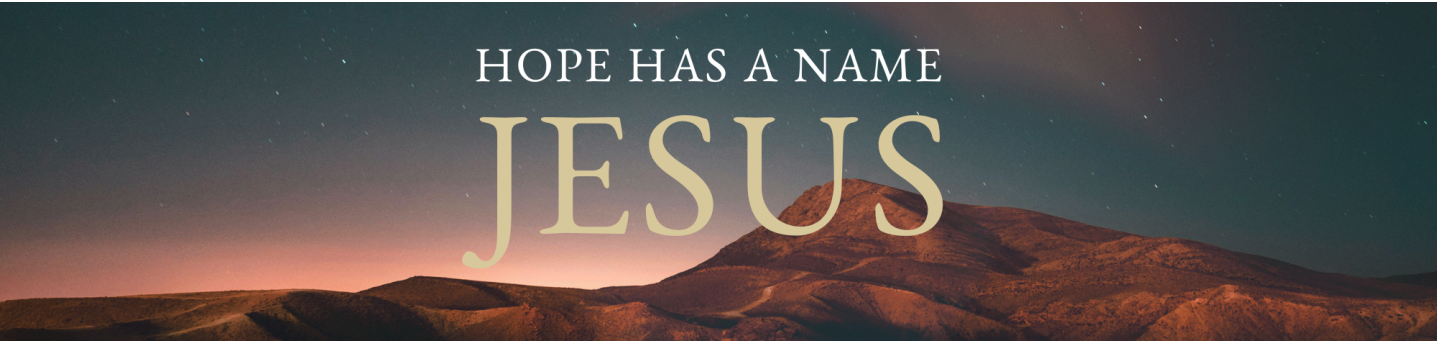




# HOPE HAS A NAME JESUS

## LEADER'S NOTES

### Week 3: Joy

#### QUESTION 1

This week, our focus is on joy. Choosing joy doesn't mean ignoring pain or pretending everything is fine. Instead, it involves making space for beauty, pleasure, and connection, even (and especially) during hardship or suffering. It means intentionally creating joyful moments, recognizing and celebrating small victories, and being willing to pause to feel hope and connection.

#### QUESTION 2

Question two focuses on the idea that joy is strength. It culminates with a quote from Dallas Willard. Some answers might include:

- Joy as a Foundation for Strength:
  - The central premise is that an internal state of joy provides resilience and moral fortitude. This aligns with many positive psychology and spiritual viewpoints which suggest that a positive, fulfilled life naturally equips individuals to navigate challenges and maintain ethical conduct. In this view, joy isn't just a fleeting emotion, but a foundational strength or virtue that fortifies one's character.
- The Effect of Joy's Absence:
  - The idea that a lack of satisfaction makes "sinful actions seem desirable" speaks to a common psychological principle: people seek fulfillment. When legitimate or deeply satisfying paths to happiness are blocked or absent, individuals often turn to immediate, perhaps destructive or unethical, gratifications to fill that emotional vacuum. Temptation thrives in the space where genuine satisfaction is missing.
- Temptation as a Misguided Search for Joy:
  - The quote suggests that the "strength of temptation" lies not in the inherent power of the vice itself, but in the perceived weakness of the person lacking joy. Temptation, therefore, might be seen as a distorted form of seeking the very "goodness" that a joyful person already possesses.

### QUESTION 3

Question three examines how complaining negatively affects joy. Here are some additional points for discussion. Joy and complaining have an inverse relationship: complaining actively reduces joy by creating dissatisfaction, highlighting negatives, and draining energy, while choosing joy encourages gratitude and solutions, boosting joy. Complaining creates a negative cycle that damages relationships, whereas a mindset of thankfulness and action fosters positive feelings and energy.

### QUESTION 4

Question four focuses on the role of generosity and gratitude in choosing joy. The question culminates by asking your group to tell a story of a time someone was generous with you and how that affected your life, or tell a story about how you found joy through generosity or gratitude. You may want to go first or at least have a story ready to share.

### QUESTION 5

Question five asks how we choose joy. Here are some ideas:

#### Key Biblical Principles for Choosing Joy

- Recognize the Source of True Joy: Unlike worldly happiness, which is circumstantial, biblical joy is rooted in God's unchanging nature and promises.
- Abide in Christ: Jesus said that for our joy to be full, we must remain in Him and obey His commands (**John 15:10-11**). Spending time in God's presence through prayer, worship, and Scripture is essential.
- Practice Gratitude in All Circumstances: Paul encourages believers to **"give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:18)**. Focusing on God's goodness and gifts, no matter how small, helps shift perspective away from negativity.
- Cultivate an Eternal Perspective: The Bible teaches that present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (**Romans 8:18**). Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and the eternal reward helps maintain joy amidst trials (**Hebrews 12:2**).
- View Trials as Opportunities for Growth: **James 1:2-4** instructs us to **"count it all joy"** when we face various trials, because the testing of our faith produces perseverance and maturity. Seeing purpose in pain brings a unique kind of joy.
- Serve Others: Shifting focus from inward struggles to the needs of others, following Christ's example of service, often brings purpose and joy (**Philippians 2:3-4**).
- Pray Continually: Worry and anxiety are "joy-stealers". The Bible advises us to **"not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6)**.

Ultimately, choosing joy is an act of faith and obedience, relying on the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit in one's life, even when circumstances seem bleak.