



## JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN HOPE: ADVENT 2020

### Third Week: JOY



#### **Aim:**

Participants will have a better understand the difference between Joy and happiness and embrace their journey in joy this season.

**Preparation needed:** Set up a group session with family and/or roommates. Follow all health and safety considerations. You can also have a Zoom session.

#### **Materials**

- Bible
- An Advent wreath or a candle
- **Gathering Song:** Song: Ready the Way | Curtis Stephan  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GGd6n5g8bo>
- **Song of Reflection:** Give Me Joy in My Heart (Sing Hosanna)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTHvAsvRknw>

#### **Structure for session:**

1. Welcome, Light third rose colored candle or a candle you may have.
2. Play gathering song and followed by prayer.
3. Sharing Human Experience provided in the session.
4. Message
5. Reflection & Integration
6. Response – What are you being called to do?
7. Final Prayer



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**Aim:** Participants will have a better understand the difference between Joy and happiness and embrace their journey in joy this season.

#### Opening Prayer:

- **Light the 3rd candle (joy) of the Advent wreath.**  
*“We light again the first Advent Candle of HOPE and the second Advent Candle of LOVE. We add today the third candle, we light the rose-colored candle, the candle of JOY, as we wait in joyful anticipation of the presence of God through Jesus Christ.”*
- **Then play the following song if possible:**  
“Ready the Way” – Curtis Stephan | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GGd6n5g8bo>
- **Conclude with the following short Advent Prayer:**  
*“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-24)

#### **Human Experience:** We begin a conversation with following questions and reflection on the topic of joy this week. Please feel free to use this one or your own:

Is it even possible to experience joy amid so much pain, suffering, and uncertainty? What is the meaning of joy? Does this mean that we must smile and feel cheerful and excited every day, all day long? How is this possible when there are so many problems all around us? If it’s true that God became like one of us to free us from sin and death so that we may experience an abundant and joy-filled life, how do I tap into this power and experience it in my own life?

Our youngest daughter, Arielle, is seven months old. She’s a pandemic baby. She was born right in the middle of all the shutdowns. Hospitals were placing strict rules for their patients and visitors. They had first warned us that only Nora would be allowed inside the hospital. Then they said that there was a chance that I could go inside the hospital but not inside the room. I couldn’t imagine not being there for her during labor and not being present to welcome our new baby girl into this world. During her last month of pregnancy, Nora wasn’t feeling that good. These were very stressful days. In the end, they allowed me to be present in the room with her. Now we only had to figure out what we were going to do with our other five children since most of our family lives in Oklahoma and couldn’t fly here because of the pandemic! Thankfully our wonderful neighbors offered to take care of them while we stayed in the hospital. Were we expecting a different outcome? Certainly. However, we never stopped experiencing the joy at knowing that we would soon get to meet our precious daughter. In the midst of all this chaos, God was still there. He was the source of our hope and joy during those difficult moments.



Certainly, there are many families who have experienced much more difficult times. And there are many stories of joyful anticipation amid the uncertain and dark moments of this pandemic. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that he became one of us to redeem our souls, heal our brokenness, cast out our fears and sorrows, and in turn, fill us with an everlasting joy that is not dependent on our feelings, possessions, or circumstances.

**Message:** Use the following key concepts to begin sharing the message of the week.

1. Christian joy is “the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew” (Pope Francis, EG 1).
2. Once we encounter Jesus and accept his salvation, our hearts and lives are filled with this unquenchable joy.
3. The difference between this kind of spiritual joy and happiness.
4. “Joy is not the same as happiness. We can be unhappy about many things, but joy can still be there because it comes from the knowledge of God’s love for us.” (*Here and Now*, Fr. Henri Nouwen)
5. “Joy is essential to the spiritual life. Whatever we may think of or say about God, when we are not joyful, our thoughts and words cannot bear fruit. Jesus reveals to us God’s love so that his joy may become ours and that our joy may become complete. Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing — sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war or even death — can take that love away.” (*Here and Now*, Fr. Henri Nouwen)
6. Joy doesn’t come from outside but from within.
7. A joy that doesn’t depend on how we feel or on what we possess.
8. “Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.” (*Here and Now*, Fr. Henri Nouwen)

**Reflection, Discovery and Integration:** Use the following questions to help participants personally reflect the topic of joy.

- *How can you let joy be a part of your everyday life?*
- *How is God inviting you to enter more fully into joy this season?*

**Response:** Use the following questions to help you in bringing out the response which God is calling you to do with the help of the Holy Spirit.

- *Who is someone that you can encourage with the authentic joy of the Lord during this season?*
- *How will you do this?*

As time comes to an end, you can play the follow song followed by the closing prayer.

- Give Me Joy in My Heart (Sing Hosanna)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTHvAsvRknw>



**Closing Prayer:** *God of love, open our hearts. Take away the things that prevent us from receiving Christ and fill our souls with joy. Help us to be instruments of that joy to others. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. AMEN*