

Good News -of- Great Joy

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 1 December 3, 2023

“Finding Joy in the Darkness”



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise you for walking with us in the midst of adversity. You promise to never leave us or forsake us; but too often we lose joy during the dark seasons of our life because we don't trust in that promise. So help us to choose joy in the midst of adversity and help us to trust your deliverance. Our lives are yours, O God, and we ask that you fix in our heart your joy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NIV)

*¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.

¹⁹ The Sovereign Lord is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to tread on the heights.*

Psalms 30:5b, 11-12 (NIV)

*⁵ weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

¹¹ You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
¹² that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
Lord my God, I will praise you forever.*

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES (CONTINUED)

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Romans 8:28 (NIV)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

INTRODUCTION

Every Christmas Eve after we share the light of Christ and sing “Silent Night,” we end our services by singing “Joy to the World.” It’s such a special moment in the service where we experience joy. But sometimes we go through seasons of life when we don’t feel like singing “Joy to the World.” So how can we find joy in the midst of dark seasons in our lives?

There are over 400 verses in the Bible that use the word “joy.” Sometimes in the Bible, joy is the exuberant feelings people have, but most often it is a disposition of the heart. We find joy when we have faith that God will deliver us from adversity. We also find joy when we have faith that God will force good to come from our season of darkness. In the end, joy is a choice we make. The reason we can choose joy in the darkness is because Christ has come.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some things you do to prepare for Christmas?
2. How do you define “joy?” Have there been times and seasons in your life when you didn’t want to sing “Joy to the World” because you didn’t feel joy?
3. The Israelites never forgot the Exodus from Egypt - their “defining story” - nor their jubilation when God set them free from exile. God lifting them up from captivity was a permanent part of their history. What do you remember as a time when God did “great things” in your life? How do you keep that memory alive?
4. Read Romans 8:28 (on page 1). Do you believe that God can bring something good from adversity in your life?
5. Have you faced and dealt with your fear of death and what comes next?
6. Do you believe that it is possible to ‘choose joy’ in the midst of adversity?

FINAL APPLICATION

What is one way you can choose joy this Christmas season? How can this group help?