

SIDEWALK PROPHETS

Artist:

SIDEWALK PROPHETS
SIDEWALKPROPHETS.COM

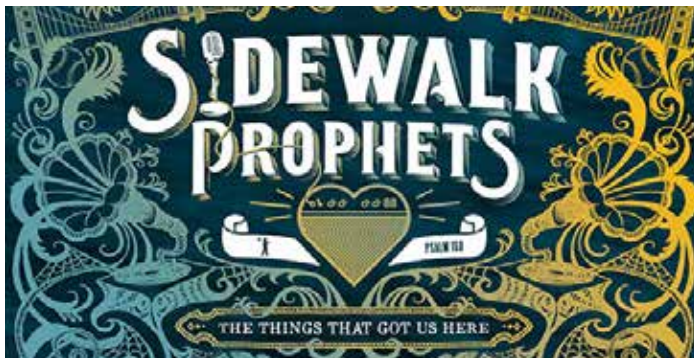
Album Title & Record Company:

THE THINGS THAT GOT US HERE
CURB/WORD

Video Title:

SMILE

Study By:

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Playlist

This song is featured on "The Linc: Joy" Spotify playlist – which is the perfect way to remind your students what you've taught them in this session. To share it with them, click the live link on the web version of this study.

Theme

Joy, Difficulties; Comfort in, Endurance; Perseverance

Objective

Students will understand that Jesus can lead us to find joy even through the most challenging circumstances and situations.

Warm Up

Honey, If You Love Me, Please Smile – Everyone sits in a circle. One person is "it." He or she must walk over to someone and say, "Honey, if you love me, please smile." He or she can make faces and noises, etc., but no touching or tickling. If the targeted person laughs while the person who is "it" says, "If you love me, Honey, you'll smile," then they must be "it." If they don't laugh, they must answer to the "it" person, "I love you, Honey, but I just can't smile." Then "it" must find another person to target.

Transition

In the course of a year, Sidewalk Prophets frontman Dave Frey experienced the high of getting married and the low of a bus fire, which caused the band to lose much of their expensive gear. This song is a reminder that we can go into any situation, knowing God's promises ring true. Frey says about this song: "Over the past few years, we've been through some pretty awesome experiences, as well as some very terrifying ones... When you start to pay

close attention, you begin to see that how you respond to these experiences is actually a choice. In the tough times, we can wither away in fear and doubt, or we can go confidently into each new challenge knowing that when we hold on to Christ and His promises, there is always a reason to smile."

The Video

Smile is an upbeat, joyful reminder to hold onto the promises of God through all circumstances. The song was released in early 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic, but became an important song as the world entered a challenging season. Watch the video together before moving into the next part of our discussion.

Transition

- What would you say to someone who tells you that being a Christian means you are happy all the time? What do you think the difference is between happiness and joy?
- What do you think it means to "choose joy?" Do you agree that joy is a choice? Explain why you think the way you do.
- What do you think the song means when it says, "But, a little change in your point of view could be just what you need."

Bible Study

The New Testament book of James gives us some insight into handling tri-

als and does so in a way we might not expect. **James 1:2-4** starts by telling us to *consider it pure joy... whenever you face trials of many kinds*. Surely this is not what you expect to hear when facing hardship. It's not natural for us to look at trials as a place of joy, but Jesus often invites us to live the opposite way from what we expect.

The song "Smile" tells us that life is going to pull you down, but there's still a reason to smile. Here are some things to talk about:

- What do you think it means to consider something "pure joy?"
- Looking at James 1:2-4, what do you think the Bible means when it speaks of perseverance? Why is that important when it comes to trials?
- Do you think God is more interested in our comfort or our transformation? Explain your thought process as you answer this question.
- Looking at this verse, what would you say to someone who asks if God wants us to be happy? Explain why you think the way you do.

It's easy to hear a song like this and think it's saying that we should just smile through the hurt and the pain we experience and pretend it's not really impacting us. Experience tells us that doing so is a terrible way to approach difficult circumstances. When we look deeper, we can see the song is challenging us to adopt a new perspective when we face trials in our lives. When we can recognize both God's presence and His prom-

ises, it can help us see things differently. It doesn't make the situation easy by any means, but we can find the strength and courage to press forward with joy as we know God is at work. Take a moment and pray for someone you know who is walking through a difficult time right now.

Wrap Up

As you consider your own life and the trials you have faced, are facing or will face, how can you be a person who finds joy in the hardest of times? The only way we can do this is if we choose to know Jesus intimately and let Him have our hearts. Maybe you've made this decision before, but need to take a moment to reconnect with Him. Perhaps you simply want to indicate your desire to be a person who can always choose joy. Let's take a moment so you can share your heart with Jesus.

When we root our lives on God and His promises, we can find joy in the darkest of times. Recognizing that hard times are coming and turning to God with a heart full of faith when they do is possibly the most challenging part of the Christian life. God's goodness does not stop when we face trials. His goodness often increases as He gives us what we need to persevere. He loves you more than you could ever imagine. In this broken world, we will face trouble, but as Jesus tells us in John 16:33, we can take heart because Jesus has overcome this world. May we be people who cling to Him, get His perspective, and choose joy one day at a time.