

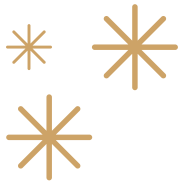
WOMEN'S
DISCIPLESHIP
COMMUNITY

JOY

DECEMBER 2021



SHORELINE.CHURCH



JOY THROUGH EMOTION

The time to begin Christmas music is a debated issue - when is the appropriate time to start? November 1st? After Thanksgiving? I (Sarah), however, listen to Christmas music sporadically throughout the year. I believe that Christmas music, especially the hymns of old, hold a truth that we need to be reminded of throughout the year. The truth that on that first Christmas morning something was brought to the world. Joy. The availability of a contentment throughout all circumstances because of the newborn Savior.

The word "joy" in our culture has been misused and its definition smeared to mean nothing more than an elevated state of happiness. That's not what joy is. S.D. Gordon defines joy this way:

"Joy is distinctly a Christian word and a Christian thing. It is the reverse of happiness. Happiness is the result of what happens of an agreeable sort. Joy has its springs deep down inside. And that spring never runs dry, no matter what happens. Only Jesus gives that joy."

Joy does not come from what is happening around us but from what already happened so long ago. It comes from knowing that we have a God who loved us so much that He would sacrifice so much for us, who deserve so little.

When we read the Christmas story we can see the emotions that each character displayed as the Christmas story unfolded. Even through sacrifice, doubt, confusion, humility, and the unknown, they displayed a joy that led them to push through the temporary emotions to fulfill God's forever plan for Jesus.

I pray that as we walk through the characters in the Christmas story and the emotions that they experienced, we will find that joy is not temporary. It does not depend upon our circumstances, but it depends only upon our position with God in our lives.

As you read, I pray that you will feel the joy of the Christmas season as you have never felt before. That you will not sing "Joy to the World" without understanding that the joy to the world was and continues to be Jesus. As we come to Him, bearing a spectrum of emotions, that we remember to be joyful as we adore Him.

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST

Search our profile,
ShorelineMonterey or the name of
the playlist: "[December 2021](#)
[Women's Discipleship Community.](#)"

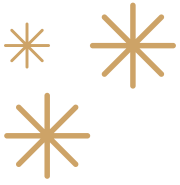
*Spotify's search bar is case-sensitive.
Be sure to include proper
capitalization and spacing!*

PRAYER WALL

Post a prayer request and join us
in praying for the women in our
Women's Discipleship
Community. This page will be
private to just our group!

www.shoreline.church/prayer-wall





JOY IN SACRIFICE

When we look at the world around us it can be hard to imagine a joyful God. With sadness, war, and famine present daily, God gets portrayed as hard and stoic. But the current state of our world doesn't reflect God, it reflects our actions, our sin, and destructive nature. If we instead look at the world that He created, in its original state, we'll see a deeply joy-filled God. His joy is present in the multi-color sky of every sunrise and sunset. His heart is present in the beauty of the mountains and the vastness of the oceans.

*You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in
your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Psalm 16:11

Read [1 Chronicles 16:26-28](#), and [Jeremiah 15:16](#).

Through His joy, God shows us His range of emotion in scripture. The emotion that is present most of all is love.

Read [Colossians 1:15-20](#).

God is the ultimate loving Father to Jesus. God saw Jesus as so perfect and beautiful that He created the entire world through and for Jesus. How much of a sacrifice it was for God to send his precious and perfect Son down to live among the sinners and scoffers. God gave the prophecies telling what would happen and still, He sent us Jesus. Read [Isaiah 53:1-12](#).

Turn to [Hebrews 12:2](#) (NIV) and fill in the blanks below.

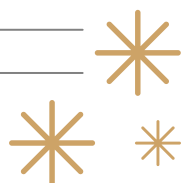
"For the _____ set before him he endured the
_____, scorning its _____, and sat
down at the right hand of the throne of God."

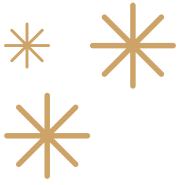
God knew how the story would end. He knew that Jesus would be restored to His rightful place but that does not diminish the pain and rejection Jesus endured on the cross. In making a way for us to spend eternity in heaven, God's joy was fulfilled through His greatest sacrifice, Jesus. Through any sacrifice that we are called to make, there is joy set before us.

Take time to pray and thank God for His sacrifice, to send Jesus and thank Him for the example He set for us that we can have joy through sacrifice.

