middle school

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Lesson 12 / November 22, 2026

Counterfeit Happiness

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as STEP 1

Lesson 12
Focus:
Understanding God's Word brings joy and comfort.

Lesson 12
Bible Basis:
Nehemiah 8:1-12

Lesson 12
Memory Verse:
The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
—Psalm 19:7

Students will learn that the Bible can provide joy and comfort that lasts longer than any counterfeit source of happiness.

Materials:
- Internet access

➢ **What comforts you when you're feeling sad, scared, or anxious?** (Answers will vary but may include praying, talking to a friend, listening to music, etc.)

➢ **How do you comfort others?** (Answers will vary.)

➢ **What are some healthy things people might do to feel better or experience comfort?** (Accept all reasonable responses, which may include talking to a friend, getting a hug from a family member, journaling, praying, or taking some deep breaths.)

People turn to all kinds of things for comfort or happiness. Praying, talking to a friend or relative, playing with a pet, journaling, or going for a walk are all great ways to experience comfort and happiness.

One way people can experience comfort is reading God's Word. There are many passages and verses in the Bible that can bring comfort when we are distressed. Let's check some of them out.

Display the following list of Bible verses about comfort for your students. You can read a few of the verses and explanations aloud to your students or share the link with students so they can read at their own pace.

10 Encouraging Bible Verses for Comfort During Hard Times
https://estherpress.com/bible-verses-for-comfort/

While reading God's Word, along with the ways we mentioned earlier, are healthy, there are also unhealthy ways people can seek comfort. Some of these are things that aren't good for people. Abusing drugs or alcohol, lashing out at others, or trying to numb the pain aren't healthy ways to receive comfort.

➢ **Can you think of some unhealthy things people might do to feel better about their problems while seeking a little happiness or comfort?** (Students may suggest "big" things like illicit sex or drug use. Remind them that "little" things, like spending all day in front of a screen or lashing out at your family because you feel lousy, can also be unhealthy ways of coping with problems.)

All of us have problems at times, and all of us want to feel better. But there are good and bad ways to cope with things. Let's look at what worked for the people of Israel in the book of Nehemiah.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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Counterfeit Happiness

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Materials:
- Index cards
- Pens/pencils
- Bible or access to Bible apps

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class. You can also share this link with them to have ready for the activity:
http://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-to-comfort-you/

If your class is meeting in person, invite teens to bring out their devices for this activity and go to the link above.

People do all kinds of things to get joy and comfort. Some of those are excellent ideas. But sometimes, we take dangerous shortcuts to joy and comfort. We talked earlier about a few negative approaches people use in their search for joy and comfort. Ask your students to recall a few of the ways they listed earlier and ask them to expand on the list if they can think of more.

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Invite everyone to navigate to the above link (or share your screen). **Read through the scriptures on this list. On one side of your index card, write down a verse that stands out to you.** Give students a few minutes to find and write a verse.

On the other side of this card, write down a negative approach that you sometimes use to find joy and comfort. Nobody will see what you write except you. Give students a minute or so to write their responses.

We learned today that God's Word can be a powerful source of joy and comfort. It gives us genuine encouragement with no negative after-effects! When you find yourself tempted to find comfort and happiness by the means you wrote on your card, instead choose to read the verse on the other side! All of us have problems sometimes. Everybody needs joy and comfort. But don't give in to the temptation to do something you'll regret. Instead, pull out your index card and read some of the thoughts that God has shared.

Close in prayer.

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