

## GOD WITH US

*Pt 3: Joy*

### INTRO

- Do you have a “happy place” – somewhere you go or an activity you do to cheer you up when you are down?
- Who is the most consistently joyful person you know?
- Is the Christmas season something you look forward to? Why or why not.

Advent is the season leading up to Christmas. It's an ancient liturgy designed to help us reflect on Jesus' 1st coming and anticipate his 2nd coming (advent = coming). This Advent we are focusing on the hope, peace, joy, and love found in the extraordinary story of Jesus.

### READ

Luke 2:8-14, Romans 5:3-5

### REFLECT

The good news results in great joy for everyone. The “good news” or gospel has many dimensions and the deeper we go, the more joy we can experience. Prominent theologian John Stott says that joy is the number one mark of a Christian.

Joy → Anticipating His ultimate

When the angels declared that a Saviour has been born, it was not just a temporary salvation for the Jewish people, but a cosmic salvation that is destined to make right everything that was broken.

We're not going away to some place called heaven. Theologian N.T. Wright explains that the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God will be united with earth SAVING it and restoring it.

“God's plan is not to abandon this world, the world which he said was “very good.” Rather, he intends to remake it. And when he does he will

raise all his people to new bodily life to live in it. That is the promise of the Christian gospel.”  
— N. T. Wright

*Qu: What aspect of the future restoration are you looking forward to?*

Joy → Encountering His abundance

Christian joy is unique in that we can rejoice in our suffering! We don't rejoice because of our suffering, but God is with us even in the darkest moments of our lives.

Through personal encounters with the Holy Spirit, the tangible love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

*Qu: Can you talk about a time (hopefully recently) where you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit?*

Joy → Sensing His pleasure

The passage says that God is actually pleased with us! How can that be except if He is looking at the merits of Christ, rather than our up and down lives.

### RESPOND

- Is there something from this week's study and discussion that has made you think differently?
- Is there something in your life that you need to change?

### PRAY

- Pray for one another to grow in joy!