

SEASON OF  
**ADVENT**  
STUDY GUIDE

Week 3: “Real Joy When Life Gets Real”

**1. READ**

**Pastor Watley’s Scriptures: Matthew 2 : 9 – 11 New King James Version (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup>When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. <sup>11</sup>And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**James 1 : 2 – 8 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup>But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup>Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

**Luke 7 : 44 – 47 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>44</sup>Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup>You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup>You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup>Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

**Psalm 51 : 10 – 12 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup>Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
<sup>11</sup>Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
<sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

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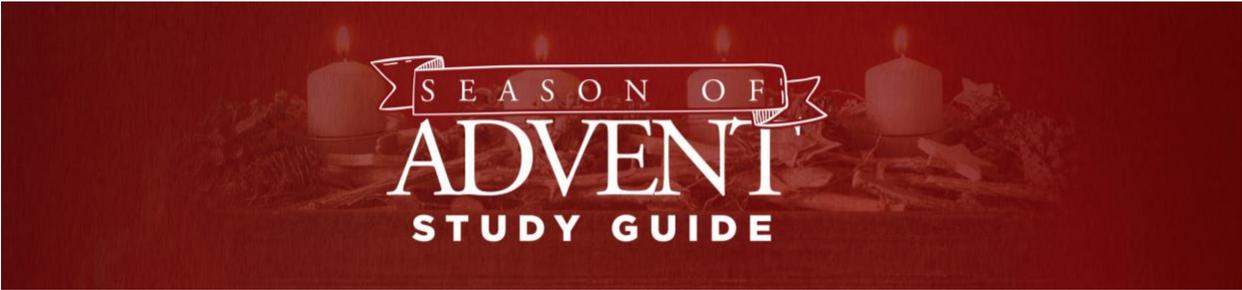
## **Psalm 30 : 1 – 5 New International Version (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> I will exalt you, Lord,  
for you lifted me out of the depths  
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- <sup>2</sup> Lord my God, I called to you for help,  
and you healed me.
- <sup>3</sup> You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;  
you spared me from going down to the pit.
- <sup>4</sup> Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people;  
praise his holy name.
- <sup>5</sup> For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may stay for the night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

## **2. REFLECT**

**[Click the image to go to our YouTube page for more content!]**





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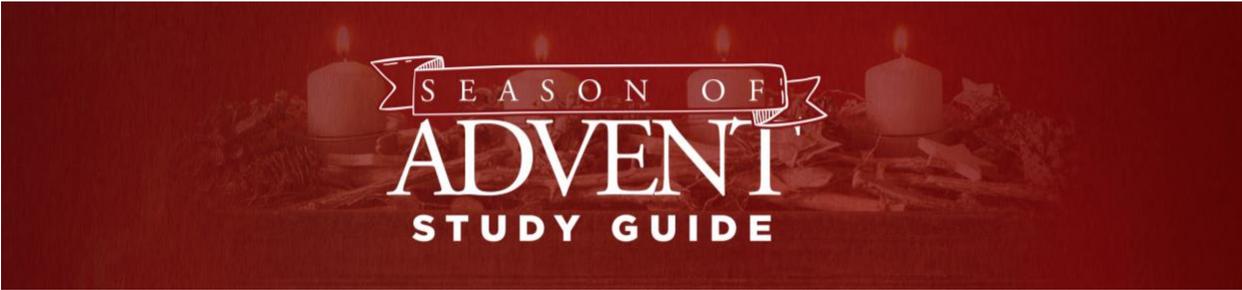
As Christmas quickly approaches, we are nearing the end of the Advent season. Over the past few weeks, we've joined Christians around the world that intentionally set aside time to prepare for the coming of Jesus. Each year, we are encouraged to reflect on the significance of our savior's birth and the beauty of the nativity story. During these unprecedented times, it is even more important that we remember the many miracles that accompanied the Lord's birth – because these miracles are still available to us today!

This week, our Senior Pastor Rev. Matthew L. Watley continued his sermon series that is focused on the Advent season. So far, we have been exploring some of the biblical themes and miraculous occurrences that marked the arrival of Jesus and accompanied his presence on Earth. We are specifically reflecting on biblical **Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love**. Last week we explored the meaning of biblical hope.

### **The theme we are meditating on for this week is *Joy!***

In our lesson for week three entitled “Real Joy When Life Gets Real,” Pastor Watley encourages us to reframe our understanding of joy. Joy is not simply an emotional response to favorable circumstances. In fact, joy is particularly suited for difficult situations. When we are facing adversity, it is easy to feel deflated, defeated, and dejected. However as Pastor Watley mentions, “Joy is the grace of God, given to sustain me, particularly when my life runs out of air.” This means that when we are at our lowest, the joy of the Lord is a tool in our toolbox that we can apply to any situation. When we are truly able to tap into this biblical joy, we are often equipped with a level of **imperturbability**. This means that we are able to be unbothered, unflustered, and undisturbed by the agitation of life. We see this principle at work in our scripture for this week (Matthew 2:9-11).

In the passage for this week we find the **magi**, or the “wise men” that were on their way to see Jesus. As they followed the star that led them to the newborn king, they had to overcome various obstacles that stood in their way. For one, these magi likely endured an extensive and treacherous journey all the way from Persia. They went to great lengths, put themselves in tremendous danger, and were even interrogated by King Herod. And yet, the Bible says they “rejoiced with exceedingly great joy” when they saw the star. They understood that even through their trials, it was an **accomplishment** to make it to Jesus, and they were filled with joy when they made it into His presence! However, the actions of the magi also tell us that even though they knew the journey would be difficult, they maintained a posture of **anticipation**. They came bearing gifts, expecting that they would be taken to the Lord. In addition, verse 10 says, “when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.” They hadn't even seen Jesus yet and they were already anticipating their time with Him. Lastly, the magi rejoiced because they knew the **arrival** of Jesus marked a shift in the atmosphere. In His presence, there is *fullness* of joy!



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For additional content on joy, enjoy the Bible Project's video on joy [HERE](#).

### 3. RESPOND

#### Introspective Questions

- How do you define joy? Did your definition of joy change after watching the Bible Project video?
- Is there an area or situation in your life that needs more joy? How can you bring biblical joy into that situation?

#### Discussion Questions

- Why do you think the magi decided to follow a star on such an important journey? Would you have done the same?
- Why do you think the magi “rejoiced with exceedingly great joy” before they even saw Jesus?