REFLECT

Describe a time when someone made a sacrifice for your well-being. Think of a time when you sacrificed for someone else. How might you or this person have been reflecting God's character as self-sacrificing?





JOY THROUGH DOUBT

In the Bible, doubt is prevalent among the main characters, and as we sit in our present day, reading the Bible from the end of the story, it's easy to scoff at why they would doubt God, when in reality we doubt Him daily. With politics, finances, and relationships we're asking the same question we hear Mary ask Gabriel: "How can this be?" What we often fail to understand is that God can handle our doubt better than we ever could, because He knows where we are emotionally and spiritually at all times.

Open your Bible to [Luke 1:26-38](#) and read about Gabriel's visit to Mary. In this story, we can see how even through doubt we can still carry joy.

When Mary asks Gabriel How can this be? God knows her heart at this moment. Most historians agree that Mary was no older than fifteen at this time. She was a young girl, trying to figure out exactly what was happening and how it was going to happen. Gabriel gives her a step-by-step of God's plan. Continue reading [verses 39-45](#).

Not only did Gabriel explain how her pregnancy would come about, but he also gave Mary undeniable evidence, something tangible, so she could believe what he said was true, Elizabeth's unexpected pregnancy. There was no time to waste here and Mary "hurried" to Elizabeth. When Mary hugged Elizabeth and felt that sweet baby bouncing around her heart exploded; the doubt was gone, and she began to sing praise to God. Read [verses 46-56](#).

Her life would not be an easy one. She would have known the prophecies of Isaiah - the baby she carried, nursed, and brought up would one day suffer a tragic death. She bore the responsibility, as a teenager, to bring up the Messiah. Still, she rejoiced. No doubt, fear, sadness, or isolation would stifle her joy. Read [Luke 2:16-20](#).

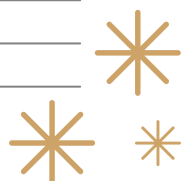
The words of New Testament theologian, Matthew Henry, beautifully sum up the peace of Mary's heart in these verses: "As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honor, now when it was veiled; and it is satisfaction enough to find that, if no one else takes notice of the birth of her child, angels do."

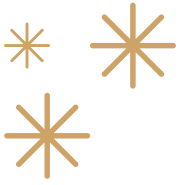
Here is Mary, exhausted from childbirth, all doubt replaced by a mother's love. She knew who Jesus was and who He would be, but now she was simply a mother in love with the newness of her baby's coos and the softness of his skin. At the fulfillment of Gabriel's message, she knew she could rest quietly in her joy.

Maybe you are feeling doubtful this Christmas season about your job, finances, family, or your faith. All emotions are welcome at the feet of Jesus. Let Him bear the weight of them while you sing praises of joy for how we know our story will end.

RESPOND

Using Mary's song in [Luke 1:46-56](#) as a guide, write your own song of praise using the lines below.





JOY THROUGH UNMET EXPECTATIONS

In contrast to Mary's story in the Gospel of Luke, Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective. Luke has such stories as the appearance of the angel to Mary, but Matthew simply says that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit and goes on to tell his readers what Joseph did. Read [Matthew 1:18-25](#) and compare with that of Luke's account in [Luke 1:26-56](#). In a journal or scratch piece of paper, note the similarities and differences of the two accounts.

Little is known about Joseph, the carpenter. What we do know, scholars have come to piece together based on what was customary in the day. As a young couple engaged to be married in the 1st century, the bond between the two was a strong one. The engagement was not likely a romantic connection; it was most certainly arranged by the couple's parents and assumed a firm commitment undertaken about a year before the wedding. During that time, the young girl would remain in the home of her family, while her betrothed would spend time preparing a place for his bride - saving, planning, and homemaking.

Imagine Joseph's disappointment when he discovered that his virgin bride had not been faithful. His high expectations and hopes for his upcoming nuptials came crashing down as he learned that his year of preparation had all been a waste. The questions running through his mind - how could this have happened? Who could have done this? What am I supposed to do next? Why did this happen to me?

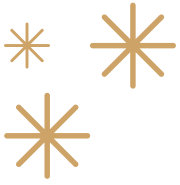
Read [Matthew 1:19](#) again. Joseph is described as faithful to the Law of Moses and yet did not want to expose Mary to public disgrace. He could have made a public display of his indignation by taking Mary before the court and making an example of her. According to the Law by which he remained so faithful, he had every right to punish Mary to the full extent of adultery (see [Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#)). But for Joseph, being faithful to God included an element of mercy. He made the decision to extend compassion despite his unmet expectations. He planned to divorce Mary in secret.

