

Advent: The Coming of Joy

December 12, 2021

PREPARATION

▶ STUDY

Spend the week studying Isaiah 65:17-25, Luke 2:10 and Galatians 5:22-23. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

▶ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

▶ LANDING POINT

Joy comes from what's on the inside, not what's happening outside.

GROUP DISCUSSION

▶ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

▶ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

▶ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

▶ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

PARADISE LOST

The Garden of Eden was paradise. It was a place of peace and joy. Everything was right and worked according to God's design. But something went wrong in the garden. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, peace and joy were lost, and the world has been broken and filled with heartaches ever since.

Jesus came to give us the peace and joy that was taken from our first parents in the garden. Only by following Him and His example can we find the true peace and joy He promises to give us. This week your group will discuss what it means to live in the joy Jesus gives and how real joy comes from what's on the inside, not from what's happening outside.

What's the difference between being happy and being joyful?

DEEPER DIVE

A MISSION OF JOY

As a prophet, Isaiah spoke directly to the people of Israel about their sin and its consequences. He gave them a grim picture of what was to come. Israel would soon be overthrown and the Israelites would be led into exile because they had rebelled against God. But Isaiah didn't leave the people without hope; he gave them an incredible, joy-filled vision of the future.

Centuries later God's angels delivered a message of great joy at Christ's birth. Years later Jesus spoke about the purpose of His mission: joy. "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11).

Let's look at a few passages that talk about joy and discuss how you can live out the joy of Jesus in your life.

Q: *Have volunteers read Isaiah 65:17-25, Luke 2:10 and Galatians 5:22-23. What words would you use to describe Isaiah's vision of the future in his prophecy?*

Q: *In what ways is Jesus's coming into the world a message of great joy for you personally?*

Q: *How can you tell whether you are producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life?*

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

JOY BLOCKERS AND ACTIVATORS

We have a choice to live out the joy of Jesus in our lives. We can choose to block that joy or activate it. Below are three common joy blockers and three joy activators you can use to let Jesus's joy flow in you.

- **Blocker:** *Envy/Jealousy* – focusing on what others have and not on what God has given you.
- **Activator:** *Contentment* – being satisfied in what God has given you, not focusing on what you lack or want.

- **Blocker:** *Ingratitude* – lacking a thankful attitude toward God and others, which can lead to cynicism, bitterness, and entitlement.
- **Activator:** *Thankfulness* – a state of mind that understands the multitude of reasons to give thanks to God for who He is and what He does in your life.

- **Blocker:** *Comparing* – measuring yourself (i.e., worth, gifts, accomplishments, possessions, etc.) against others.
- **Activator:** *Celebrating* – acknowledging the goodness of God in the unique way He has created other people and the many ways He has blessed them.

This Christmas, let's choose to activate joy through contentment, thankfulness and celebrating. Jesus came to bring you joy and it is ours for the taking. When we activate that joy, others will see evidence of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) in our lives.

Q: *Joy is a choice. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.*

Q: *Where is joy being blocked in your life? What could you do to activate joy in that area?*

Q: *What's something your group can do to activate joy through contentment, thankfulness and celebrating this Advent season?*

Q: *How can the group be praying for you this week?*

COMMENTARY

Role of the Prophet “In the Bible, prophets often had both a teaching and revelatory role, declaring God’s truth on contemporary issues while also revealing details about the future. Isaiah’s ministry, for example, touched on both the present and the future. He preached boldly against the corruption of his day (Isaiah 1:4) and delivered grand visions of the future of Israel (Isaiah 25:8).

Prophets had the task of faithfully speaking God’s Word to the people. They were instrumental in guiding the nation of Israel and establishing the church. God’s household is ‘built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone’ (Ephesians 2:20).”

New Heavens and New Earth “Isaiah uses images from his age to paint a magnificent poetic picture to describe the joys of the world to come. Christians differ over whether to read this as (1) an idealized description of restored Jerusalem (leading into eternal joys), (2) an intermediate “millennial” state, or (3) the eternal state itself. Certainly the expression new heavens and a new earth would seem to suggest the eternal state (because of Rev. 21:1). On the other hand, the mention of people dying, even at an advanced age, as well as the presence of the sinner (Isa. 65:20), seem to suggest this is not the eternal state. To argue for a millennial state (which is not explicit here), one would have to understand the millennial state to include both death and unbelief among unbelievers during the millennial period. However, the mention of the animals (v. 25) evokes 11:6–9, which is part of an oracle describing the messianic era. Hence (and in view of the larger context of chs. 40–66) some interpreters read these verses as describing an idealized future for Jerusalem—not simply as a restored city but as the center of the world, in which all manner of people know and delight in God and live at peace with each other (as 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:1–10). Under such circumstances, human community and piety flourish. At the same time, the description goes far beyond anything that the world has ever seen, inviting the believing reader to yearn for more and to play his or her role as the story unfolds to its glorious end (cf. 2:5).”

Abiding in Christ Jesus talks about fruit-bearing in John 15:1–17. “This command [to abide or remain in Him in v. 4] implies that believers are already organically connected to Jesus and are responsible to maintain that vital connection. Believers should do this for three reasons: (1) Fruitfulness is impossible apart from doing so (vv. 4–5). (2) Doing so results in fruitfulness (v. 5). (3) Failing to do so results in final judgment (v. 6).”