



JOY
BECAUSE HE
CAME

5 Day Devotional Series Based On Christmas Hymns



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introduction

Welcome to the 5 day “Joy Because He Came” devotional series! I am HONORED that you have chosen to download this series and am praying, right now, that it will be a blessing to you!

This series was planted in my heart a few years ago. My family was visiting a church for their Christmas play. After it was over, we all stood and began singing Christmas hymns. These were the same hymns I had sung my entire life, but the people in this church weren't just singing! They were WORSHIPING. They sang as loud as they could with their hands raised high in worship to God. They were truly adoring Him. It struck me that I had never really thought of them as worship songs! They were songs that we sang at Christmas time. That was all. That day changed the way I viewed these familiar hymns. God opened my eyes to the fact that celebrating the birth of Jesus was a time of worship. It was the biggest reason we have for worshiping Him — the One who sent His only Son to pay the penalty for our sins.

This truth is also the reason we can have JOY amidst all of the chaos that we see going on around us in our world, our country, our town, and in our own lives. Life can be brutal! And that doesn't change just because the world is celebrating Christmas. But we have a reason to worship and experience JOY, even during the hardest of times.

My prayer is that, as you read through this Joy Because He Came series, you will be moved to worship God during this season and every season. And that you will experience JOY in every circumstance with the knowledge that He came!

O Come Let Us Adore Him -- together!

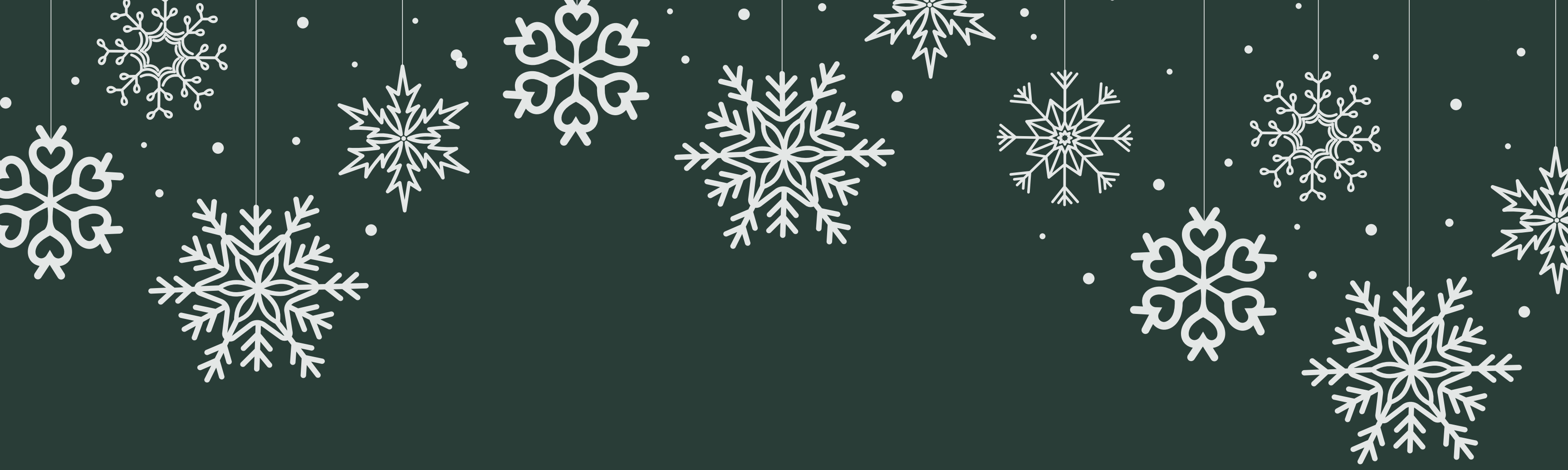
DAY 1

O Holy Night

Christmas time can be a hard time of year. I love buying gifts and spending time with the people I love, but often find myself struggling during the Christmas season. There is the absence of the three of our four parents who have passed away, my 86-year-old mom who isn't able to travel very much anymore, children who are married and have plans elsewhere, the dear friend who is facing Christmas without her husband of 50 years, my brother-in-law who was just diagnosed with cancer, and the young mom friend whose husband passed suddenly. The sadness of these circumstances is magnified during this season, one in which we put so much effort into establishing and maintaining familiar routines.

