



ENTER God's presence

Psalm 126

- ¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
² Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."
³ The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.
⁴ Restore our fortunes,^[c] Lord,
like streams in the Negev.
⁵ Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
⁶ Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

Pray: Gracious God, As we gather around your Word today, quiet our hearts and remind us that all good gifts come from you. In this season of Advent, may we experience again the joy of knowing the depth of your love for us and the closeness of your presence with us. Lord, let your Spirit open our eyes again to the joy that comes from being in your presence. In Jesus name, Amen.



SHARE life together

1. What are your highs and lows since you last met?
2. What is something that you do that brings a 'spark' of joy to your life each day?
3. How would you describe the difference between 'joy' and 'happiness'? Is there even a difference?
4. What is something about Christmas that usually brings you joy?

In the reading from Isaiah that you will read together in a moment, Isaiah gives the image the joy of the Lord being like a

Week beginning:
Monday 8th December 2025

Worship series:
Christmas is...
#3 Joy



VERSE for the week

"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."

Isaiah 35:5-6a



REMEMBER this week

'Joy is not a feeling but an expectation of God's blessing unfolding in our lives and rushing to live in that abundance.'

desert in bloom. The seed or bulb is always there, the potential for growth and blossoming is there but it is only as the rain comes that these desert flowers really come to life.

It's also like that with our lives as followers of Jesus. All that Jesus has done for us and won for us through his life, death and resurrection is already ours through faith and trust in him. Yet in the desert storms of life it can sometimes feel like we are still barren and lifeless. It's only as we encounter and experience God at work in us in meaningful relationship, like the desert flowers need to encounter and experience the rain in order to bloom, that we begin to understand and experience the fulness of joy that is in Christ Jesus.

Read **Isaiah 35:-7 and Luke 1:39-56** [HERE](#) or in your own Bible.

5. **What verse/concept/teaching in these readings caught your attention and what was challenging/confronting/comforting about them for you?**
6. **What words or images in the Isaiah passage stand out to you as signs of life, joy, or renewal?**
7. **In Isaiah, 35:5 we read, “*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened...*” in the previous verses what is the event that causes Joy to spring up?**
8. **With the Isaiah text in mind, how or what would you say is the cause of the joy that both Mary and Elizabeth express?**
9. **What are the similarities and differences you see between the cause of joy and the expressions of joy in both readings?**



As we look more closely at these two passages, we begin to see that the joy God gives is not simply an emotional reaction or a moment of happiness. It is something that springs up when God draws near—something that grows even in places that feel barren, uncertain, or long overlooked. Isaiah's vision and the joy shared between Mary and Elizabeth both point us to a joy that comes from recognising God's presence and His saving work unfolding in real lives.

10. **Both Isaiah and Luke show joy arising when God's presence becomes real and personal. Where have you experienced God drawing near in a way that sparked joy, even if your circumstances hadn't changed?**
11. **Isaiah describes joy blossoming like flowers in the desert—slow, surprising, and God-grown. How does that image help you think about the way joy develops in your own life?**
12. **Mary's joy leads her to magnify the Lord and rejoice in God her Saviour. What aspects of God's character or actions in your life make you want to respond in praise or gratitude?**
13. **Think back on some of your most joyful experiences. How do you think an attitude of gratitude and thankfulness can affect our experience of Joy?**





LIVE purposefully

MAKE IT REAL:

As we listen to Isaiah's visions of renewal and Mary's and Elizabeth's overflowing joy, we can see that biblical joy is never just a feeling—it's the fruit of recognising God's presence and God's work in the midst of whatever season we're in. Joy grows when God meets us, speaks to us, and strengthens us, even in the dry or difficult places. With that picture in mind, it's worth pausing to consider how these truths might shape our own lives this week. What would it look like for us to live with a deeper awareness of God's renewing presence and to let His joy take root in our daily routines, relationships, and decisions?

14. **Where in your current season do you most feel like a “desert”—a place that needs God's renewing joy to break through? What might it look like to open that part of your life to Him this week??**
15. **Mary responded to God's work in her life with trust, praise, and readiness to serve. What is one small, practical way you could respond to God with similar openness in the coming days?**
16. **If joy is something God grows in us as we encounter Him, what practice—however simple—could help you stay more attentive to His presence each day?**

Plan your weekly devotions or [download the Church Central app](#) for the daily **LifeWay Devotions**



PRAY intentionally

- **Praise the Father**, for the joy of being in his presence.
- **Thank Jesus**, who, for the joy set before him endured the cross for our sake.
- **Ask the Holy Spirit** to make your life a place where others can encounter Christ and experience the joy of his presence in you.
- Pray for all of LifeWay as we continue to grow into God's plans and purpose for us as his people as we live his love, share his hope with all, and grow in grace together.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross on their forehead or on the palm of their hand as you say...

[Name], May you encounter the fulness of God and his joy this Christmas, Amen.