



*December 13, 2020*

**Week 3: Day 1 Joy**

**Bible:**

The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;  
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the Lord,  
the splendor of our God.

Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
say to those with fearful hearts,  
"Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
he will come with vengeance;  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you."

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.  
The burning sand will become a pool,  
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.  
In the haunts where jackals once lay,  
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness;  
it will be for those who walk on that Way.  
The unclean will not journey on it;  
wicked fools will not go about on it.  
No lion will be there,  
nor any ravenous beast;  
they will not be found there.

an astronomical phenomenon of a star that pointed to birth of the Messiah, Jesus. They would have probably heard of the prophecy about the king of the Jews to be born as prophesied in the Old Testament and they would have expected this person to be born in the capital city in the palace, which is most likely why they first went to King Herod.

After seeing the star was not pointing to the palace, they found the Messiah in Bethlehem. When they found Him, they worshiped him and presented him with gifts. This was a common practice when appearing before royalty. Not only were gifts given, but they also fell and worshiped Jesus.

Can you imagine these Magi here? They are probably hundreds of miles away and see this star that they believe is from God. And rather than just say the journey is too much, they travel far distances, give up resources and time, and even revere the baby king. They were willing to go to great lengths to show their joy and respect to this king they had never met before.

We can sometimes forget to show our joy and our worship to God, can't we? We get caught up in the day to day and it becomes a hassle to show our joy to God. These Magi were willing to pay the cost to worship God, and it brought them joy.

**Talk About it:**

What is something that you need to thank God for today?

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When was the last time worshiping God cost you something?

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How does worshiping God bring you joy?

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**Further Reading:**

Daniel 7:13-14, Numbers 24:15-19

*December 19, 2020*

**Week 3: Day 7 Joy**

**Bible:**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Matthew 2:1-12

**Devotion:**

These Magi here are astronomers. They would have been interested in dreams, astrology, and magic. The magi were guided by

But only the redeemed will walk there,  
and those the Lord has rescued will return.  
They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah 35

**Devotion:**

Joy is something that is often seen as coming from our circumstances and our possessions. Here we are told that our joy is rooted in an everlasting relationship with Jesus. We are told that when we enter heaven, Zion, we will be singing and have everlasting joy that we wear as a crown. This sounds great, but that's after this life. What about now? How do we have joy today despite what we're go through?

During Christmas, there are advertisements all around us trying to sell us things that will bring us happiness. There are promises that the new truck or the perfect ring will bring us happiness, but after every gift, every purchase, we are left with this hallow happiness. This happy moment just creates a deeper hole of disappointment and depression. This is because there is no gift or object that can bring you complete joy. The fullest joy we can have is through an unending relationship with Jesus.

**Talk About it:**

Where have you seen 'joy' being sold to you?

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How does a relationship with Jesus bring fuller joy?

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How would you define Joy?

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**Further Reading:**

Isaiah 9, Isaiah 12

*December 14, 2020*

**Week 3: Day 2 Joy**

**Bible:**

Praise the Lord.  
Praise the Lord, my soul.  
I will praise the Lord all my life;  
    I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.  
Do not put your trust in princes,  
    in human beings, who cannot save.  
When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;  
    on that very day their plans come to nothing.  
Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
    whose hope is in the Lord their God.  
He is the Maker of heaven and earth,  
    the sea, and everything in them—  
    he remains faithful forever.  
He upholds the cause of the oppressed  
    and gives food to the hungry.  
The Lord sets prisoners free,  
    the Lord gives sight to the blind,  
the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,  
    the Lord loves the righteous.  
The Lord watches over the foreigner  
    and sustains the fatherless and the widow,  
    but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.  
The Lord reigns forever,  
    your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the Lord.  
Psalm 146

**Devotion:**

David writes here about praising God throughout his lifetime. David was a person who had experienced all that life had to offer: From defeating Goliath and being praised by all of Israel, to running for his life and hiding in a cave. From watching over sheep for days on end by himself, to being surrounded in a place with extravagant gatherings.

