
Celebrating Joy

Christmas is really the perfect opportunity for us to engage our hearts in a true celebration of Christmas joy.

Isaiah saw religious celebrations divorced from true worship and spoke of how distasteful this was to God (Isaiah 1:13-14). If we are not intentional about truly engaging in the worship of God this Christmas, we could easily become caught up in a pointless and mindless holiday and lose sight of the meaning of Christmas.

However, Christmas is about declaring, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come." God's desire is that His people would be full of joy.

Throughout the Christmas story the message of the birth of Jesus was met with great joy! (Luke 1:14; 44; 47; Luke 2:10)

The ultimate story of God's love is still true. The glory is still there to be witnessed. How do we make sure that this Christmas we celebrate with great joy at the news of our Saviour? How will we experience the joy of Christmas?

What is Joy?

Unfortunately, many people leave Christ out of Christmas. Instead of looking to Jesus, people look for joy anywhere and everywhere else.

The Bible says a lot about joy. The kind of joy the Bible talks about goes much deeper than mere happiness.

Happiness deals with what is happening and depends on circumstance. Genuine joy, on the other hand is an inner sense of well-being that has nothing to do with circumstance. Our search for joy begins with Jesus.

There are four keys to experiencing the joy of celebrating Christmas – in reconciliation, in reconnecting, in rejoicing and in being generous.

The Joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of reconciliation

Christmas should focus our hearts on the reconciling work of Christ. Paul couches the coming of Christ in terms of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Any celebration of Christ should reflect the core purpose of His coming – to reconcile, to reconnect, the world to Himself through the work of Jesus.

Jesus does for us what no other has been able to do: He removes our guilt and reconciles us to God. He raises us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. He implants within us new hopes, new aims, new enthusiasm. When Christ comes into a life, He revolutionises it so that the person becomes a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is our reason to celebrate with great joy.

Christmas affords a great reminder that the people we have excluded from spending time with us, could have a place with us around the Christmas tree if we were only willing to be more like the One we celebrate.

The Joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of reconnection

Good news must be shared. Christmas should draw us together to tell the world's greatest story once again and share true fellowship.

The good news is reason to gather those near and far to celebrate (Luke 15:8-10).

The Christmas celebration should put all grievances "off limits" if Christ will truly be honoured. A proper celebration and shared appreciation of what Jesus has done and why He came can dissolve disputes and heal broken hearts if we decide to put it into action.

Joy in the season is found in reconnecting with those we love, and even with those we have lost touch with along the way.

The Joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of rejoicing

We would do well to join the angelic chorus (Luke 2:13-14).

Joy is experienced when, as a conscious decision, despite our circumstances, we choose to worship Christ and lift our praise (Luke 2:20; Matthew 2:10).

In Psalm 16:11 it tells us that “In His presence there is fullness of joy.” When we worship the King, we come into His presence, where there is joy! (Psalm 16:11)

The joy of celebrating Christmas is found when we choose to rejoice, when we engage in praising God.

The Joy of Christmas is to be found in a spirit of generosity

God the Father gave His one and only son for you and me (John 3:16). What incredible generosity!

We need to reaffirm the sacred foundation that supports the gift-giving tradition of the Christmas season.

Unless we invest into Christmas with its glorious message and meaning, we risk the holidays will pass like a pagan festival. We have the opportunity to experience joy this Christmas as we truly celebrate Christ and find ourselves worshipping Him.

You are the reason Jesus came. No one has more cause to celebrate and experience His joy than you do.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we avoid the rush of the world around us to come and celebrate with joy the season ahead?
2. What is the difference between happiness and joy? What would biblical joy look like in your family this Christmas?
3. The greatest reconciliation was made between God and us when He sent His Son Jesus. What reconciliation needs to happen in your relationships for you to experience Christmas joy?
4. How can you reconnect with those who have drifted away from you?
5. What can you do to enter true worship of Christ this Christmas?
6. What does generosity look like for you this Christmas? How is it that you can reflect the generous heart of God who gave His son to us – God with us, Immanuel.