

The Fruit of the Spirit is JOY

What do you think of when you hear the word joy? *(Pause for student answers.)* What are some synonyms of the word joy? *(Students may say words like happiness, gladness, pleasure, etc.)* Joy and happiness are often thought of as being the same thing. The feelings of joy and happiness bubble up in us when we are excited about things like birthday presents, good times with friends, and accomplishing something we've worked hard on for a long time.

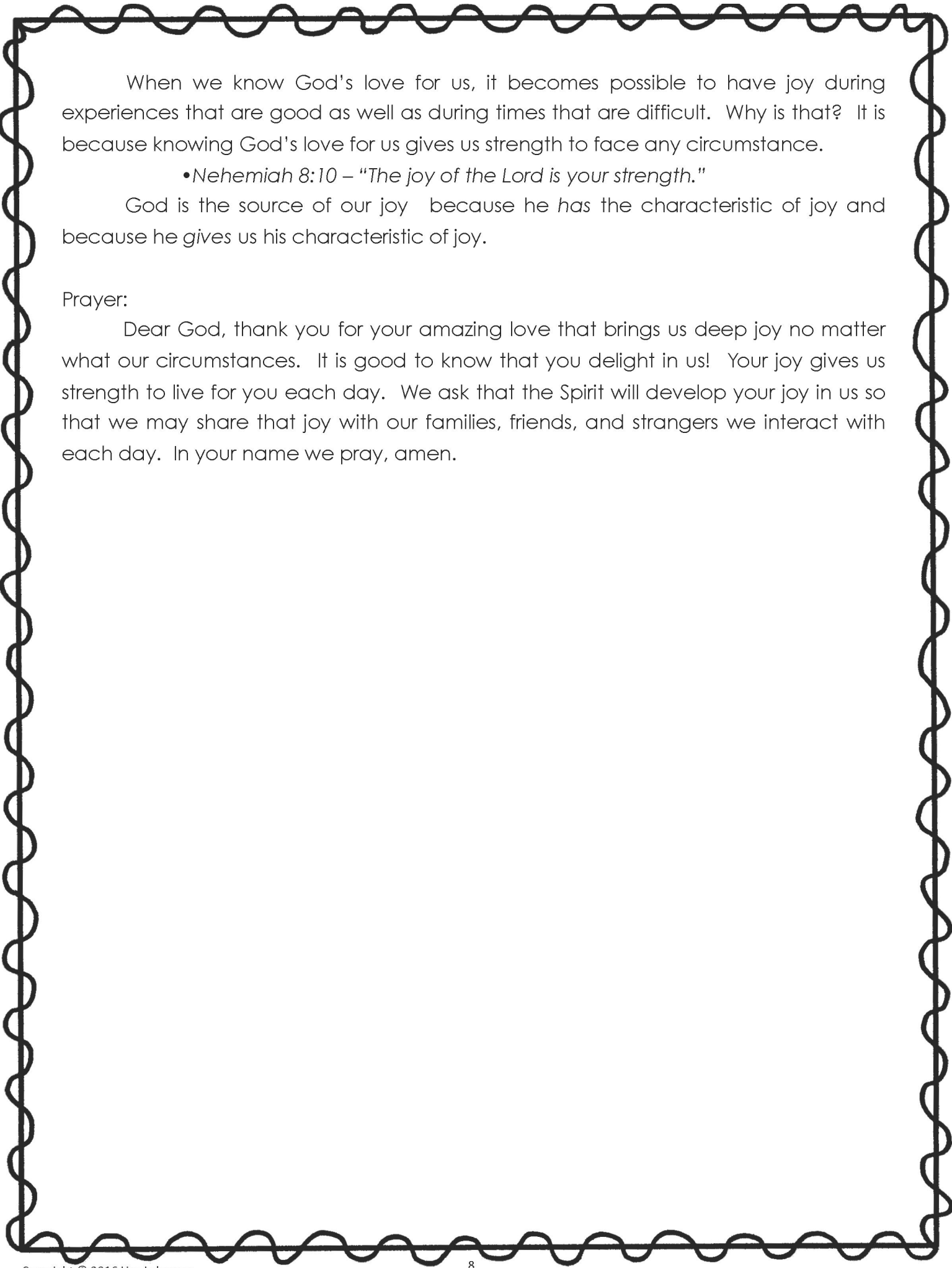
God's joy is seen in the Bible when he shows delight and pleasure. God delights in the world he created, in the people who love him, and in sending his son Jesus to the world. Take a look at God's delight and pleasure in these Bible passages:

- *Genesis 1:31 – "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."*
- *Psalms 147:11 – "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."*
- *Zephaniah 3:17 – "The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."*
- *Matthew 3:17 – (when Jesus was baptized, God spoke these words) "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

The Holy Spirit grows God's characteristic of joy in us. That joy becomes both an emotion and an action in our lives. We have the emotion of joy when we are excited and happy about things we experience. We display the action of joy when we praise God, when we sing to him, and when we rejoice in his love for us.

The deepest joy we can experience comes from knowing and experiencing God's amazing love. Jesus often talked to his disciples about staying connected to him. He taught about God's love for them and encouraged them to remain in God's love. The reason for this was so that they might have joy:

- *John 15:9-11 – "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love...I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*



When we know God's love for us, it becomes possible to have joy during experiences that are good as well as during times that are difficult. Why is that? It is because knowing God's love for us gives us strength to face any circumstance.

•Nehemiah 8:10 – *“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

God is the source of our joy because he *has* the characteristic of joy and because he *gives* us his characteristic of joy.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for your amazing love that brings us deep joy no matter what our circumstances. It is good to know that you delight in us! Your joy gives us strength to live for you each day. We ask that the Spirit will develop your joy in us so that we may share that joy with our families, friends, and strangers we interact with each day. In your name we pray, amen.