



STUDY GUIDE: December 7, 2025

Message Series: The Stories are True
Message Title: Faithfulness to Joy
Teaching Pastor: Brian Hughes

Warm-up/Icebreaker: (10 min.)

Share a favorite Christmas memory.

Pray:

Lord God, as we gather today, break through the noise, and the blur of the season and draw us back to what is true. Open our hearts to Your Word and open our eyes to Your faithfulness. Restore in us the joy that cannot be manufactured but is born of knowing You—our rescuer, our Redeemer, our Emmanuel. Let Your Spirit guide our conversation and awaken our joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Get Started: (30 min.)

- When you think about Christmas, what's one thing that still feels magical or meaningful to you—and what's one thing that feels manufactured?

Read Luke 2:10–11.

- Why do you think the angel emphasizes *great joy* as the starting point of Christmas?
- How does knowing “the story is true” change the way you hear these words?

Read Luke 1:5–7.

- What stands out to you about their faithfulness despite disappointment?
- How do you typically respond when your prayers seem unanswered for a long time?

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 then 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 my 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 be 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

- How might faithfulness—not circumstances—shape your capacity for joy?

Reflect and Commit: (40 min.)

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, miraculous, sacrificial thing that actually has power to infiltrate our family disasters, our national crises, our political divisions, our health struggles, our family meltdowns our financial woes and whatever else we'd put in the not-so-great circumstance list - do we really believe that what God did with the Advent of Christmas can 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. -Pastor Brian Hughes

- Faithfulness births joy. What is one step of faithfulness you could take this week that doesn't depend on your circumstances improving?"

Read Luke 1:13–17.

- What does this passage reveal about God's timing and long-term faithfulness?
- How does the birth of John show the connection between God's purposes and personal joy?

God was always faithful, is always faithful. Our faithfulness in spite of our circumstances unlocks joy that lasts beyond a season every year. It 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. -Pastor Brian Hughes

Read Nehemiah 8:10.

- How have you experienced the tension of grief and joy co-existing?
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- What would it look like for the “joy of the Lord” to strengthen you right now?

Rise above your current circumstances. Because God is faithful - because THIS story IS true - that God so loved the world that He sent His only son into it. That the Emmanuel who was God with us then is still the God with us now. That the one with the power over life and death has overcome the latter to grant us the former. That we can claim God's rescue of our own mess - and the mess of our world and the mess of our circumstance. And in spite of it all, if we're faithful, we can have Joy. -Pastor Brian Hughes

Gather prayer requests. (5-10 min.)

Pray:

Father, thank You for the truth of the story that never stops rescuing us. Make us a people marked by faithfulness so that true joy can rise from within us, no matter our circumstances. As we leave this place, help us walk in the strength of Your joy and shine the light of Jesus to every person we encounter. Here comes heaven—and we receive it with grateful hearts. It's in the name of Jesus that we pray, Amen.