



## CHRISTMAS BEHIND THE CURTAIN: It Looks Like Joy, But I'm Not Okay

Pastor Derek Sanford

December 3, 2023

### Life Group Discussion

**Encouragement:** What is one thing that brings you joy at Christmas time? What is one thing that tends to steal your joy at Christmas time?

**Scripture:** Read [Isaiah 9:1-7](#) and [John 8: 31-36](#).

-Derek mentioned 4 runaway emotions around Christmas: insecurity, guilt, sadness, and anger. Which of these emotions are you currently struggling with?

-Biblical joy is a feeling of good pleasure and happiness that is dependent on who Jesus is rather than who we are or what is happening around us. How is this different from your understanding of joy?

-How does the birth of Jesus bring joy, according to Isaiah?

-How does John 8:31-36 help us address our runaway emotions and experience joy?

-Which of these titles of Jesus do you need to press into in this season: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, or Prince of Peace? Why?

### Next Steps:

How and when you will practice solitude this week? Use Pastor Derek's tool for practicing solitude:

- Subtraction before addition. Don't just add this time on; replace something with it.
- Find a quiet place – as distraction-free as possible. Get rid of your phone.
- Do 10 deep cleansing breaths – with each inhale, pray silently, "Jesus, fill me with your joy." Your mind might run wild, but spend the first few moments resting in God's love.
- Read 2 verses from [Isaiah 9:1-7](#) multiple times. Read until certain words or phrases feel like they're being 'highlighted' for you. Ask God what he might be saying to you.
- Pray those impressions back to God.

**Christmas At the Warner** is Dec 22 & 23 (<https://christmasatthewarner.com/>). Who will you invite?

### Prayer:

-For each member to practice solitude and find true joy in this season.

-For family and neighbors (pray for 8)- In what practical ways can we be people of joy and peace in our neighborhoods and families?



## CHRISTMAS BEHIND THE CURTAIN: It Looks Impressive, But I'm In Over My Head

Pastor Derek Sanford

December 10, 2023

### Life Group Discussion

**Encouragement:** Share with others where you've seen and experienced the light of Jesus this week.

**Scripture:** Read aloud Zechariah's and Elizabeth's story from [Luke 1:5-24](#) and [1 Peter 1:3-9](#).

We learned in Pastor Derek's sermon that to followers of Jesus, hope is the confident expectation that God will fulfill His promise. From the reading in Luke, we learned about four lessons about hope:

- 1-The object of your hope will determine how you live your life;
- 2- The bigger the problem, the greater the opportunity for hope;
- 3- Just because God is silent doesn't mean He's inactive;
- 4- A hope in circumstances is flimsy, a hope in Jesus is secure.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you feel hopeful this advent season?
2. How did Zechariah and Elizabeth's story help you understand hope in a new way?
3. Which of the 4 lessons from the story in Luke resonates with you the most?
4. How can you live each day with the living hope that we read about in 1 Peter?

### Prayer:

-For each member to practice solitude and find true joy and hope in this season.

-For family and neighbors (pray for 8)- In what practical ways can we be people of joy and hope in our neighborhoods and families?

### Next Steps:

How and when you will practice solitude this week? Use Pastor Derek's tool for practicing solitude:

- Subtraction before addition. Don't just add this time on; replace something with it.
- Find a quiet place – as distraction-free as possible. Get rid of your phone.
- Do 10 deep cleansing breaths – with each inhale, pray silently, "Jesus, fill me with your hope." Your mind might run wild, but spend the first few moments resting in God's love.
- Read [1 Peter 1:3-9](#) multiple times. Read until certain words or phrases feel like they're being 'highlighted' for you. Ask God what he might be saying to you.
- Pray those impressions back to God.

**Christmas At the Warner** is Dec 22 & 23 (<https://christmasatthewarner.com/>). Who have you invited?



## CHRISTMAS BEHIND THE CURTAIN: It Looks Like Family, But We're Fractured

Pastor Derek Sanford

December 17, 2023

### Life Group Discussion

**Encouragement:** Where have you seen chaos this month? When have you experienced peace?

**Scripture:** [Colossians 3:12-17](#);

-Pastor Derek described these traits as “the currency of Christmas”: compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness. Which of these are easier/harder for you?

-How do chaos, overscheduling, disappointment, sorrow, etc., steal your joy, hope, and peace?

-Read these prophecies and the words of Jesus out loud. Pause to reflect or pray or allow the group to process: [Isaiah 9:2-7](#); [Isaiah 40:27-31](#); [Isaiah 43:1-7](#); [John 6:35](#); [John 8:12](#); [John 10:7-10](#); [John 10:14-18](#); [John 11:25-26](#); [John 14:1-6](#); [John 14:27](#)

-How do these scriptures stir up hope, joy, and peace in your heart? What are some practical ways to live each day in hope, joy, and peace rather than chaos and strife?

### Prayer:

-For each member to practice solitude and find true joy in this season.

-For family and neighbors (pray for 8)- In what practical ways can we be people of joy, hope, and peace in our neighborhoods and families?

### Next Steps:

How and when you will practice solitude this week? Use Pastor Derek's tool for practicing solitude:

- Subtraction before addition. Don't just add this time on; replace something with it.
- Find a quiet place – as distraction-free as possible. Get rid of your phone.
- Do 10 deep cleansing breaths – with each inhale, pray silently, “Jesus, fill me with your peace.” Your mind might run wild, but spend the first few moments resting in God's love.
- Read [Colossians 3:12-17](#) or [John 14:27](#) multiple times. Read until certain words or phrases feel like they're being 'highlighted' for you. Ask God what he might be saying to you.
- Pray those impressions back to God.

**Christmas At the Warner** is Dec 22 & 23 (<https://christmasatthewarner.com/>). Who have you invited?