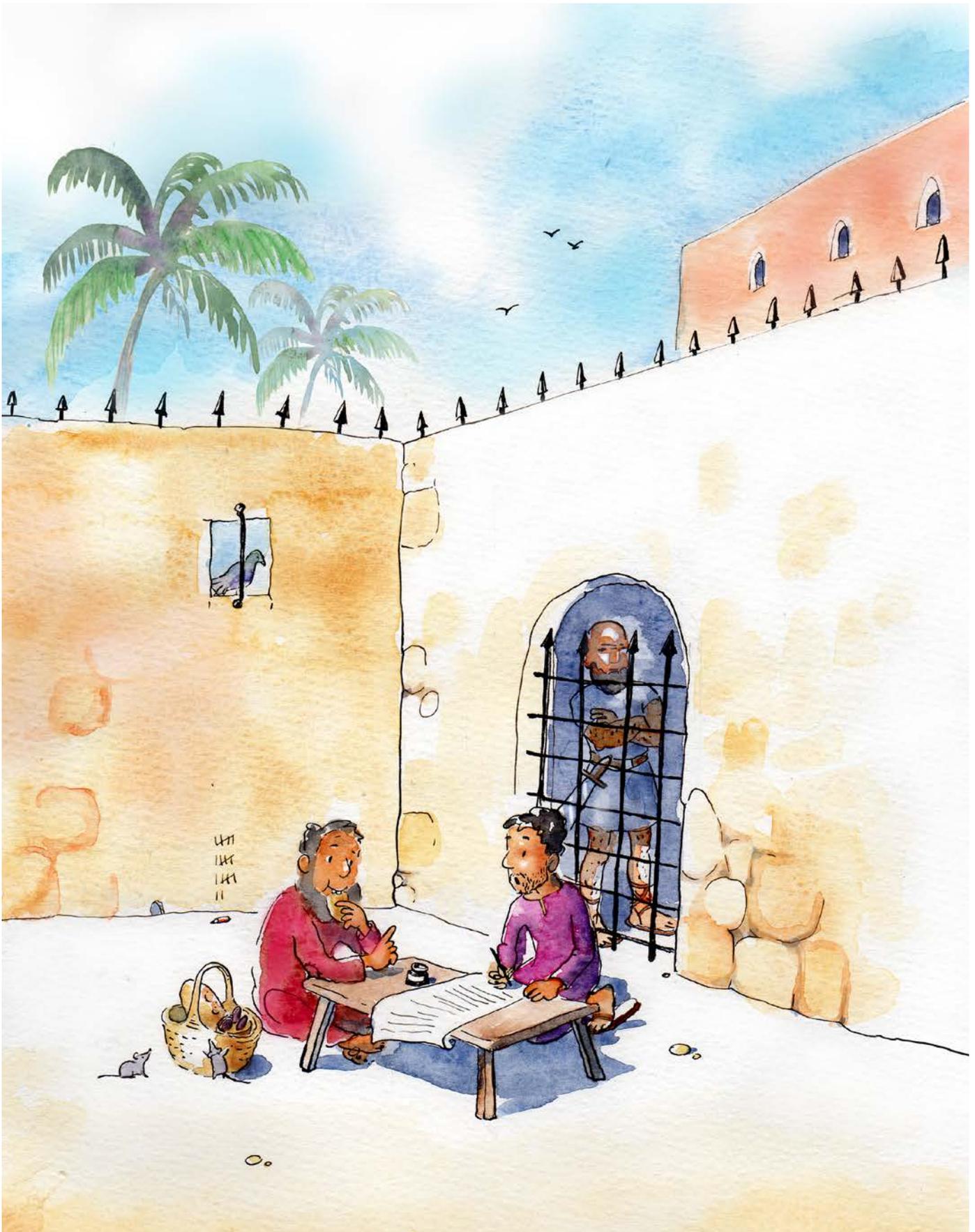
Tips

- Stand in a circle and hold hands.
- Let three children say one sentence each, or say the entire blessing together.



