



READ

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. (Isaiah 65:18 NIV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25 NIV)

UNDERSTAND

One of the best things about the Christmas season is the way anticipation builds for the big day. From the moment Thanksgiving ends, the countdown to Christmas officially begins. And the closer and closer it gets to the actual day, the more and more we anticipate with excitement what Christmas morning will actually bring. In other words, our expectations for joy are high. And as the anticipation builds, so does the joy we look forward to feeling.

The people of God looked forward to that first Christmas with a similar anticipation, but what they were anticipating was much greater than any present we might be hoping to find awaiting us this year. They'd long been waiting for a Savior to come, and as news spread that He might have finally arrived, their anticipation grew to new heights. And when they knew that Jesus, the One whose arrival they'd anticipated for hundreds of years, was born that Christmas morning, their joy was endless.

While we can't imagine what it must have felt like for the people back then to know that the King they'd been promised had finally come, we can share in their joy this Advent season. For just as God filled their hearts with His joy, He can fill ours with the same. And His joy—a deep, unmatched, life-changing joy—is better than anything else we might be anticipating this Christmas season.

As Advent moves on, ask God to fill your hearts with joy. Focus your anticipation on the celebration of His birth. And, ask Him to make your life a living testament of His joy this Christmas.

RESPOND

Questions for Discussion:

What's one thing you're anticipating with excitement this holiday season?

What do you think real joy feels like? How is it different than happiness?

What's one way you can find the joy of Christ this Christmas? How can you help others experience that same joy?

PRAYER

Lord, you are the One we've all waited for, and we're so grateful that you came to Earth for us all those years ago. We're so grateful for the way you saved us and the joy you made possible for us. Help us to remember that what we have to be most excited about this holiday season is You. Give us your joy and help us to share it with others.

FAMILY TIME

The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear, right? Well, we think so!

Make a point to interject some joy into your family's holiday season by doing something fun and unexpected. One evening this week, tell your family to put on their best Christmas pajamas. Then, load everyone up in the car and take them to a local coffee shop for some hot chocolate. But in order to get their hot chocolate, your family has to sing a Christmas carol to the barista behind the counter!

Take your hot chocolates to go, and hit the road together to explore some of the best Christmas lights your neighborhood or town has to offer. Blast the Christmas music as you go, and sing along to some of your favorite holiday tunes together as a family.

It may sound silly, but we promise it will create some fun, joy-filled memories for your family this holiday season.