

DISCUSSION GUIDE

· In The Waiting: An Advent Series ·



December 18, 2022

ADVENT: THE WAITING JOY

Welcome to the Discussion Guide - designed to help you think more deeply about the sermon topic as you engage with others through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and real-life application.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is one thing that brings you joy during the holidays?

➤ EXPLORATION

This week we turn our attention to the gift of **JOY!** As you work through this guide, it's important to remember that joy is so much more than a feeling, it is a posture of the heart. Joy is also a gift to those who put their trust in Jesus.

Before you go any further, take a few moments to pray together. Ask God to bless each person in your group with joy.

Matthew 2:9-10 (read all scriptures aloud)

Luke 2:9-10

In the Matthew passage we read about the Wisemen who had spent their lives looking for a sign, which had finally appeared. In the Luke passage we see unsuspecting shepherds just going about their daily routine when the Angel appeared to them. There was joy in both places. Whether or not we are looking for it specifically or simply seeking God, joy is possible.

Joy can come at unexpected times and in unexpected places. In this season we are reminded once again that the gift of true joy only comes to us through Jesus.

Joy and happiness are two different things. They may look similar on the outside, but their origins are different. There is a difference between what makes me happy and what the Bible says will bring me joy.

**Who is the most joyful person you know?
Why would you describe them that way?**

Did you think of someone who is like a cheerleader, hype-man, center of attention OR someone who is calm, steady, consistent and focused on others?

What the world means by 'happy'

- Circumstantial (if things are going well)
- All about 'now'
- Limited by quantity (just a little more)
- The absence of trouble
- Just a feeling

What the Bible means by 'joy'

- Centered in God
- Anchored in the future
- Discovered in quality
- A reality in times of trouble (James 1:2)
- An attitude

Look back at Luke 2:10, it says...the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people." **So we ask ourselves, What is this good news? Why will it cause great joy? What does great joy even look like?**

It's good to remember that Jesus was the most joy filled person in the history of this world. In fact one of the very last things that Jesus taught his disciples before his death was about joy.

John 16:20-24

We can see throughout scripture the legacy of joy that God has for his people.

In the Wilderness:

- Psalm 105:43 He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy...

In Exile:

- Nehemiah 8: 10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

In Suffering:

- James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds...

How do these passages challenge your understanding of joy?

When the angels came and declared joy to the world on that first Christmas, it was right in line with what God has been telling His people from the very beginning.

It is shocking how often we live like we don't know our Bible. As followers of God, we stand in a long line of women and men who have come before us and who have fought for joy, by looking to God and trusting Him in the midst of their crazy world. Our family tree of faith is filled with unexplainable joy in the lives of ordinary people!

Jesus began his ministry on earth by quoting the following scripture. As you read it, consider how this truth is fulfilled in your life.

Isaiah 61:1-3

What caught your attention in this passage?

"The opposite of joy is not suffering. It's the despair in suffering." ~John Piper

Joy is not dependent on happy circumstances. We can be transformed by joy any moment of any day. However, we

must choose where we will put our focus, on our circumstances or on the truth of scripture?

John 16:24

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

These scriptures remind us that prayer is a key to joy, knowing that God will hear us and will answer us. When our focus turns to God and we acknowledge our struggles and invite God to give us his eternal perspective, our hearts make room for joy. We are assured through scripture that even though there are difficulties and sorrows in our lives, God is with us!

The Practices of Joy

- **Praying:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 Rejoice always, pray continually
- **Loving:** John 15:9-12 Keep his commands and love each other
- **Thanking:** Philippians 4:6 Pray with thanksgiving
- **Singing:** Psalm 100:2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.
- **Serving:** Psalm 100:2 Serve the Lord with gladness
- **Giving:** 2 Corinthians 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver

Each of these practices helps become more attentive to God's presence in our lives. It is only there we will find true and lasting joy.

Which of these practices come the most natural for you?

Which practice do you need to increase this week as you seek the Giver of Joy?

> ADVENT PRAYER

God, we thank you for the joy that can be found in Jesus. We ask you to fill us with Your joy by the power of the Holy Spirit, even while we are living in this weary world. May Your joy in us, day by day, be a light for this dark world to see Your glory and grace. Amen
