

Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

Week 50: November December 11-17, 2022

Celebrate Advent (pt. 3: Joy)

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Come Join Us as We
CELEBRATE GOD!



**“They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.”**

Dr. Patrick Wilson

(Psalm 145:7)

2022

Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Advent (pt. 3: Joy). Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- How would you differentiate "joy" from "happiness?"
- What brings you joy?
- How might you put Jesus first and others before yourself?
- What comparisons do you see with Jesus' analogy of joy coming through pain like giving birth to a child?
- How have you experienced joy through serving others in need?
- What will you do to experience increased joy this Christmas?

Craft: Joy Ornaments

1. Cut out the letters J—O—Y in the board of your choice.
2. Place a dot of hot glue on the board at attach one end of the yarn.
3. Wrap the yarn around the letters many times covering the entire board multiple times to make a three-dimensional letter. Cut the end of the yarn and glue the tip in place.
4. Do the same for the other letters.
5. Make a loop of yarn for each letter. Put a dot of glue in the top center of each letter and attach the two ends of the loop to make a hook.
6. Place the ornaments on your tree and remember to have "J—O—Y" this Christmas!

Needed Supplies:

- Cardboard, Foam Board, or Styrofoam
- Scissors/Box Cutter
- Yarn
- Glue Gun and Glue

Food to Prepare

Maybe we are all somewhat like the Cookie Monster on Sesame Street—we see cookies, get wide-eyed, and go, “Om Nom Nom Nom!” Perhaps there is no better time for cookies than Christmas. Here are the most beloved Christmas cookie recipes on allrecipes.com:

1. Best Big, Fat Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookie
2. The Best Rolled Sugar Cookies
3. Easy Sugar Cookies
4. Mrs. Sigg’s Snickerdoodles
5. Big Soft Ginger Cookies
6. Beth’s Spicy Oatmeal Raisin Cookies
7. Linzer Tarts
8. Raspberry and Almond Shortbread Thumbprints
9. Chocolate Crinkles
10. Cranberry Pistachio Biscotti
11. Gingerbread Cookies
12. Coconut Macaroons
13. Russian Tea Cakes
14. Cranberry Orange Cookies
15. Shortbread Cookies
16. Buckeyes
17. Peppermint Meringues
18. Peanut Blossoms
19. Chocolate Rum Balls
20. Rugelach

Try your hand at one of these or dust off Grandma’s old recipe. Get a little flour on you, waft the sweet aroma, and enjoy some family baking time together. Memories are oftentimes made in the kitchen.

Ornament Story Telling

Sit around the Christmas tree one evening. Take turns going to the tree and selecting an ornament. The person who selects the ornament is to tell a story about that ornament. It could be how the ornament was received, something funny that happened on Christmas that year, or simply why he/she likes the ornament.

You might even softly play some Christmas music while you enjoy the conversation around the Christmas tree.

Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. According to TimeOut, these are some of the best Christmas animated movies. If you'd rather, just pick another great movie to watch together. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the couch, and enjoy the show!

Christmas Animated Movies:

- Klaus
- A Charlie Brown Christmas
- The Nightmare Before Christmas
- Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer
- Arthur Christmas
- Frosty the Snowman
- The Elf on the Shelf Presents: An Elf's Story
- Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas
- Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer
- The Polar Express

Game: Oven Mitten Unwrap

Get a gift and wrap it many, many times with various materials (i.e., bubble wrap, newspaper, paper sack, wrapping paper). Sit in a circle. Place the wrapped gift in the middle of the circle with a set of oven mitts. Select someone to go first. They are to put on the mitts.

The person to their left is handed a cup with two dice. On "go" the player with the mitts tries to unwrap the gift as much as possible, while the person with the dice tries to roll a double (two dice with the same number).

Once doubles is rolled, the player passes the cup and dice to the next player in the circle and takes over the oven mitts and continues to work on unwrapping the gift. Play continues around the circle.

The player who unwraps the final layer of wrapping keeps the present.

