

TALKING POINTS

JOY TO THE WORLD - JOY TO THE WORLD

LEARNING IN

During this season, you will see the word JOY more times in the month of December than any other time in the year, because the culture craves joy. Although we crave joy, especially in this season, we don't always find it because we search for joy in all the wrong places and it leaves us empty. When we look for joy in all the wrong places, it leaves us feeling stressed, lost, angry, frustrated.

So often we confuse happiness with joy, and don't recognize the difference between the two. Happiness depends on happenings. Happiness depends on what *happens* to us. It is both *external and temporary*. Joy, on the other hand, is *internal and permanent*. It comes from having the assurance God is present and in control in our lives and will guide us through whatever we face.

There's a reason why you can't find joy *in the world*, because it came *to the world*. You might find moments of happiness, but not *real* joy. Real joy comes to us through the person of Jesus, who came into this world to fulfill the promises of God and give us an assurance the world can not give.

This Christmas season, it's important to remember - Joy is not found in *presents*, it's found in Christ's *presence*.

Read Luke 2:1-14 (specifically, verse 10)

The pursuit of happiness is the overwhelming occupier of most people - why doesn't it work?

LIVING IT OUT

Given how important joy is to all of us, here are two guiding principles for finding real joy:

Joy Comes From Gratitude - we live in a culture of "never enough", where we often ignore what we *do* have in a never ending search for "more". When it comes to joy, *it's not joy that makes us grateful, it's gratitude that makes us joyful*. When we practice gratitude, it leads us to joy. God knows this, and He encourages us to practice gratefulness knowing full well the joy it will ultimately bring us.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Can you share something you have gratitude for today, even in the midst of these complicated times?

We Find Joy In Believing - the very root of joy can be found in believing the promises of God. And what are His promises? Here's a list of them -

God loves you
He will never leave you nor forsake you.
All things work together for the good of those who are in Christ Jesus.
He is with you in it all and through it all
Nothing is impossible with God
He can do abundantly more than we can ever ask or imagine.

We may know all of these things in our minds, but do we really believe it? Often true belief happens when we walk with God long enough for Him to show us the reality of His presence and we personally experience His loving kindness.

Read John 3:16, Deuteronomy 31:8, Romans 8:28, Isaiah 41:10, Luke 1:37, Ephesians 3:20-21

What's the difference between knowing things about God and really *believing* in Him?