

The Wonder Of Joy

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GROUP ICE BREAKER

What is your favorite Christmas song and why? Extra points if you sing some of it!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- I will not make the peace of Christ a search for comfortable circumstances.
- I will choose a word of Scripture to dwell on so my thinking leads to peace.
- I will use singing as a way to prepare my heart for the peace of Christ.
- I will think of worry as a prompting from the Holy Spirit to pray.

MESSAGE SUMMARY

"When was the last time you experienced joy?" Not just any joy, but deep, real, lasting joy. The kind of joy you can't help but contain. Another question is, "How much joy are you living with today?" Right now, this moment, how would you rate yourself on the joy scale?

Recalling the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Luke wrote of these rather mysterious messengers of God (angels, we call them) who light up the sky with this simple but profound message: "I bring good news that will cause great joy." What is the source of this new good news? Psalm 98 speaks to Jesus and what he will do. The only circumstance affecting our joy is our acceptance of the fact that Christ's existence is in us.

Here are three ways you can make the experience of joy more tangible in your life this Christmas season. First, *say yes to this new reality*. The biblical word for saying yes is repentance. Now, this also requires that we say no as well, saying no to our own kingdom.

The second way is to simply *make space*. Are you saying no to Jesus today because you're too busy, too full, have no vacancy? Saying yes to God is important, but then you're called to structure your life in a way that you continue to make space for God.

The last thing is *pay attention*. Pay attention to the ways in which this beautiful reality of the creator God is already breaking into your life. The more attentive you are to what God is doing in the world, the more naturally your response will be joy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share a time you remember feeling joyful.

2. What are the similarities and differences between joy and happiness?

3. Imagine you're sitting with a group of non-believers. How would you explain the "good news" the angels spoke of to the shepherds?

4. There were three ways given to make joy more tangible in this Christmas season. Take a moment with each.
 - a. *Say yes to the new reality* of Jesus. The biblical word for "yes" is repentance. Is there an area of your life where you need to repent, to think differently about something you've said or done, or haven't done. Share it with the group only if you're comfortable.

 - b. *Make space*. Many of us say no to joy because we're too busy. What is one thing you will say no to this Christmas to make space for joy?

 - c. *Pay attention*. After the shepherd's saw Jesus, everything was different to them. They left with a new vision. Where do you see God moving in your life that you can be joyful for?

NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

Use these as a guide to take your next step and commit to what you learned this week:

- I will say yes to the reality that the good news brings great joy.
- I will say no to the barriers of joy — pride, selfishness, indifference.
- I will structure my life to make space for God.
- I will say no to some things in my life to make space for joy.
- I will be attentive to what God is doing in the world and make joy my response.
- I will make it my goal to bring joy to those around me.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Luke 2:8-10
- Psalm 98:1-3
- 1 Peter 1:8
- Psalm 16:11
- Luke 2:20

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- [Surprised by Joy](#), C.S. Lewis
- “So when we accept the fact of [Christ’s] existence deeper within us than our own and make it one of the aims of our life to draw on it and develop it, we shall be conscious of a glory transfiguring our life and irradiating ordinary things.” F.B. Meyer

PRAYER REQUESTS

Take time to share how you can be praying for each other over the next week:

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