Bible Study

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

As Paul closes this letter to the believers in Thessalonica, he concludes with a number of pithy, overarching statements that are easier said than done. In verse 16, he says that we are to rejoice all the time. In verse 17, he speaks of praying perpetually. In verse 18, he calls us to be thankful, no matter what!

The point here is not to get caught up in the absolutes and to beat ourselves up when we do not feel/act this way. Rather, the point is that our lives should be self-controlled inwardly and not self-determined externally. With God, we are not exempt from hardships, troubles or difficulties. We are not told to rejoice or be thankful for the pain, sorrow, and anguish that comes our way. Rather, we are to look for the good in every situation, while dealing with the evil. This certainly necessitates divine aid, but God’s will is for us to live in Christ Jesus to such an extent that we find the silver lining in our circumstances.

Consider what you are going through right now. Can you find something to be joyous about? Focus on that. Can you find something to be thankful for? Focus on that? Can you find something to pray and turn over to God? Do that. Rest in the providential care and provision of God for you this Christmas season. As you do, may the joy of the Lord find you and well up inside of you as you celebrate the coming of Jesus into your troubled world.

Prayer Time

Take time this week to pray for yourself and for others that you know who are facing pain this Christmastide. Be mindful of those who have lost loved ones this year and are reliving that sorrow and loneliness. Consider those who are recently divorced or estranged from family and friends. Remember those who are separated by distance or health. Here is a prayer from Catholic Spirit to get you started:

“God above, do good and avoid evil is so easy to say, yet so hard to put into practice. Be with us in each and every moment of each and every day so that we remain blameless and worthy of your coming.

“Help us, Lord, not to dampen the joy of others. Remind us this week to rejoice always and to pray without ceasing.”



Help Provide Warmth for Winter

As winter begins, it is easy for us to overlook those who struggle to stay warm. There are many ways that you can help. You can financially donate to a shelter. You can purchase hand warmers for those on the streets. You can buy blankets or make your own. Here is an easy (no sewing required) blanket that the kids can help you make for someone:

https://www.amazon.com/ALEX-Toys-Craft-Quilt-Chevron/dp/B01CEY3NXA/ref=as_li_ss_tl?dchild=1&keywords=fleece+blankets+kit&qid=1602457295&sr=8-2&linkCode=sl1&tag=hssf-20&linkId=0e03ec6295920aa0c6318d3ca11f9761&language=en_US

Take the blanket to a nursing home, assisted living center, homeless shelter, hospital, or police/fire station for distribution to others in need.

Pajama Program

The Pajama Program is a nation-wide program that provides children facing adversity with the materials, information, and support they need to have Good Nights for Good Days. The programs and services deliver Bedtime Basics, Sleep Health Education, and Caring Connections—three key components that support a comforting bedtime routine and healthy sleep. By investing in bedtime, they invest in children's futures.

In many communities around the United States, the Pajama Program helps gather pjs, books, etc., for kids who are displaced from their homes, often-times in emergency situations when the kids are unsafe. These rescue efforts rarely afford emergency personnel time to gather belongings. By providing comfortable sleepwear, you help kids thrive in their new environment.

To learn more or to find a location near you, go to:

<https://pajamaprogram.org/>



Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs are about the joy of Christmas. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

Joy of Christmas Songs:

- Angels We Have Heard on High
- God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
- Joy to the World
- Glory to You in the Highest
- Christmas Day
- Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- A Christmas Alleluia
- It's Christmas
- Where's the Line to See Jesus
- For All the World

Challenge:

Remove Joy Thieves

We all have situations that try our patience and tend to rob us of the joy in our lives. While we rarely can remove these challenges, we can revamp how we handle them. Take time this week, and make a list of the scenarios and circumstances that regularly steal your joy. Consider what makes them so powerful in your life. Acknowledge your personal weaknesses. Evaluate what you have control over and what you do not. Create a list of better ways to handle these situations so they have a limited effect on you and your emotional wellness. Pray about them. Turn the over to God. Try to find your joy this Christmas season.

"The joy in life is to be used for a purpose. I want to be used up when I die."
—George Bernard Shaw