



Your group matters.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Icebreaker -

*What's a Christmas movie character
you find relatable, and why?*

1. While 'joy' is often referenced at Christmas time, Pastors Aaron and Nate suggested that Christmas sometimes feels "like something to survive." "Does joy feel like an afterthought or fantasy at this point" in your Christmas season?
2. Read **Luke 2:9-20**. "The angels didn't give the shepherds a way to earn joy, they gave them news that produces joy." What do you think the difference is between receiving joy and manufacturing joy? How does this tie into the 'Good News' of Christmas and life lived as a Christian?
3. Read **Luke 1:46-56**. Genuine joy doesn't depend on good circumstances but on God's unchanging Good News. If "joy begins as a response to what God has done", what God-given grace can you recall that would redirect your heart and attitude toward joy this Christmas?
4. Read **1 Peter 5:7**. What Joy-Killer(s) will you surrender to God to help you abide in the joy of His Good News? (comparison, hurry, control, cynicism, unmet expectations, etc.)
5. Read **Philippians 4:4**. What Joy-Building practice(s) will you establish to help you embrace/nurture the joy of God's Good News? (daily gratitude list, encouraging others, praying with others, celebrating small wins, etc.)

PERSONAL GUIDE

*This Personal Guide has been adapted from
Professor Grant Horner's Bible Reading System.*

Day One: Luke 12; Psalm 143

Day Two: Numbers 28; Proverbs 21

Day Three: Hebrews 2; 2 Kings 19

Day Four: 2 Timothy 1; Ezekiel 22

Day Five: Job 21; Acts 5



Your
story
matters.

DEC 14, 2025

Message Notes



Merry and Bright: Celebrating the Greatest Gift of Christmas

"Merry and Bright: In the Midst of..."
Aaron Andrews & Nate Sickler | Dec 14, 2025

Christmas can feel like something to _____.

- Travel
- Sickness
- In-laws
- Expectations
- Disappointment
- The list can go on and on...

Does _____ feel like an afterthought or fantasy at this point?

1. Joy Is Announced by God, Not _____ by Us (Note Luke 2:9-20)

Luke 2:10 - "Good news of great joy."

- The angels didn't give the shepherds a way to earn joy, they gave them news that produces joy. (**Isaiah 9:2**)
- Joy _____ as a response to what God has done.
- You don't create joy, you _____ joy.

2. Joy Is Rooted in Good _____, Not Good Circumstances (Note Luke 1:46-56)

- Emotion depends on what happens.
- Joy depends on what Jesus has done.
- Circumstances change. The _____ doesn't.
(**Habakkuk 3:17-18**; **2 Corinthians 6:10**)

There is no problem-free or clean-and-neat in life.

How can this Christmas actually be "*merry and bright*"?

A. Stop _____ to "feel joyful."

- What is good news that can produce joy?
 - You're forgiven.
 - You're loved.
 - God is with you.
 - Jesus came for you.

B. Identify one place where you've let _____ steal joy.

- Invite God to restore joy even there.

C. _____ a Joy-Killer you need to surrender (**1 Peter 5:7**)

- Comparison
- Hurry
- Control
- Cynicism
- Unmet _____

D. Choose a Joy-Builder to start practicing _____ (**Philippians 4:4**)

- Daily gratitude list
- Encourage someone daily
- Pray with a family member or friend
- _____ small wins

E. When the source of your "merry and bright" or joy is Good News from God, you can experience Christmas, even in the midst of your reality, as God intended.

Tell us about the next step you took today in your spiritual journey!

App: Message Notes/Connect Card **Or:** MYRC.LINK/CONNECT



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- Joy begins as a response to what God has done.
- You don't create joy, you receive joy.

2. Joy Is Rooted in Good News, Not Good Circumstances (Note **Luke 1:46-56**)

- Emotion depends on what happens.
- Joy depends on what Jesus has done.
- Circumstances change. The Good News doesn't. (**Habakkuk 3:17-18**; **2 Corinthians 6:10**)

There is no problem-free or clean-and-neat in life.

How can this Christmas actually be "**merry and bright**"?

A. Stop trying to "feel joyful."

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- Invite God to restore Joy even there.

C. Identify a Joy-Killer you need to surrender (**1 Peter 5:7**)

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- Hurry
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D. Choose a Joy-Builder to start practicing today (**Philippians 4:4**)

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