



## WEEKLY STUDY

### Week Three

This is the third week of the Advent season. Pastor Jacob shared a message about the joy that Mary and Elizabeth shared after God showed up in a big way. If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit [prov.church/signup](http://prov.church/signup) and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this prayer together:

*Prayer of Joy: God we are people whom you have called to usher in the joy of our savior to a world that has experienced much sadness, grief and fear. Like Mary, we believe that you will fulfill your promises to us. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.*

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### DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 1.39-45

*At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"*

- There is surprising joy in this story. Both Mary and Elizabeth found joy in their surprising pregnancies. Their shared experience increased that joy exponentially. Who have you shared joy with recently? How has that experience changed your perspective?
- *Pray for opportunities to share joy today.*

## TUESDAY: 1 THESSALONIANS 5.16-23

<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not treat prophecies with contempt <sup>21</sup> but test them all; hold on to what is good, <sup>22</sup> reject every kind of evil.

<sup>23</sup> May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.

- Paul writes instructions to “rejoice always”. To find joy in all circumstances can be a real challenge, but many people have found that difficult situations become an opportunity to witness to the hope and joy we have in Christ. Have you marvelled at someone’s ability to find joy in a really challenging time? What opportunities do you have to witness to the joy of Christ?
- *Pray for those who have a difficult time finding joy today.*

## WEDNESDAY: LUKE 1.46-48

*And Mary said:*

*“My soul glorifies the Lord*

*<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

*<sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful*

*of the humble state of his servant.*

- Mary witnesses to the magnitude of the moment she finds herself in. God is at work through her and it causes her spirit to rejoice. When have you felt that God was mindful of you? Is there a connection between God’s interaction with you and the level of joy you feel?
- *Pray that your soul and your life would magnify Jesus.*

## THURSDAY: ISAIAH 61.10

*I delight greatly in the LORD;*

*my soul rejoices in my God.*

*For he has clothed me with garments of salvation*

*and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,*

*as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,*

*and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

- Isaiah is describing the favor of God. He lists salvation and righteousness as clothing that he has received from God. These garments cause him to delight and rejoice in God. How are you “wearing” salvation and righteousness that you have received from Jesus? Are those garments producing delight and joy?
- *Pray that you would find it easy to delight in God all day long.*

## FRIDAY: PSALM 16.11

*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.*

- Joy is not the same as happiness. You can feel sad and still hold on to joy. The path of life described by the Psalmist is not always smooth and easy, but it is good and it leads to full joy in the full presence of God. Have you ever noticed joy in your heart even when you weren't feeling happy?
- *Pray that joy would be your natural disposition--your default posture today.*

## SATURDAY: HABAKKUK 3.17-19

*Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
<sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior.  
<sup>19</sup>The Sovereign LORD is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
he enables me to tread on the heights.*

- In times of great stress and loss, we come face to face with what we actually need. Our fears are exposed in how we respond to a lack of resources (toilet paper anyone?). How do you find joy in the face of grief? How do you rejoice when the cupboards are bare?
- *Ask God to give you the stability to stand at great heights and rejoice in every season.*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Pastor Jacob noted that joy is not something that we can plan, but more often comes to us by surprise. When have you been surprised by joy?
- Mary and Elizabeth found joy in the company of one another. It seems that John experienced joy in the womb as Mary (and Jesus) approached. In 2020, we've had a lot less coming together. How have non-traditional ways of coming together brought you surprising joy this year?