

## **Week 3 of Advent: Joy**

**Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 // Psalm 126 // 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 // John 1:6-8, 19-28**

A cheeky grin, a twinkle in the eye, a roaring belly laugh, suppressed giggles at the back of class, the freedom of running around on a sunny beach, the look on someones face as they open a much wanted present. When was the last time you felt joy? I believe that joy is such a powerful emotion. It can break down barriers, help people connect, it can bring lightness to a hard and heavy conversation. Joy can give you a new perspective, it can give you energy to get back up again. Read the verses 1-4 from Isaiah 61 and see how they describe what joy is. Is it what you expected?

But what do you do when you look around and don't seem to see much joy? How do we have joy when there are people suffering, when restrictions are hard, when family or friends are far away and out of reach? Perhaps with God we can find a deep sense of joy, not one that is based on our circumstances, but one that recognises we have a future hope all because of Jesus. A joy that knows that this pain will not last forever. Read the passage from 1 Thessalonians, how does this help us practically to find God's joy? As we draw ever closer to Christmas, is our anticipation filled with joy?

### **General Questions:**

What last caused you to experience joy? What is joy? What do you think it means to have a deep joy? How might God's joy be different to other types of joy? What part(s) of the gospel might cause us joy? How do we receive God's joy? In what areas/places in your life do you need God's joy?

### **3-5 yrs**

Have some fun playing a game where you make different faces, and people have to guess what face you are making. See who can make the most silly face. Who can make the funniest face? Chat about what joy is, what makes you laugh, and think about what reasons God gave us to be happy and joyful. Pray for joy in your week, pray for those that need joy.

### **6-11 yrs**

Have a competition about who make up the best joke. Try them out on different people and see if you can make them laugh. Once you've had some fun, grab some paper and pens and draw something that makes you joyful. As you're drawing, talk about why joy is important. What it means to have joy in God, and where you might need more joy. Pray together for more joy, and for those who need joy in their lives/in situations.

### **OR**

Get a big jar from the recycling. You can decorate the jar if you like, stick things on, paint, glass pen, do a drawing on paper and stick it to the outside. Then get lots of strips of paper and think about things that bring you joy, things that you could do that might bring others joy, and situations/people that need prayer for joy. Write one thing per slip of paper, fold it up and put it in the jar. Over the next week (or longer), take 1-3 things out of the jar each day and do something for yourself, for someone else or pray for something. As you are writing things to go in the jar, talk about why joy is important in life. Ask what it feels like to not have any joy. Think about why and how we might find joy in God.

### **12+**

Have some fun and get yourself into two teams. Find a random word generator online, or write down lots of words on slips of paper and put them in a hat. Each team gets a word, they have to form that word using only yourselves (plus props if there aren't enough of you), and the other team has to guess the word. Using your phone, and some free software, like iMovie, create a documentary about joy. Or, be a journalist and write a news article about joy. Talk to people about what joy is, what it means, whether it's important and why. Talk about what it means to have joy in God, and what it means to have joy even when things are hard. Pray for yourselves and others where joy is much needed.