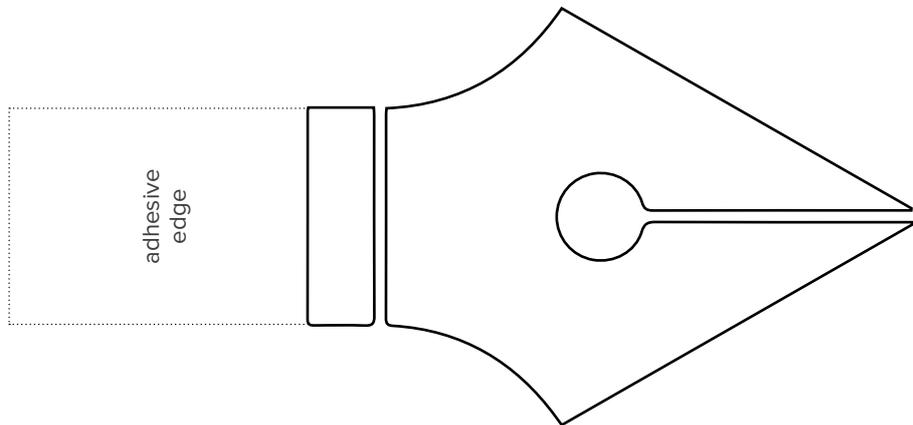
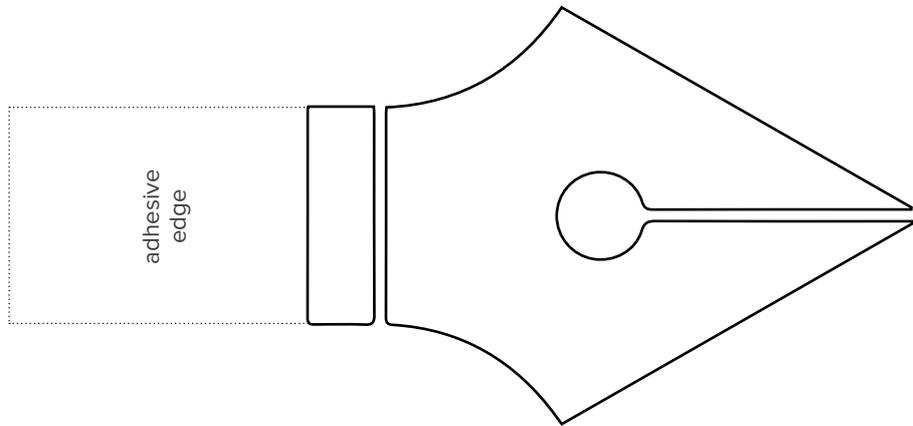
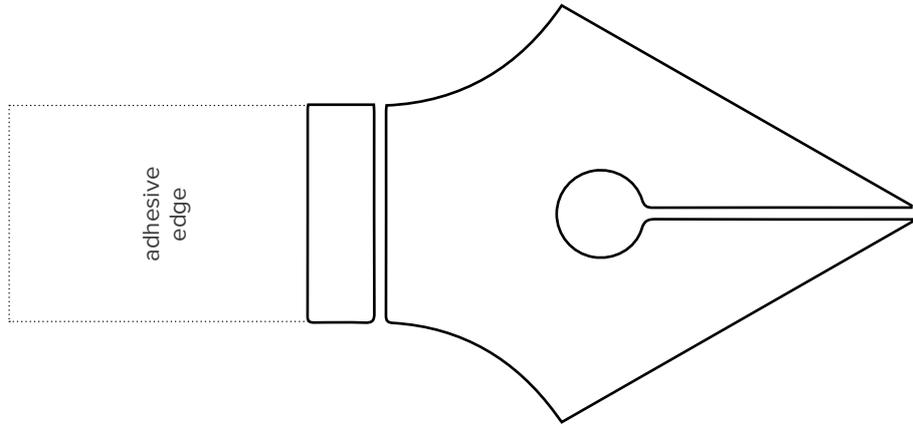
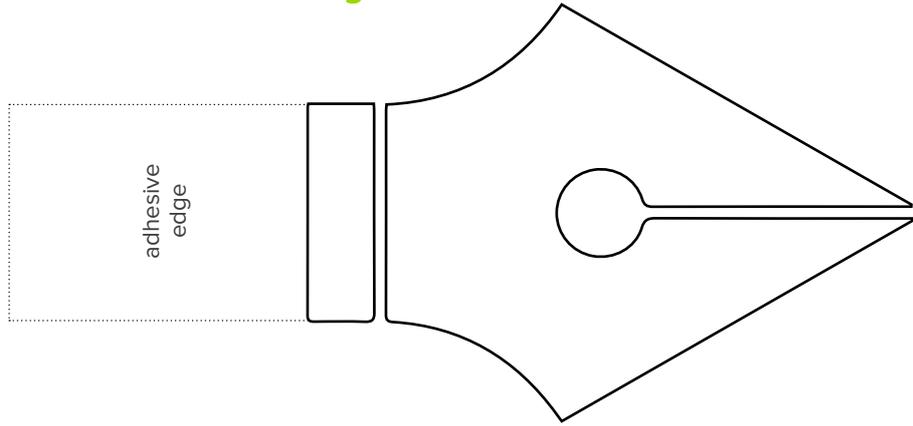
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May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord.
I say it again: Rejoice! - Philippians 4:4

Handout (4-6 years) - A Cheerful Nib Rejoice!