“If you are suffering this Christmas, you have far more in common with Jesus than the comfortable and contented.” ~Vaneetha Rendall Risner

This year the realities of life are causing me to move into the holiday season thoughtfully and soberly. The idealistic picture of Christmas that used to hang in the back of my mind has blown away with the winds of change. Somewhere along the way I became tired of fighting to make it something it can never really be.



When my children were young, I focused on three things during the holidays: Making sure they knew that Christmas is about the birth of Christ, establishing family traditions, and making memories. I often tried to open my little one's eyes to truths that only God can cause them to see and make real in their hearts. Time has taught me that, although we may have some fun Christmas memories, what truly made a lasting impact was the authentic living that was done within the walls of our home along with the unseen, one-day-at-a-time work that God was doing.

There is a type of knowing that comes with years of living as each year builds on the last. God slowly opened our eyes to truth and allowed us to experience the joy and pain of change. Since Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ, then it's okay that all the hype during the holidays becomes somewhat meaningless. It's okay to enter quietly and feel the sadness of the realities and the changes that have taken place. The losses, deaths, sickness, and suffering that are present are merely reminders of why we so desperately need a Savior and why Jesus was born in the first place.



The Thrill of hope. The weary world rejoices!

The birth of Jesus is a celebration because it is the reason we can experience JOY even when we are weary! I am moving into this Christmas season feeling weary and I am spending a lot of time on my knees fighting the battle in my heart and mind. I have been crying out to Him with a heavy heart fighting to see things from His perspective. I am reminded of this: *Christ was born for one purpose: To die for the sins of people who rebelled because they thought God and his plan wasn't enough. They wanted more.*

Something to think about:

The Christmas season can be a struggle because the stark realities of life don't take a holiday break! But we can tune in to the beautiful Christmas hymns we sing every year and be reminded that we can have JOY! There are days I do have to fight to find joy in the moment, but in the end it is there. I just need to focus on the reason He came. And wearily rejoice that He was born.



Something to pray:

Father, it was truly a glorious night when your Son was born. Even the angels rejoiced! The entire world was given a King, and You granted us eternal salvation when Your Son died for our sins. Help me to be reminded that I can have true, Biblical Joy in spite of my circumstances if I choose to focus on the truths found in this hymn!

“A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn...”

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (Romans 8:19–21)

O Holy night!

The stars are brightly shining.

It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appears and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees; O hear the Angels voices !
O night divine, O night when Christ was born

O night, O Holy night, O night divine!

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger

In all our trials born to be our friend

He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger

Behold your King; before Him lowly bend

Behold your King; before Him lowly bend

Truly He taught us to love one another;

His law is love and His Gospel is Peace

Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother

And in His name, all oppression shall cease

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we

Let all within us Praise His Holy name

Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!

