



## EXPERIENCE THE GIFT OF JOY

### Opening Prayer

God, thank You that in this season of Advent, we can receive the gift of joy. Help us to anticipate, recognize, and choose joy as we give thanks, obey, and abide in You. Lead us into joy as You lead us into a deeper relationship with You. Give us the courage and strength to rejoice no matter what circumstances we face. And make our joy complete in You.

### Scripture Focus

- Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in the Lord always
- Luke 2:10–11 – Good news of great joy for all people
- Psalm 96:11–13 – All creation rejoices at His coming

Encourage participants to read each passage aloud together or take turns.

### Main Point 1: Anticipate Joy

**Read: Luke 2:10–11; 1 Peter 1:8**

The shepherds were terrified when they first heard the angels’ message, but that fear turned into great joy when they realized the Savior had come.

Joy begins with anticipation—expecting God to move and rejoicing in His promises even before they are fulfilled. As we anticipate joy for ourselves, we also ask God to strategically deploy us into the same joy that allows others to receive it. It’s called service. The Psalmist caught the Old Testament reality of joy when he wrote, “Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before His presence with (joyful) singing. Anticipate! Expect! Embrace! Exhibit! That’s the idea of Advent... Joy has come! Let earth receive her King!

This Advent, we wait with the same hope-filled anticipation, knowing Christ has come and will come again.

### Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to anticipate joy rather than chase happiness?
2. How can remembering God’s promises fill you with joy even in waiting?
3. What area of your life needs renewed expectation of joy this season?

### Reflective Prompt

Write one thing you’re waiting for with joy and trust this Advent.



## Main Point 2: Recognize Joy

**Read: Matthew 2:10–11; James 1:2–3**

The wise men recognized joy when they found Jesus, worshiped Him, and offered gifts.

True joy is often hidden within trials—it strengthens us and refines our faith. Non-believers struggle with this paradox: “How can you be joyful in the middle of so much pain?” They may ask. But you know something they don’t know. You know that Pastor James instructed his congregants back then... and believers today that pain is only part of the process. There is so much more to my story than what you can see. Hidden, deep within my story... You will find swaddling clothes and an empty tomb. Those clothes and that tomb give me inner strength... to keep going...even when the tires of my life blow out... at the same time. Our pain never impedes our progress. Why? Because our progress is in Him!

Recognizing joy requires spiritual vision to see God’s goodness even in struggle.

### Discussion Questions

1. What keeps us from recognizing joy in everyday moments?
2. How can trials actually deepen your sense of joy?
3. What habits help you notice God’s blessings around you?

### Reflective Prompt

Record three ways God has surprised you with joy recently.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Main Point 3: Choose Joy

**Read: John 15:10–11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fleeting emotion. It grows through obedience, gratitude, and abiding in Christ.

We cannot force joy, but we can choose to position ourselves where joy flourishes—by thanking, trusting, and following God daily. Joy is a part of our DNA. God placed it there for us to use. Maybe it lies dormant within, or perhaps we live each day recognizing the beauty of joy that can only be appreciated when we consider the Advent: God came near. Almost like Papa coming home after a long absence. He welcomes us with wide open arms. Hugs us so tightly and gently and affectionately; and then, as only a loving Father could do... He gives us the greatest gift any child could ever want... and His name is Jesus.

As we live in obedience and gratitude, Christ’s joy becomes complete in us.



### Discussion Questions

1. How can obedience to God's Word increase your joy?
2. What role does gratitude play in choosing joy?
3. How can you make time this week to abide in God's presence?

### Reflective Prompt

Take five minutes daily this week to write or pray a short list of gratitudes.

### Closing Thought

Joy is not the absence of trouble—it is the presence of Christ. As we choose gratitude, obedience, and abiding in Him, we experience the gift of joy that no circumstance can steal.

### Closing Benediction

But the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.' — Luke 2: 10-11