

Carols

Joy to the World

Joy in all circumstances is possible because Jesus has come (Psalm 98:1-9). We can experience joy, regardless of our situation, because the birth of Jesus and the salvation He provides is *good news*. Apart from Jesus, our sin makes us enemies of God and subject to His wrath and punishment (Romans 5:9-10). In our sinfulness we cannot fix, cleanse, or forgive ourselves. But because Jesus has come, and because of His death and resurrection, the impossible has become possible: He has *paid* for our sins and provided a way for us to become children of God who share in His reward and inheritance. Joy is the inner confidence, the deep security, that comes because we have been made right with God through Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

How would you define joy, and what makes joy different from happiness? Is it an emotion, a state of mind, an attitude, or something different, and why? How do you know if you have joy?

Go DEEPER

1. In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before Him. Knowing from the New Testament gospels (i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) that Jesus suffered physically, emotionally, and relationally from going to the cross, what was the joy set before Him? How was Jesus able to find joy in the midst of His pain?
2. According to Hebrews 10:30-31, why is it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God? Who are we, and what is our condition, apart from Jesus and His salvation (Romans 5:9-10; Romans 3:10-18)?
3. What do we receive when we trust our lives to Jesus?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. How would you rate your level of joy in this season? How challenging is it for you to find joy simply in the truth that *the Lord has come*, regardless of your circumstances?
2. What has to shift in your heart or perspective to see the coming of Jesus more fully as *good news of great joy*?

PRACTICE IT NOW

Take time as a group to intentionally pray and to verbally thank Jesus for coming to earth, and for His death, burial, and resurrection. Acknowledge to Him who and where you would be without Him. And ask God to do in you whatever is necessary to increase your joy, especially in this season and in the midst of your particular situation.

BLESS

Because the coming of Jesus is great news, every follower of Jesus has a story of where they were and where they are now because of Him. Who is someone you know that does not know Jesus but would be encouraged by hearing you tell your story?