His power and glory evermore proclaim

His power and glory evermore proclaim

DAY 2

O Come All Ye Faithful

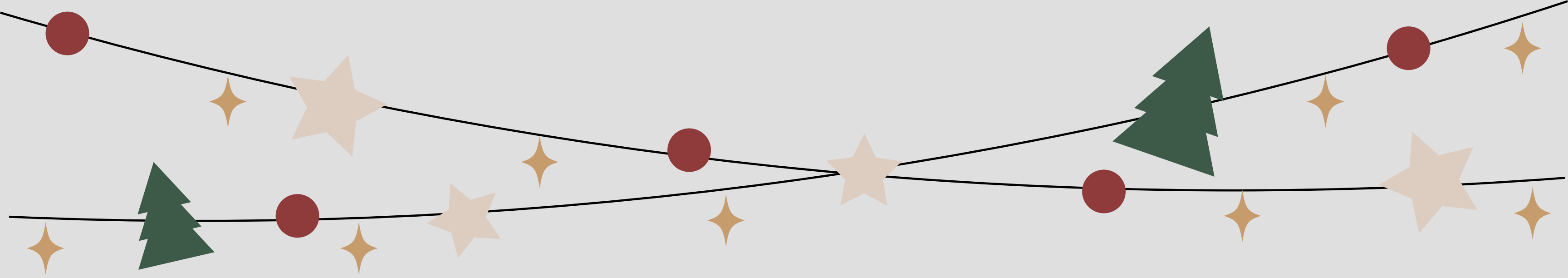
How can you have joy when life is hard? How can you have joy when so many people are suffering? It is possible if you learn what it means to have biblical joy. Over the past several years, as a result of some difficult circumstances, God has had me on a journey of coming to the end of the resources I tend to cling to. He has been showing me that I often find more joy in my purpose, and in the things that He has provided, than in Him, who is the provider of these good things. He has been teaching me what it means to find joy in spite of my circumstances.

James 1: 2-4 says: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

The word "Testing" refers to a positive test intended to make one's faith "genuine." The result of the test is steadfastness, which is a life of faithful endurance amid troubles and afflictions.

Genuine faith! Endurance! Perseverance! These are the things that are being produced in us during difficult times!





It's easy to think that a life without some form of difficulty is the norm, but the Bible tells us the opposite!

John 16:33 tells us: *"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

What are the things that he told them so that they might have peace? In the chapter before (John 15) the reader is told to abide. *"If you abide in me I will abide in you...apart from me you can do nothing."* We must abide.

Draw near. Listen to Him. Rest in Him. If we abide, we will have peace. He doesn't say *"if you abide, you won't suffer!"* He says *"you will have peace."*

We find rest when we abide in Christ and His promises, His word, and His grace. Choosing to abide during difficult times helps to wean us from the things that we cling to. God wants to wean us from the things that we look to that bring us joy, and for us to find our joy in Him. The losses and suffering that we face are God's way of helping us to find our joy in Him alone.

In the same way, the Psalmist states in Psalm 131:1-3, *"My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty. I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore."*

We must cooperate with God's ability to bring peace. We must do our part. We must choose to quiet and calm our soul and focus on God.



So how can I have joy this Christmas season...

"..put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore."

Joy can be present when I calm and quiet my soul and when I put my hope in the Lord.

Something to think about:

Christmas is a time for the faithful to gather around the manger and allow our hearts to fill, and burst, with joy when we remember why Christ came. The familiar Christmas Hymn, *"O Come, All Ye Faithful,"* draws us into the Christmas story found in Luke 2:8-16. It invites all of God's faithful to come. Abide in Christ, the One who is *"Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing."* Worship Him, the Christ who came to live on earth as a sign of God's kingdom, who died on a cross for our salvation, who was raised from the dead, and is now in heaven and is ready to come again and complete his work of establishing God's kingdom. Abide in Him. Adore Him. And you will find true joy.

Something to pray:

Father, You have given us the best gift. A gift that is better than anything that I could possibly focus on and try to find joy in, here on this earth. You gave Your gift of love that came to earth in the form of a baby, born with no sin. I want to take time to abide in You and adore You, finding my joy in You alone. Please enable me to be faithful. Amen.



O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God,
Glory in the highest;
See how the shepherds,
Summoned to His cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;

We too will thither
Bend our joyful footsteps;
Lo! star led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
Offer Him incense, gold, and myrrh;
We to the Christ Child
Bring our hearts' oblations.

Child, for us sinners
Poor and in the manger,
We would embrace Thee, with love and awe;
Who would not love Thee,
Loving us so dearly?

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing.



DAY 3

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

I was talking with a friend recently and asked if they would be seeing a particular family member over the holidays. Their answer saddened me. You see, there has been a lot of conflict in the family. Relationships are fractured. Some members of the family don't even speak to each other.