By an incredible act of grace, God intervenes in Joseph's decision. He sends a divine messenger to encourage Joseph: "do not be afraid." The angel explains that Mary's miraculously-conceived child will be a son, and Joseph is instructed to name him Jesus. It would have been possible to simply say, "He will be called..." but by involving Joseph in the act of giving the name to the child, Jewish tradition symbolically communicates that Joseph will accept Him as his own ([Luke 1:59-60](#), [Isaiah 43:1](#)). This child will be special and will have a destiny that is expressed in the meaning of His name - He and no other will save His people from their sins.

Like Joseph, we often convince ourselves that we have the best idea for how our lives should play out. When those expectations begin to unravel as unforeseen hardship comes our way, we make haste to handle the situation the best we know how. Yet God so graciously reminds us that His plan is so much greater than we could ever ask, plan, hope, or imagine ([Ephesians 3:20](#)). Joseph - humble, righteous, and gentle - could not have imagined or dreamed that he would be the one to parent his long-awaited Savior. Joseph was chosen to enjoy the incredible privilege of watching Jesus as He grew in wisdom and stature ([Luke 2:52](#)).

Joseph's story reminds us that surrendering to God's plan does not guarantee a life of comfort and ease. Mary and Joseph's struggles were just beginning as Jesus grew inside Mary's womb. Yet in surrendering to God's will, we are offered a life full of more joy than our feeble human hearts could ever contain.





JOY IN HUMILITY

From the Old to the New Testament, there is a shift in the view on shepherding in Jewish culture. Abraham and Moses, the patriarchal pillars of the Old Testament, were shepherds and were greatly esteemed for it. Jacob became a shepherd later in life and acquired great wealth because of the profession. When Joseph moves his family to Egypt, he tells them that Egyptians have a different view on shepherding. Read [Genesis 46:33-34](#).

After 440 years in slavery in Egypt, it is not difficult to believe the Israelites would have adopted a similar way of thinking as the Egyptians. This is where we meet the shepherds in Bethlehem; no longer seen as prosperous men with fields of great currency, but hired hands tending another man's sheep. It was a lonely and dirty lifestyle. Shepherds were generally considered unclean in the community of God's people because of the work they did. They were in daily contact with dirty, smelly sheep, their manure, their blood from cuts and scrapes, and the insects that buzzed around them. All of this meant that shepherds were almost never clean enough to worship with God's people in God's presence. So they were generally treated as outsiders.

The shepherd's story in [Luke 2:8-20](#) echoes God's heart from the beginning of eternity, that no one, no matter how humble their circumstances, are out of reach from God's good news. In the first century Israel, only the high priests were allowed into the Holy of Holies at the Temple and even then they followed a protocol given by God. But here in the open fields in the dark of night, shepherds are brought into the presence of God. Unclean and unworthy, God chose to reveal Himself to them. Read [Luke 2:8-9](#).

To understand the shock that the shepherds felt in this moment, it is necessary to understand the nature of angels. The Bible describes the voices of angels as roaring lions and thunder and their presence as bolts of lightning (see [John 12:29](#), [Revelation 10:1-3](#)) This was not a gentle looming as we would see in a sunrise, this was a jolt of light and the sound of thunder that came in an instant. Read [Luke 2:10-12](#).

This is the proclamation that changed the religious class system forever. Salvation would be for all people and because of that, everyone could experience the joy of hope and redemption. No longer would God's family consist of only the Jews but anyone: Gentile, slave, master, man, woman, unclean, and unknown, could be adopted into the family of God. Read [Luke 2:13-14](#).

The host of angels did not come in a quiet crescendo. They blasted the shepherds with their praise for the One that had left an empty throne in Heaven to live a perfect humble life. Read [verses 15-20](#).

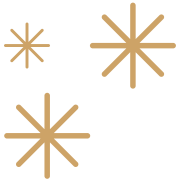
The angels went away as quickly as they had arrived. The absence of their light left the sky darker than it had been before. The shepherds run to each other, holding no conference to decide if they should go, but instead, they hurry to find Jesus. They approach the manger with empty hands and hearts full of worship. They had nothing of earthly value to give the new parents, but their testimony of the angels and the birth announcement of the Savior was an offering that no king could surpass.

Jesus' words in [Matthew 20:16](#), spoken 30 years later, would harken back to these shepherds:

"So the _____ will be _____, and the
_____ will be _____."

