

# A Different Kind of Christmas

## Group Discussion Guide

### *Thinking about joy at Christmas*

What kinds of things contributed to your joy over the past few weeks? What gave rise to delight?

Jesus often spoke about joy. In one short parable, He touched on the idea of joy as it relates to our pursuit of life with Him. Read Matthew 13:44.

In Matthew's Gospel, references to "the kingdom of God" speak of life with God. With that in mind, what does this short parable imply about . . .

How we should think about the kingdom?

What we should do about the kingdom?

Why we should respond to the opportunity for life in the kingdom?

What do you think the connection is between "joy" and "treasure"?

### *Thinking about what this means for your joy*

How do you see that connection between "joy" and "treasure" played out in your own life?

How do you think that connection should be lived out in your journey with Jesus?



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## Leader's Guide for Discussion

### *Thinking about joy at Christmas*

Joy. For some it seems to be a bit of an elusive word. How do we define it? What is it that we feel when we are feeling joy? Although we might not be able to articulate a precise definition, we all, indeed, feel joy. And the holidays are often a time rich with joy.

As you reflect on joy, try and elicit some thoughts as to what gives rise to joy. Explore a bit of the “soil” out of which joy grows. That will help guide the discussion as it unfolds.

It would seem that joy is, at the core, the feeling or experience we have when we either anticipate or have what we value. The greater the value, the more the joy. When we are “enjoying” what we want, we taste joy. And that seems to be part of Jesus’ understanding of how we are to pursue life with Him.

In the short parable from Matthew 13, Jesus likens life with Him (life “in the kingdom of heaven”) to finding “treasure” (something of great value) and doing all one can to have that treasure (which is where “joy” is tasted). The parable underscores the rightness of pursuing life with Jesus *for the joy!*

The man in the parable sees and recognizes the treasure for what it is worth; that is why he wants to have it. The man in the parable sells all he has to buy the field that contains the treasure because he wants that which he values so much; that is why he does all he does. And obtaining what he wants most tastes like joy! The man doesn’t sorrowfully sacrifice, he joyously gives himself to obtaining the treasure.

If the man did not see or recognize the value of the treasure (“Oh, some old worthless box seems to be buried in that field!”) he would not have had joy in obtaining it. If the man was unable to obtain the treasure he valued (“That ‘Not for sale’ sign is gonna make it hard to buy that field!”) he would not have had joy in pursuing the treasure. But because he saw and knew the value of the treasure and could make it his own, he experienced joy.

And that is the way Jesus tells us we should be thinking of life with Him! We are to see Him as our great treasure and, realizing that life with Him is within our grasp, we should pursue Him and that life with joyful abandonment.

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