

Leader's Guide: Sunday, December 14, 2025

The Joy Before You

Pastor Ben Pippen

Luke 2:25-38, Romans 5:5-8

Guiding Question

Where is my life aimed, and how is that direction shaping my joy?

This question should remain in the background throughout the discussion. The goal is not simply to talk about joy, but to help participants discern what they are living for and how that shapes their inner life over time.

Message Recap (For Leaders)

This reflection contrasts **temporary happiness** with **lasting joy** by examining the lives of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25–38. Both lived long, difficult lives marked by waiting, loss, and uncertainty, yet they overflowed with joy when they encountered Jesus. Their joy did not come from circumstances, achievement, or comfort, but from a life oriented toward God and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The message highlights Romans 8:5–8, showing that a life set on the flesh—seeking fulfillment through worldly means—leads to emptiness and death, while a life set on the Spirit leads to life and peace. Joy is not something we achieve or acquire; it is the fruit of walking with Jesus, re-centering our lives on Him, reordering our loves and habits, and remaining faithful where God has placed us.

Discussion Questions with Leader Follow-Ups

1. **Joy vs. Happiness:** Where do you see the difference between temporary happiness and lasting joy in your own life? What are some things you've chased that promised happiness but didn't deliver lasting joy?

Follow-Up Questions:

- Can you think of a time when something made you happy but didn't bring lasting peace?

- What emotions tend to surface when happiness fades?
 - How would you describe joy if it isn't dependent on circumstances?
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2. **Life Aimed Somewhere:** Simeon and Anna shaped their lives around waiting for what God promised. What do you think your current habits, priorities, and time reveal about what your life is aimed toward?

Follow-Up Questions:

- What gets most of your mental energy during the week?
- If someone observed your life from the outside, what might they assume matters most to you?
- Are there areas where your stated values and lived values don't quite align?

Additional Scripture to Reference:

- Matthew 6:19–21
 - Colossians 3:1–3
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3. **Flesh or Spirit:** Romans 8 talks about setting the mind on the flesh versus the Spirit. What are some practical signs that your mind is drifting toward the flesh, and what helps reorient you toward the Spirit?

Follow-Up Questions:

- What emotions or behaviors tend to show up when that drift happens?
- What helps you become aware that you're off-center?
- What practices help you reset your focus on the Spirit?

Additional Scripture to Reference:

- Galatians 5:16–26
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4. **Faithfulness in Waiting:** Anna waited many years and remained faithful in worship and prayer. What areas of waiting are hardest for you right now, and how might God be inviting you to remain faithful in them?

Follow-Up Questions:

- What makes waiting spiritually challenging for you?

- How do you usually respond when God's timing feels slow?
- What might faithfulness look like in this season, even if circumstances don't change?

Additional Scripture to Reference:

- Psalm 27:13–14
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- 5. Living and Sharing Joy:** Anna couldn't help but tell others about Jesus. Where do you see opportunities in your everyday life to share the joy and hope you've found, and what might hold you back from doing so?

Follow-Up Questions:

- What fears or hesitations make sharing difficult?
- How can joy be shared naturally, without pressure or performance?
- Who in your life might need hope more than answers right now?

Additional Scripture to Reference:

- 1 Peter 3:13-16
 - Matthew 5:14–16
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Closing Encouragement (For Leaders)

Consider closing the group by revisiting the guiding question and inviting participants to silently reflect on one small step they can take this week—re-centering on Jesus, reordering life (adjusting habits), or remaining where you are (choosing faithfulness in a place of waiting). You may also choose to close in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to produce joy that is rooted not in circumstances, but in Christ Himself.