

For Further Study

Week of 12/2/12

1. In general, does the Christmas season tend to bring you more joy or more frustration? Which parts of Christmas are the most stressful for you? Which parts give you joy?
2. Is it wrong for Christians to pursue happiness in the stuff of everyday life? Why or why not? At what point does finding joy in creation become a problem?
3. Pastor Brian suggested that addictions can be viewed as an extreme form of joy-seeking gone bad? Do you agree or disagree?
4. Read Psalm 32:11 and Psalm 37:4. In what ways does religious practice make it anywhere from difficult to impossible to find joy in God?
5. Read Psalm 16:11. What is God's relationship to joy? Why is joy an integral part of God's nature? Why doesn't our culture think of joy when it thinks of God?
6. Think back to our study of the Prodigal God (Luke 15). What were the consequences of the sons looking for joy in the father's gifts but not in the father himself? What was the joy-filled invitation offered at the end of the story? Why does it matter?
7. Read Luke 2:10-11. In the shepherds' day, the Jews were waiting for an "anointed one" ("Christ" in the Greek), to liberate them from their Roman oppressors. How, then, were the angel's words a source of joy to the shepherds? How did Jesus fulfill the role of Savior in a bigger way?
8. Why is it hard to remember that we are in need of salvation? How can remembering the cross be a way to renew our joy in God?
9. Read Hebrews 12:2, how can remembering that our ultimate experience of joy lies in Heaven, help our attitude in the midst of immediate suffering?
10. Pastor Craig Groechel wrote, "Joy is not necessarily the absence of suffering but the presence of God." How does suffering make it hard to remember God is present? What practices have you found helpful to reconnect to God during suffering?
11. Read James 1:2. How do you "count it all joy" when facing trials without slipping into denial about your circumstances?
12. Read Philippians 4:4-7. What makes you anxious about the Christmas season? How can you apply this verse to address those concerns?
13. Read John 16:24. What's the relationship between being prayerful and joyful? What are some possible misinterpretations of this verse?
14. Read Psalm 42:5. What choices do we need to make in order to maintain a joyful attitude?
15. What does it mean to not just accept Jesus as our Savior, but our treasure as well?