



STUDY GUIDE – December 6, 2020

Message Series: 'Tis the Season
Message Title: For Joy
Teaching Pastor: Brian Hughes

Warm-up/Icebreaker:

Share one vivid Christmas memory that brings you JOY at the thought.

Pray:

Dear Lord, we want to be fully present, free of distractions. Help us to internalize that the pathway to joy is not just in the pursuit of temporary things, but in the day in and day out steady devotion to You Lord. You have the power to help us to overcome our obstacles. Thank you for providing a way for us to connect with You and others, joyfully. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Get Started:

“Over and over again, the Bible defines joy, and it is not about what’s happening around us, but about the faithfulness within us. Even when the world is not right, even when our circumstances are challenging or bad or downright awful, joy cannot be taken from us because the pathway to joy is through our faithfulness to God, and nothing can stop that. Well, except me. I’m the only one who controls my faithfulness to Jesus. No one can make me faithful. No one can make me stop. Not even God. I alone have that power. And what that means is that I also control the joy factor in my life.” -Pastor Brian Hughes

Read Nehemiah 8:10.

- How does this scripture relate to Sunday's message?
- Describe a time when you have experienced joy in your own life by choosing faithfulness.

Watch and Discuss video:

Happiness is an emotion based on external circumstances and factors from the **outside pushing in**.
Joy is a resolve based on internal faithfulness and spiritual dedication from the **inside pushing out**.

Joy is ultimately found through faithfulness to God.

Three Steps to Maintain the Spirit of Joy:

- 1) Consider your blessings.
What are you most grateful for this year?
- 2) Consider the possibilities.
Share a challenge or struggle that you are experiencing and consider a possible positive outcome.
- 3) Renew your dedication through spiritual practice.
Share one or more spiritual disciplines that you practice well and one or more that you would benefit from starting.

No one can make you be faithful, not even God.

What is your reaction to the above statement from Pastor Brian? Share your thoughts.

Reflect and Commit:

"We go through the motions - sing Joy to the World and Hark the Herald Angels sing. But do we really believe that God did this marvelous thing that actually has power to infiltrate our family disasters, our national crisis, our global pandemic, and bring joy not just for a month, but for our lives? And to get it, are we willing to be faithful to God no matter what? Because one leads to the other, and that means that regardless of the circumstances of your life, you can have an increasing level of joy and that can start right now. You can literally sing joy. All the time. Joy that is inside, pushing out of you, shining the light of Jesus to everyone you encounter. If every one of us today could willingly accept responsibility for the joy in our lives and focus faithfully on Jesus, the power of God might be unleashed in a way we can't even imagine. In a way that we ALL need, right now, as we begin this Christmas season of 2020." -Pastor Brian Hughes

Consider Christmas lyrics. There is a tension in certain carols. This could be due to the juxtaposition of the joy that comes through the waiting and/or lamenting sometimes present in the process of faithfulness that is embedded in them. Read two carol excerpts below:

God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Savior
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray:
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

O Holy Night!
The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Till he appear'd and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

- What contrasting themes are present in these carols? Is this a new observation for you? If time allows, can you think of any other Christmas songs where this is the case?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Pray:

Dear Lord, our diverse lives, unique journeys, and varied traditions intersect perhaps especially during this season. Help us move toward common goals of peace, hope and joy. We are grateful to have received the promise of a Savior. You are faithful and we desire to be as well. And in our faithfulness may we find joy, everlasting joy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.