



Joy

Week Three: Joy

Months before angels appear to the shepherds in Bethlehem, Mary, having received the news from the angel Gabriel that she is to conceive the Messiah, visits her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth herself is with child, carrying John in her old age, the one who will prepare the way of the Lord. Scripture tells us, *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.* -Luke 1:39-44

Mary has told little to no one of the promise that she carries. She has pondered the angel's words quietly to herself. No one yet sees the evidence of the child growing within her, and it is in this greeting between her and Elizabeth we are met with the joyous confirmation Mary must have been longing for. Elizabeth's unborn son recognizes the presence of the Messiah. In this moment, Elizabeth's baby leaps within her, and she is filled with the Holy Spirit. The arrival of the King does that! It is his presence in our lives that causes the life within us to leap. When Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, she immediately begins to speak words of thanksgiving and praise. The Advent season is pregnant with joy. As we acknowledge the coming of Christ in our lives and in the lives of those around us, past, present, and future, we must celebrate it.

Mary's situation seemed impossible, and Elizabeth's situation was called barren, yet in the presence of the Savior, by the handiwork of God, life and joy! This is the promise of God to all of creation. Where impossibility and barrenness have reigned, a new reign has come. Like Elizabeth, may words of thanksgiving and praise erupt from our hearts. As we do this, his joy is released in our lives for ourselves and for others. May we prepare a way for the Lord in our lives, celebrating the past and present, and expecting to celebrate the future.

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing
-Joy to the World*

*Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD.
-Isaiah 54:1*

J E S U S I S O U R J O Y

Joy seems to be a difficult thing for people to achieve. What if we told you that it's not just an emotional destination but a daily choice of remembrance and hope for the future, fueled by a heart of gratitude? During Advent, we remember the joy the shepherds in the field had when they learned of the Messiah's birth. All of Heaven rejoiced in front of the shepherds! What an amazing sight that would have been! When we choose to trust that God will never forsake us and He has only good for us forever, we can't help but have joy in anticipation for Jesus's second coming!

Week 3 | Joy | Integration

Basic:

Train your soul for gratitude.

Start a routine of thanking God for something in the morning when you wake up or at night before bed

Find one person to celebrate this week in a small way.

Baseline:

Offer joy to someone else.

So many times, we forget to be specific in our thanks to others. When you decide to put thoughtfulness behind an encouraging word instead of something generic and "safe" that everyone else uses.

Find two to three people to celebrate this week.

Build:

Plan a party!

Celebrating others will help you live a life of joy!

It's Christmas time— you can plan a party to celebrate Jesus and the joy He has brought to your life.

Look for ways to daily celebrate the people you encounter.





*Scripture Reading
Week Three*

PSALM 80:1-3

PSALM 23: 1, 1 PETER 2:25

ISAIAH 40:11

JOHN 10:10-18

EZEKIEL 34:11-16

LUKE 2:15-20

JEREMIAH 23:5-6

Reflections

JOY

Where did you start this week? Circle one: Basic | Baseline | Build

What did you take away from your integration this week?

Are you inspired to live a joyful life powered by gratitude?

What is the next step for you to live joyfully in the next year?