When conflicts persist unchecked within a family, a new 'normal' is established as family members become accustomed to the changed relationships. Yes, there is still an ache in the heart because of the fractured relationships, but daily life goes on. Then comes the holidays. Thanksgiving. Christmas. All of a sudden, the absence of that family member is magnified, yet again. The reminder that all is not well seems to hover over any celebration that takes place, and after the season comes to an end, there is a lingering sadness, as decorations are boxed up and the tree is put away, that you've made it through another Christmas without that loved one.

Is this an all too familiar scenario for you? Can you find joy amidst this type of suffering? Can there be joy when you long for reconciliation with that beloved, estranged family member?

In the hymn “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” we see lyrics to meditate on that can cause joy to rise up within your heart even when we are facing painful family relationships.

We can find joy when we fix our eyes on the One who sent His Son to make the ultimate reconciliation possible – the reconciliation of sinners back to Himself. Of course, we will never stop praying to be reconciled to that beloved family member, but the knowledge that God has made it possible for us to be reconciled to Himself is enough to cause us to persevere in praying for Him to accomplish that in our family relationships. He is able to do that work. He is all powerful!

Something to think about:

When we read the lyrics to “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” we can also find joy in the fact that, when we fix our eyes on God’s Son, we are choosing to lift our eyes above our painful circumstances and are focusing on Christ. This hymn tells us that the One on whom we are focusing is King, Lord, Prince of Peace, Sun of Righteousness, Everlasting Lord, Desire of Nations, Incarnate Deity, and Emmanuel.

We are also drawn into celebrating: the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the truth of the new birth.

That is some powerful, supernatural truth, isn’t it? It is something that no one could ever accomplish – but God! He accomplished it when Christ laid aside the glory of heaven to take on human nature and become one of us. Doesn’t that make you want to rejoice? Doesn’t that give you hope?





Something to pray:

Father,

As I navigate through this season that seems to magnify the fractured relationships in my family, I look to you and all that was accomplished when Your Son came to earth. I fix my eyes on the King, Lord, Prince of Peace, Sun of Righteousness, Everlasting Lord, Desire of Nations, Incarnate Deity, and Emmanuel, and I thank you for making it possible to be reconciled back to You. Help me to find joy in this truth amidst the suffering that I experience in this lifetime.

Amen.



Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"
Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Risen with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the new-born king"
"Glory to the new-born king"

DAY 4

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

“Lonely.” “Isolated.” “No support system.” These are some of the words that I have heard moms use to describe what they experience while they are walking through the day-in and day-out of what it means to be a mom. Regardless of how old your children are, each season of motherhood does come with a measure of loneliness, isolation, and a lack of support. Why is that? Because other moms are busy raising their children just like you are. When we prioritize our family and our marriage, there are seasons when there isn’t much time for anything else. I also know of some who don’t have much in the way of community. My husband and I have gone through times in our lives when God actually withheld community for a season. Yes, community is important and I encourage you to pray for God to lead you to that particular church body that you can be a part of and live out true, biblical community. It is life giving and, when intentionally done in a biblical way, will help you grow in your walk with God.





But, during those seasons when we didn't have consistent community, we sensed that God wanted to do something in us that only He can do. He wanted to have our full attention. He wanted us to experience a loneliness that can only be filled by drawing near to Him and crying out in desperation and need.

We are never alone. Ultimately, He is the only One who can meet us in our deepest longing and loneliness. He wants us to experience this in a new way.

When you take time to look at the lyrics of today's hymn and are able to see what these lyrics are saying, I believe that the truths found there can lift you out of any sense of loneliness or isolation and give you a birds-eye view of the life you have been gifted.

Emmanuel – God with us.

This Christmas Hymn explains what we can experience because Jesus came. We see prophecy being fulfilled when He was born – His first coming. And we see in the same hymn the promise of His return – His second coming.

Jesus is with you.

He was born, lived His life, walked in obedience as He submitted to His Father and accomplished what He was sent to earth to accomplish. He was crucified, died, rose again, and then went back to His Father when His plans were accomplished.