To Start Off (8-12 years)
Rejoice!



<p>WHEN YOU HEAR KNOCKING ... STAND UP, SHOUT, "COME IN!" AND SIT DOWN AGAIN.</p>	<p>YOU HAVE THE FIRST CARD IN THE GAME. KNOCK YOUR FISTS ON YOUR CHAIR A FEW TIMES.</p>
<p>WHEN SOMEONE SAYS "YES" ... STAND UP AND TAKE A DEEP BOW.</p>	<p>WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE SHOUTING "COME IN!" ... STAND ON YOUR CHAIR AND IN A VERY STRICT VOICE, SAY, "YES!"</p>
<p>WHEN SOMEONE SAYS, "MY NAME IS TIMOTHY." I AM HERE TO SEE A PRISONER" ... STAND UP AND PRETEND BOTH OF YOUR HANDS ARE HANDCUFFED, AND THEN SIT DOWN AGAIN.</p>	<p>WHEN SOMEONE TAKES A DEEP BOW ... SHAKE HANDS WITH SOMEONE IN THE GROUP AND SAY, "MY NAME IS TIMOTHY. I AM HERE TO SEE A PRISONER." THEN SIT DOWN AGAIN.</p>
<p>WHEN SOMEONE SAYS, "I AM GLAD YOU HAVE COME TO VISIT ME IN PRISON" ... SIT DOWN IN A CROSS-LEGGED POSITION.</p>	<p>WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE WHO IS HANDCUFFED ... LOUDLY SAY, "I AM GLAD YOU HAVE COME TO VISIT ME IN PRISON."</p>

To Start Off (8-12 years)

Rejoice!



<p>WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE SITTING IN A CROSS-LEGGED POSITION ... STAND UP AND WRITE SOMETHING IN THE AIR.</p>	<p>WHEN SOMEONE IS WRITING SOMETHING IN THE AIR ... GO AND STAND ON YOUR CHAIR, SHOUTING "TIP 1"</p>
<p>WHEN SOMEONE IS SHOUTING, "TIP 1" ... YOU SAY, "REJOICE!"</p>	<p>WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE SAYING "REJOICE!" ... STAND ON YOUR CHAIR AND LOOK AROUND THE GROUP LOOKING AS HAPPY AS YOU CAN.</p>
<p>WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE LOOKING HAPPY ... STAND ON YOUR CHAIR AND SAY, "TIP 2: BE KIND TO PEOPLE."</p>	<p>WHEN YOU HEAR, "TIP 2: BE KIND TO PEOPLE" ... WALK TO SOMEONE IN THE GROUP AND SAY SOMETHING KIND TO THEM.</p>
<p>WHEN SOMETHING KIND IS SAID ... SKIP AROUND THE GROUP, SAYING, "DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING."</p>	<p>WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE SKIPPING ... TAKE A BIBLE AND SAY, "WE WILL NOW CONTINUE BY READING PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS FROM THE BIBLE." (END OF GAME)</p>

Handout (8-12 years)

Rejoice!

Put into practice what you learned and received from me,
both from my words and from my actions.
And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:9

PEACE TO KEEP YOU SAFE

Paul says that hearts and minds are protected by God's peace. The Greek word for "keeping safe" Paul uses here, was also often used for soldiers' protection of a city. For the Philippians, that word was easy to understand: their city was protected by Roman kept safe by Roman soldiers.



A PROTECTIVE LAYER

Paul says God wants to give his peace. That peace does not mean that there is no more war or that you never go through anything that is difficult. That peace does protect your heart and mind. Even when things are difficult.



PAUL IN PHILIPPI

Philippi was an important Roman city in the north of Greece, in the province of Macedonia. It is the first city in Europe where Paul shares the Good News about Jesus. Paul ends up in Philippi in a very special way. He hadn't intended to go to Europe, but he gets a dream in which a man from Macedonia begs Paul to come. When Paul is in Philippi, special things happen: just read Acts 16:6-40! When Paul later writes this letter to the Christians in Philippi, he is in prison. We don't know for sure where Paul was in prison. It may have been in Ephesus, it may have been in Rome.

