

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"ADVENT IS JOYFUL PREPARATION" | LUKE 2: 8-20 | PASTOR BRIAN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is a special moment that usually causes people to rejoice?

"Joy in the Christmas Story" (Luke 2: 8-10)

Jesus' birth was announced and then celebrated with joy by relatives, angels, shepherds and the Magi. What is it about Jesus that allows so many different people have joy?

"Joy is... and Joy Stealers" (Luke 2: 11-20)

Joy is the result of the choice celebrate God and what He has done. However, people often choose not to do this and are robbed of Joy. What are the major joy stealers in our society today?

"How Do We Move from Fear and Suffering to the Command for Joy?" (Phil 4:4-8)

Paul shares that believers are commanded to rejoice in all circumstances and then shows by focusing on God, praying to Him and thanking Him for what He has done allows people to do that. What are specific things about God and what He has done that cause you to rejoice?

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Bearing the fruit of joy is a lifelong process as we all face difficult times and struggles. Have you been focusing on your circumstances instead of Jesus lately? Pray that God will remind you of His victory and for help in practicing the discipline of celebrating Him.

BONUS ADVENT SCRIPTURES FOR THIS WEEK: JOYFUL PREPARATION

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|-----------|-----------------|
| Monday | Isaiah 35: 5-10 |
| Tuesday | Luke 1: 5-15 |
| Wednesday | Luke 1: 39-45 |
| Thursday | Matthew 2: 1-12 |
| Friday | Romans 15:13 |

Advent is Joyful Preparation

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-6 AP: Xmas Eve. Holiday hours. Men's breakfast. CG. School sub's.
- B. Slide7 Jason Wed Nite, O Holy Night. *Till he appeared in the soul felt it's worth.*

II. Slide8-10 Intro: Advent is Joyful Preparation

- A. Well we looked at: *Advent is Expectant Waiting*, & *Advent is Hopeful Anticipation*.
- B. We live in-between 2 advents. *The 1st coming incognito, the 2nd time in glory.*
1. What comes to mind when you hear the word Joy?
 2. What color do you think of when you hear Joy? (purple?)
 3. Is your life marked by gratitude & celebration? Are you a grateful person, or is it marked by the cynicism & the anger of our day?
- C. Do you have the settled assurance that God is in control of every detail of your life, that quiet confidence that ultimately ... *everything will be all right?*
- D. Slide11a Did you know the human brain is bent towards the *negative*.
1. A neuroscientist said, "It takes just 3 seconds for a negative memory to imprint on the brain, but it takes 14 seconds for a positive one." He later said, "your brain is like Flypaper for negativity and Teflon for positivity."¹
 2. How about take 14 seconds when you see a beautiful sunset or the color change of leaves, let it imprint in your mind.
- E. Slide11b And have you ever noticed how hard it is to stay joyful? One minute you are on top of the world, the next in a pit of despair. To stay joyful is like trying to carry water in a bucket full of holes.
1. And the Bible says, *be joyful always*. Suggestion or a command? It doesn't make sense and seems impossible. *The car breaks, the kids are*

¹ John Mark Comer, Advent Joy.

fighting again, the Dr gives you the bad news, your spouse walks out, the co-worker stabs you in the back, stress keeps growing, your neighbors are difficult, you failed the test, and you want me to be joyful? (eg. Fri morn, *Great Harvest Bread*, what could go wrong? on the way to go study about Joy)

III. Slide12a-g JOY IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY

- A. Joy or rejoice is dotted throughout the bible, 436 x's. *Kinda important.*
- B. Joy is used in the Christmas story, 8 x's. That's why we say *Merry Christmas.*
- C. Wisemen - Mt.2:10 *When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*
 - 1. **Great joy** = *megas charA* (we're talking **mega joy!**)
- D. Zechariah - Lk.1:13,14a *Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness ...*
- E. Many - Lk.1:14b *and many will rejoice at his birth.*
- F. John B - (prenatal praise) Lk.1:43,44 *And why is this granted to me (Liz) that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*
- G. Mary - Lk.1:46,47 *And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*
- H. Shepherds - Lk.2:8-10 *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear (mega-phobos). 10 And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy (mega-joy) that will be for all the people.*
 - 1. It was significant then when Jesus of Nazareth was born, it was announced as **good news that brings great joy.**