Where the world sees obscurity God sees opportunity, He doesn't see our position on earth but our position at the cross. Joy does not come from our circumstances, it comes when we leave everything behind, not questioning if we should go to Him but only how quickly we can get there.





JOY IN THE UNKNOWN

Read [Matthew 2:1-12](#). Although much is unknown about the Magi, we do know that these were not men that would have worshipped one God. The word Magi comes from the word "magos" which is used in other places in scripture to describe sorcerers and fortune-tellers.

God is clear all through scripture that sorcery, star-worship, and fortune-telling are practices that He does not tolerate (see [Deuteronomy 18:9-12](#)).

The question then is, why use those who worshipped the stars and fortune-telling practice to bring men to Jesus? He wanted them, he wants us, to know that He is the only one worthy of worship. Without God, there are no stars. Without Him, there's no future to predict. He's the beginning of all the things that we worship over Him and He will show us Himself if we allow our hearts to be opened to search.

Look at [Romans 1:19-20](#). What does this passage say about how God presents Himself to the world?

These were seekers to be sure, they sought answers in the stars because they knew there was something bigger than themselves but did not know where to find it. They were looking in the unknown to find something their soul told them was there.

Read [Matthew 7:7-8](#). What does Jesus say to those that seek?

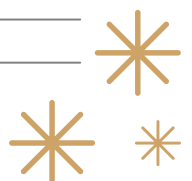
There are different possibilities for what the Magi saw in the heavens, what they were chasing. There are speculations that it was a comet, a supernova, dancing planets, planets intersecting, and so forth. We do not know the specifics but we do know it was something worth following.

As the Magi prepared for this incredibly unknown journey they took with them gifts fit for a king. As their excitement for discovery grew something else was budding too - joy. An inexpressible emotion that pushed them through the unknown to discover the Savior that the stars themselves worship. What started as curiosity ended in worship of the one, true God and filled them with all the answers they needed to feel the joy that is available to us all.

Read [Matthew 2:10-11](#). When they found Jesus they were overwhelmed with joy! That is what it is to find Jesus; to seek through the unknown, trudging through bearing gifts to something worthy of accepting them, and in turn receiving the unstoppable joy of Christ.

RESPOND

Use this space to journal your thoughts about the Magi. Take time and thank God for how He calls us to Him through His Holy Spirit and how He's always ready to accept us from whatever path we have walked and teaching us to walk with Christ.



SHARE THE JOY

This month, you had the opportunity to reflect on each character in our beloved Christmas story. We hope you walk away with a deeper understanding of the joy that we have in the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, but also the urge to share this joy with others. True joy cannot be contained, stifled, or shielded from others. When we truly understand the weight of His glory and sacrifice, joy bursts forth from our lungs as we eagerly share this life-altering news. We cannot help but live differently; our lives should not and will not be the same. If you have been yearning for an opportunity to share this joy with others, below are two ways to get started this Christmas season.

WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS DESSERT

Join us for our annual Christmas event on **Friday, December 3rd from 7 pm - 9 pm** in the Worship Center. Enjoy an evening of fellowship, music, dessert, and exceptional teaching to kick off the Christmas season! This event is a great time of celebration and festivities and remembering the reason why we celebrate. This will be a wonderful opportunity for you to invite your neighbors, friends, family members, and coworkers who don't know Jesus as the gospel message will be presented and with an opportunity to pray with someone on our team following the event. The cost of this event is \$15 per person which includes beautiful desserts, hot beverages, and a copy of our speaker's book, God's Many Voices. If you are not able to join us on campus in the Worship Center, you are encouraged to register for the online experience of the event which is \$10 per person. This online experience includes an e-copy of God's Many Voices. Purchase your tickets in advance by visiting our webpage at www.shoreline.church/womens-christmas-dessert and for more information and answers to frequently asked questions.

GIFT BOXES OF HOPE

Give the gift of hope this Christmas season! Think about the people in your life - your neighbor, hairdresser, coworker, barista, or your child's teacher. If you have been praying for an opportunity to share Jesus with them, now is your chance. For \$20, you can share the message of Christmas with someone in your life. Each box is full of high-quality handcrafted and local items intended to bless your gift recipient. Pick-up will begin **the first week of December**. We look forward to seeing the impact that these gifts will have on our community as you spread the message of hope this season. Pre-order your box while supplies last on our website at www.shoreline.church/gift-boxes-of-hope. Feel free to gift this box to both men and women!

**For questions or more information about either of these opportunities,
email women@shoreline.church.**