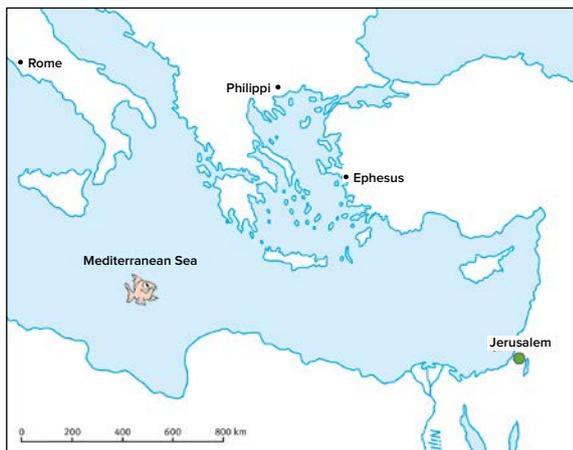


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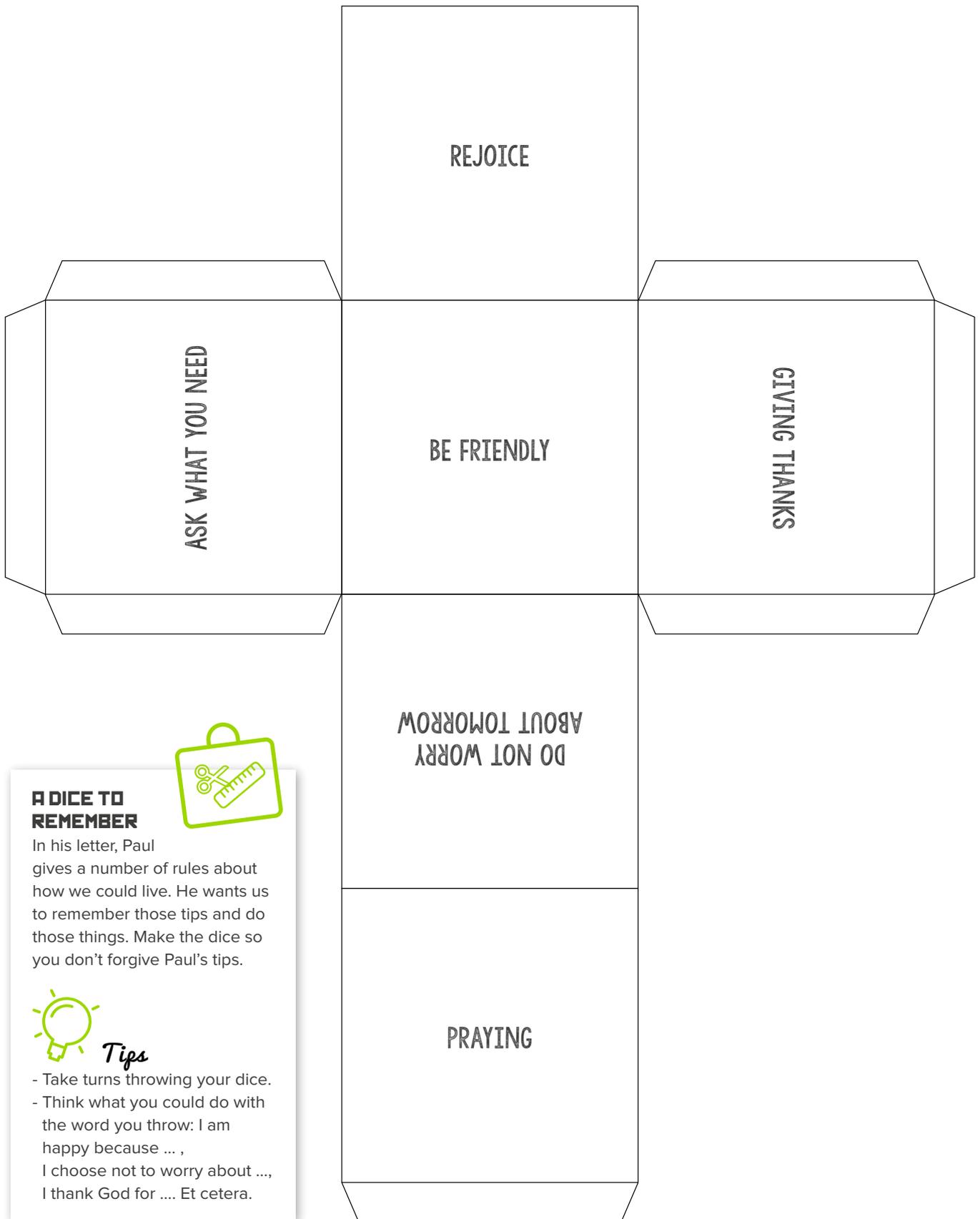
Let's start!

- Peel one mandarin.
- Place the mandarin in a bowl of water.
- What happens?
- Now place the mandarin with its peel in the other bowl.
- Now what do you see? What does this have to do with the story?



Handout (8-12 years) - A Dice to Remember

Rejoice!



A DICE TO REMEMBER

In his letter, Paul gives a number of rules about how we could live. He wants us to remember those tips and do those things. Make the dice so you don't forgive Paul's tips.



Tips

- Take turns throwing your dice.
- Think what you could do with the word you throw: I am happy because ... , I choose not to worry about ... , I thank God for Et cetera.