IV. Slide13 JOY IS ...

- A. **Joy**. You can give it away, keep it, and be surprised by it. You can have joy in things/people but that can fail and be lost. *You can even have Joy in dark situations.*
- B. **Rejoice** is the verb form of the word **Joy**. It is something that is active, it's not just something we feel we have to choose it. *You are more than emotions.*
1. **Celebration** then is a discipline, it doesn't just magically appear.
 2. Joy is more than an emotion (so are the other 3: *Hope, Love, Peace*)
 3. They are *the inner condition of the heart of Jesus* (who is *loving, and joyful & peaceful & hopeful*). It is something that we *take on* in **our own inner-woman or inner-man**, as we apprentice under **Jesus** over a lifetime.
 4. It's a deliberate decision we make then, to *Joy in God*.
- C. **Joy** is closely related to *gladness* and *happiness*, although *joy* is more a state of **being than an emotion, and as a result of choice**. Lexham Bible Dictionary
- D. **Joy** is *a peace filled confidence about life because of the character, acts and promises of God*.
- E. **Joy** comes from confidence in **the One** who *is in control of all things, rather than in our circumstances* at the moment.
- F. **Joy** should be our *signature* as Christians; it should be our *badge* of honor.
1. Our joy should be the 1 thing which *separates us* from this world.
 2. **Why should we be joyful?** because *"Freedom Brings Joy!"*
 - a) Consider the joy of one being release from *jail or the hospital*. **And** yet not one of these is as *free* as the person who's been *freed from sin's shackles & chains*.
- G. **Joy** gives us **singing faith**. We have thousands of songs. We have so many songs just for this 1 holiday. *Joy, unspeakable Joy* (Chris Tomlin). **What Joy song** are you presently singing?
- V. **Slide14a WHAT ARE JOY STEALERS?** *what steals your joy?* (I won't go into a bread store anymore)
- A. Comparison, perfectionism, legalism, conformity, bondage, sin, fear, suffering, bad news, *a critical-complaining-attitude*, not showing mercy, not forgiving, murmuring, fault finding, the person with *stinking-thinking*. **Slide14b** Mark Twain

said: *I have been through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened.* (so worrying about what might happen).

1. Rick Hanson, Ph.D., neuropsychologist and author of *Hardwiring Happiness*, said, “The innate neurological circuitry of your mind poses a very real challenge: **positive stimuli** tend to *roll through it* while **negative stimuli** get *flagged and captured and deferred to*. But you can consciously override those tendencies in simple and effective ways each day, by focusing on positive experiences, valuing them, & helping them sink in.”
2. This is *science speak* for the biblical concepts we’re talking about.

B. So how do we break through the barriers of joy?

VI. Slide 15 HOW DO WE MOVE FROM FEAR TO JOY?

A. How do we move from Fear to Joy? (shepherd’s started out ... *greatly afraid & moved to hearing good tidings of mega joy*). So the short answer is by sitting and waiting in the dark, & in the cold, & moving toward the **joy** that is the result of the gospel, the good news, by practicing the way of **Jesus**.

B. Let’s take it up 1 more notch ...

VII. Slide 16a HOW DO WE MOVE FROM SUFFERING TO JOY? Or can we?

A. Heb. 12:2, *For the joy that was set before him* (Jesus) *endured the cross*.

1. Wait, **Joy**? How do you face the cross w/joy? **Jesus** didn’t find joy in **the event** ... He found joy in **the guaranteed outcome** of the event!
 - a) It’s very different to go through **pain without purpose**, then **pain with purpose**.
 - b) **Joy** is a **focus** before it’s a **feeling**. So while we are chasing a feeling called **joy**. God gave us the ability to **choose the focus** of joy.
2. Paul experienced **much sorrow**, but he described it, **being full of sorrow and yet rejoicing**, 2 Cor. 6:10.

a) So it's *more than*, *turn that frown upside down*, *or smile like a monkey with a new banana*. **No!** Christian **joy** is a profound decision of faith **and** hope in the power of *Jesus' own life and love*.

