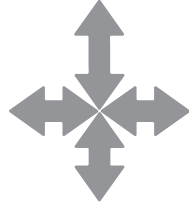




GUIDE FOR GROUP STUDY: the week of December 2nd

This study is designed to help your community group grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. There are three dimensions to following Jesus:



UP: growing in relationship with God

IN: growing in relationship with other followers of Jesus

OUT: growing in relationship with the world around us as we join God in God's mission

Getting Started:

What image or memory comes to mind when you think about joy in your own life?



UP: Connect with God through Spending Time in His Word

Read aloud the passage for the week: John 16:16-24. Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you heard. Underline or note words or phrases that seem meaningful.

1. How would you define joy? How are "joy" and "happiness" related/different?
2. We rightly associate Christmas with joy, but December always seems filled with things which make joy difficult. What are some of the barriers to joy which face us in the coming weeks?
3. In the first half of this passage, Jesus refers to his death and resurrection. This will be the source of the disciples' joy. How does the news of Jesus's death and resurrection still serve as a source of joy for us today?
4. Joy is not something that happens accidentally. It must be cultivated. One of the practices which helps foster joy is gratitude; giving God thanks for his work in your life each day. What other practices or habits could you experiment with this December?



IN: Connect with Each Other

As you prepare to close your group, share prayer requests as you look ahead to this often challenging and busy month.



Out: : Connect with the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation. However, it is not just a season of anticipation for this Christmas, but for a future joy, when Christ will come in glory and his kingdom will be fully realized.

Close your group using this prayer as a guide. Have one person lead the prayer, and invite your group to respond with, "Come to us and make us whole" after each "Come Lord."

Lord, we wait with anticipation for your coming kingdom.

We ask that you would come into our lives and into our world.

Into our troubles and weaknesses, into the barren places of our souls, Come Lord,

Come to us and make us whole.

Into the war torn and the refugee, into those who live in conflict, Come Lord,

Come to us and make us whole.

Into the homeless and the unemployed, into those who feel abandoned, Come Lord,

Come to us and make us whole.

Into the sick and the disabled, into those fighting cancer and other diseases, Come, Lord

Come to us and make us whole.

Into the poor and the starving, into those who are oppressed or abused, Come Lord

Come to us and make us whole.

Into the lives of loved ones, into those from whom we are estranged, Come Lord,

Come to us and make us whole.

Into our joys and celebrations, into our work and our achievements, Come, Lord

Come to us and make us whole.

O Christ we long for your coming. Hasten that day when those who seek you in every nation will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south to share a table in Your Kingdom. Hasten the day when your Kingdom will come in all its glory and suffering and pain and sickness and oppression and death will be overcome forever. Hasten the day when we will live in peace, harmony, joy and love together in your kingdom.

Amen.¹

¹Adapted from Christine Sine's Advent liturgy which can be viewed here: <http://godspace-msa.com/2015/11/29/liturgy-for-the-first-sunday-of-advent/>