

Good News -of- Great Joy

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 3 December 17, 2023

“The Joy We Can’t Yet See”



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the stories of Joseph and his example of finding joy in the midst of sorrow. Lord, we know that you love us and will never leave us or forsake us, but we don't always live like that when we go through seasons of sorrow. So Father, help us to trust that you are going to take the pain and sorrow and bring something good from it. Help to trust that joy will come again in our lives. We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 1:18-19 (NIV)

¹⁸ “This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

The Seven Sorrows and Joys of St. Joseph

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| 1. Sorrow one: | The doubt of Joseph that results in heartbreak. |
| Joy one: | Confirmation of Mary's story from the angel. |
| 2. Sorrow two: | The poverty of Jesus' birth. |
| Joy two: | Gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. |
| 3. Sorrow three: | Joseph takes Jesus to be circumcised. |
| Joy three: | Knowing his son was going to play a role in the salvation of the world. |
| 4. Sorrow four: | The prophecy of Simeon at Jesus' dedication. |
| Joy four: | Simeon also says Jesus will be a light to the nations. |
| 5. Sorrow five: | Joseph and Mary have to flee Bethlehem. |
| Joy five: | They are welcomed in Egypt and given refuge. |
| 6. Sorrow six: | Returning from Egypt. |
| Joy six: | Life with Mary and Jesus in Nazareth. |
| 7. Sorrow seven: | Losing Jesus in Jerusalem. |
| Joy seven: | Finding Jesus in the Temple after three days. |

INTRODUCTION

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Like Joseph, we all have hopes and dreams for our future and we may believe that we can only find joy if those hopes and dreams come true. Sometimes, though, we find that God has other plans for us and we may have to put our own hopes and dreams on hold. But just because we can’t see the joy in this season of life doesn’t mean we won’t find it.

In scripture, there are seven stories of Joseph experiencing sorrow, and a corresponding joy. Like Joseph, we have joy that follows the sorrow in our lives, but too often we may not see it. One lesson we learn from Joseph’s story is to have faith that joy will follow your sorrow. When seasons of sorrow come, ask yourself “what joy is on the backside of this sorrow?”

QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite Christmas song? What is your favorite Christmas movie?
2. Have you ever been thankful that God did not answer one of your prayers in the past?
3. Review the seven sorrows and joys of St. Joseph (on page 1). Like Joseph, do you find this rhythm in your life of seasons of sorrow followed by seasons of joy? Explain your experience.
4. Read Matthew 1:18-19 (on page 1). Joseph’s first sorrow is that he doubted Mary’s story about her pregnancy and he was heartbroken. Joseph was the first person to doubt the virgin birth. Do you have doubts about the virgin birth as well? Discuss.
5. In his sermon, Pastor Eric challenged everyone going through sorrow to “have faith that joy will follow your sorrow.” Do you find it easy or hard to have faith during seasons of sorrow?

FINAL APPLICATION

Change your perspective this week and find joy in the midst of an area of sorrow in your life. How can this group help?