B. **Slide16b** *Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning*. Ps.30:5

1. See, *Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit*. Gal.5:22. It is a Christian virtue.

2. *The pursuit of joy is a moral obligation ...*

C. **Rick Howe** (hoe) writing on **Joy**. *“Emotions... are the tip of the iceberg. There is much more beneath the surface. And when we explore that territory, we discover that we are **active participants and contributors** to our emotional states. **Even if it seems that we have a little control over our feelings per se, we do have a say about their entourage of values, beliefs, and desires. We can affirm them or deny them, embrace them or reject them, cultivate them or put them in check. This is what makes it possible for us to ‘school’ our emotions. Wisely or foolishly, in healthy or unhealthy ways, we all manage our emotions. This intern plays an important role in the formation of our character. And this makes our emotions morally significant ... The pursuit of joy is a moral obligation.”²***

VIII. **Slide17a** **HOW DO WE MOVE FROM THINKING JOY IS A SUGGESTION, TO HEARING IT AS A COMMAND?**

A. Most of Paul's writings theologians call, *Indicative/Imperative*.

1. 1st 1/2 of his letters tell or “indicate” *What God has done for us, in Christ*.

2. **Then** the 2nd 1/2 it's full of *imperatives* or *commands*, how we as disciples of Jesus, are to *live-into* what God has done for us, in Christ)

a) **And** so we have this *Joy Imperative*, in the 2nd half of Philippians ...

B. **Slide17b** Phil.4:4-8 *Rejoice in the Lord always* (Joy is a command. The Key to the Christian's joy is *its source*, which is *the Lord*); *again I will say, rejoice*. (*drives it home*. Msg, *Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him!*)

5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; (and what is the great enemy of Joy? read on) 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in

² Quoted on John Mark Comers Advent 2020 (You Tube)

everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (give thanks, habituate-gratitude) 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (redirect your thoughts when thoughts come about how **hard** life is, how **bad** life is, redirect to what you are thankful for. Redirect your mind, or practice ‘directed attention’. Redirect to what you are thankful for. Maybe you get to practice this a lot?) 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (think about it, its the opposite of what so much of **social media & news** is all about, “whatever is **not-true**, whatever is **dishonorable**, whatever is **unjust**, whatever is **impure**, whatever is **ugly**, whatever is **unfavorable**, if there is anything **bad**, if there is anything **unworthy** of praise, # these things.”)

IX. Slide 18a BEARING THE FRUIT OF JOY IS A LIFELONG PROCESS

- A. Surely there are many circumstances in which Christians cannot be happy. But they can always rejoice in the Lord and delight in Him.
1. As Joy was the *predominant theme* of this Epistle of *Philippians*.
 2. Paul found the secret of such victory in *the joy of the Lord*, it was the way of escape, from *his prison*, while imprisoned!
 - a) This is *a quality of life* that is worth knowing, because *we all have* a prison of one kind or another. **Think** ... what would you define as your prison today? *Your singleness? Your marriage? Your addiction? Your compulsion? Your anger? Your hurt? Your job? Your unemployment? School that wont end? Life that wont begin? [the joy of the Lord ... the secret of victory!]*
- B. C.S. Lewis, “**Good things as well as bad**, you know, are caught by **a kind of infection**. If you want to get warm you must stand near *the fire*; if you want to be wet, you must get *into the water*. If you want *joy, power, peace, eternal life*, you must get **close to**, or even **into**, the thing that has them.”

1. Slide18b C.S. Lewis' formula for Joy was basically, **get close to the source of Joy itself, The Trinity we call God.**

C. Prayer: God You are our the **source** of joy. *In your presence is fullness of joy.*

D. Keywords: Joy, cross, freedom, God, Gospel.