The fact that He rose again means that He is with you. It means that He is alive and walking you through every single minute of your day. Every trial, He experiences with you and enables you to persevere. Every victory, He has enabled you to accomplish and rejoices with you in it.

Something to think about:

You can have joy, knowing He came and is with you. You can have joy knowing that there is so much more to this life than what we are experiencing right now. He is coming again and we will spend eternity with Him. All of His promises will be fulfilled.

We can worship Him this Christmas as we celebrate His birth, and we can also worship Him as we look forward to His return. We can thank him for coming and thank Him for the promises that we find our hope in, for the future.

And then we can add the following words to describe what we experience while we are walking through the day-in and day-out of life – at times feeling like we are completely alone: “*Thankful.*” “*Rejoicing.*” “*Anticipating.*” “*Hopeful.*”

Something to pray:

Father, thank you for coming to earth as a baby and thank you for the promise that You will come again one day in the future. Thank you that these truths and promises give me joy and hope amidst daily life and loneliness. Thank you for being with me. I need You. Thank you for giving me true joy when I focus on You, praising and worshiping You for being Emmanuel – God with us.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orders all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in its ways to go.

O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's stem,
Unto Thine own and rescue them!
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe for us the heav'nward road,
And bar the way to death's abode.

O come, Thou Bright and Morning Star,
And bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
And turn our darkness into light.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid all our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.



*Silent night, holy night! Son of God,
love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace...*

We've spent the past few days talking about how to find biblical joy by focusing on the truths that are found in the theologically packed hymns we have been singing all of our lives. I don't know about you, but meditating on these lyrics has adjusted my perspective and reminded me to WORSHIP!

Of course, it's okay to take part in some of the seasonal and cultural celebrations like decorating a tree, buying gifts for loved ones, hosting a festive party, or going driving at night to see the beautifully decorated homes. But let's not allow it to drown out the celebrating of all that we have been given because Jesus came. Let's ask God to remind us today, and every day, that even though we deserve death, we can have peace with God because Jesus came. That is the definition of grace! Amazing grace!

The song "Silent Night" stirs up pictures in our minds of a calm night, stars brightly twinkling in the sky, and a newborn baby sleeping. It talks of a mother who lovingly sits at the bedside of her newborn son and of shepherds that are watching nearby, having been led there by a star.

I love what is pictured in this line: *“Radiant beams from Thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace.”*

Radiant beams from His holy face – redeeming grace has been given! It’s the reason Jesus came. It is freely offered to us. It is our hope for the future and what will sustain us in the present. It is what reconciles us to God. Don’t you want to sing this hymn, and every hymn we have we have talked about this week, and be moved to worship? Don’t you want to allow the Holy Spirit to whisper the truth found in them, in your ears?

You CAN be moved to worship and hear the truths ring in your ears:

When you sit in church and sing Christmas hymns...

When you watch the children’s ministry Christmas play and see the nativity scene reenacted...

When the story of the birth of Christ is read from the pulpit...

When you are Christmas shopping and hear music playing in the background...

You can be moved to worship and JOY in all of these familiar traditions, when you picture the *“Radiant beams from His holy face”* and thank Him for *“the dawn of redeeming grace.”*



Something to think about:

Christmas hymns can be used to remind you of truths in God's Word and can be turned into moments of worship. Christmas hymns can be used as a springboard for sharing the gospel. Let's pray that we will be alert to His truths and to gospel opportunities this Christmas!

Something to pray:

Father, thank you for the amazing, amazing redeeming grace that came to earth in the form of a baby and died for the sin of the world so that I can have peace with You. This season, and every day, I worship and praise for all that You have provided for those who believe in you. Help me to hear the truths in each act of celebration this Christmas and to truly worship You from my heart. Amen.

Silent Night, Holy Night

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!
Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.
Silent night, holy night!
Wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!



It's my sincere hope that over the last few days spent reflecting on some of my favorite Christmas hymns, you've set the tone for a truly joyous Christmas season. Maybe you'll even be inspired to think about the other hymns you sing this year in the same way. What a gift that would be!