**Devotion**

Habakkuk here is remembering back to the stories of old when God worked. He had heard of the fame of God when He parted the red sea, when He brought down the walls of Jericho, when He defeated Goliath with just a stone, and now Habakkuk is asking God for a miracle in his day.

In the book of Habakkuk, he is asking God how He can use an evil people for a divine purpose? Habakkuk is living in a time when God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish Israel for walking away from Him. Habakkuk is praying for God to work and to remember mercy, even in this punishment. Habakkuk ends this chapter by declaring that even though he couldn't see God at work, he would still rejoice in God.

God has been faithful in your pasts and you can look back to those points in your life to strengthen your faith, but it is another thing entirely to have joy when terrible things are happening around you and to you. This is what Habakkuk is experiencing here. He chose joy instead of sorrow and we can do the same, but we must make this choice before we are in the tragic moment. When tragedy comes, will you be ready? Will you choose to praise God even in the disaster?

**Talk About it:**

Look back to December 10 (Week 2: Day 5) and rewrite where God has been faithful in your past:

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When was a time you experienced tragedy? What did you do?

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What is one thing you can do now to choose joy in a tragic moment?

**Further Reading:**

Habakkuk 1, Habakkuk 2, Habakkuk 3: 17-19, Job 1

December 18, 2020

Week 3: Day 6 Joy

**Bible:**

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On *shigionoth*.

Lord, I have heard of your fame;

I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord.

Repeat them in our day,

in our time make them known;

in wrath remember mercy.

God came from Teman,

the Holy One from Mount Paran.

His glory covered the heavens

and his praise filled the earth.

His splendor was like the sunrise;

rays flashed from his hand,

where his power was hidden.

Plague went before him;

pestilence followed his steps.

He stood, and shook the earth;

he looked, and made the nations tremble.

The ancient mountains crumbled

and the age-old hills collapsed—

but he marches on forever.

I saw the tents of Cushan in distress,

the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

Were you angry with the rivers, Lord?

Was your wrath against the streams?

Did you rage against the sea

when you rode your horses

and your chariots to victory?

You uncovered your bow,

you called for many arrows.

You split the earth with rivers;

the mountains saw you and writhed.

Torrents of water swept by;

the deep roared

and lifted its waves on high.

Habakkuk 3:1-10

David knows what it is like to have everything and to have nothing. He knows what it's like to be safe and secure to feeling helpless and mortified. Through all of this, David writes that he will praise the Lord all his life. He knows that praise is due to God because God is someone that he can trust in, have faith in, and find hope in. David knows that God not only made everything, and everyone but that He also looks after each one of His creations.

David recognized that the all-powerful Creator of the universe, cares about him. David knew that God had been with him through all the ups and downs of life, so he could praise God and put his joy in the unchanging God. David knew that God had been faithful in the past and that he would be faithful in the future.

We can take a lesson from David. Throughout the highs and lows of life, when we praise God, we take our focus from our situations and put it on God. We secure our joy in an unchanging God. When our joy is in God, our circumstances don't determine our joy, our God does. When life gets troubling or when life is great, our joy and passion remain elevated because of God.

It's easy to choose joy when you are praising God. It's easy to be thankful when you are praising God. It's hard to choose joy when your joy is depending on people or belongings.

**Talk About it:**

How does praising God elevate your joy?

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When do you feel like praising God the least? Good times, or bad times?

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What is something you can praise God for today?

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**Further Reading:**

Psalms 47

*December 15, 2020*

**Week 3: Day 3 Joy**

**Bible:**

Then I looked up, and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand. I asked, "Where are you going?"

He answered me, "To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is."

While the angel who was speaking to me was leaving, another angel came to meet him and said to him: "Run, tell that young man, 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and animals in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the Lord, 'and I will be its glory within.' "Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north," declares the Lord, "for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven," declares the Lord.

"Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Daughter Babylon!" For this is what the Lord Almighty says: "After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye— I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me.

"Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the Lord. "Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling."

Zechariah 2

**Devotion:**

The imagery described in the passage for the Israelite people would have been awe-inspiring. When the angel was describing that Jerusalem would be a city without walls, this would have been completely counter-intuitive to what they would have experienced their whole life. The walls were built around Jerusalem to protect them from

to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Luke 1:57-80

**Devotion:**

Zechariah experienced a moment that filled him with pure joy. The birth of his son sparked the joy that spurred this song from Zechariah. In this moment, he was so filled with the Holy Spirit that he prophesied of what was yet to come because of what this child would do.

Zechariah recognized that this moment of joy was from God. The prediction from the angel had come true and his child was here and Zechariah was full of joy.

When was the last time you experienced a moment of pure joy? What happened? What did you do in that moment of Joy? What if when you were filled with joy, you praised God with everything that you had because you were thankful for what happened.

**Talk About it:**

What do you do when you experience a moment of joy?

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When you are filled with joy, how can you remember to praise God?

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**Father Reading:**

Malachi 3:1-5, Matthew 3:1-12

*December 17, 2020*

**Week 3: Day 5 Joy**

**Bible:**

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.  
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David  
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),  
salvation from our enemies  
and from the hand of all who hate us—  
to show mercy to our ancestors  
and to remember his holy covenant,  
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,  
and to enable us to serve him without fear  
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

their enemies and Jerusalem was known as being a city with walls throughout history. The walls around the city of Jerusalem were massive in size, measuring 2.5 miles around the city and averaging 8.2 feet wide and 39 feet high. This wall kept the people of Jerusalem safe, and here, the angel is telling Zechariah that the city will be without a wall.

The angel then tells Zechariah that God would be a “wall of fire” around Jerusalem. This would have evoked memories of when the Israelite people were running from Egypt. When they were faced with the Red sea, God came down in a pillar of fire to protect the Israelite nation from the Egyptians. Now this fire is described as surrounding the entire city, protecting the people of the city. This protection from God would bring hope for the Israelite people.

God doesn’t necessarily come down in a wall of fire around your home to make you feel protected, but God is with you everywhere you go. Knowing that God is with you and protecting you should bring you joy. He is actively with you, wanting to have a relationship with you and give you His joy and comfort.

**Talk About it:**

How did God protect the Israelites in the passage here?

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How has God protected you in the past?

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Does knowing God is with you, protecting you bring you joy? Why or why not?

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**Further Reading:**

Nehemiah 3, Nehemiah 6:15-19, Nehemiah 12:27-47

*December 16, 2020*

**Week 3: Day 4 Joy**

**Bible:**

Vindicate me, my God,  
and plead my cause  
against an unfaithful nation.  
Rescue me from those who are  
deceitful and wicked.  
You are God my stronghold.  
Why have you rejected me?  
Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?  
Send me your light and your faithful care,  
let them lead me;  
let them bring me to your holy mountain,  
to the place where you dwell.  
Then I will go to the altar of God,  
to God, my joy and my delight.  
I will praise you with the lyre,  
O God, my God.

Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

Psalm 43

Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.  
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your

righteousness.  
Open my lips, Lord,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.  
You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;  
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.  
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart  
you, God, will not despise.

May it please you to prosper Zion,  
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,  
in burnt offerings offered whole;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 51:10-19

**Devotion:**

The first passage (43) starts with David praising God, but then it moves to him asking why his soul is downcast. David recognizes that something is off inside of him and he is trying to get to the bottom of it. David here tells his own soul to praise God and to put his hope and joy in God.

Have you ever felt downcast and you didn't know why? If this happens to you, take a moment to be like David here, get to the bottom of it, and put your hope and joy in God. It could be as simple as a mental shift to reset your joy.

**Talk About it:**

When have you been down and not known why? What did your day look like?

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How can you remind yourself to put your joy in God on these days?

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**Further Reading:**

Psalms 27