

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



WELCOME
THE SEASONS
Advent

Days of Joy

December 18 & 19, 2021

During this Advent season we have been living into days of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. When we read of the amazing joy of Mary and the shepherds as they are told of Jesus, we too long for that joy. The good news is that the joy of Advent doesn't only come to us during this season. This joy is within us all the time. And when we experience it, it is a joy like no other.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: LUKE 2:8-11

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

There it is, *"good news that will bring great joy."* For many of us this time of year brings such joy. There are friends and family to gather with, there are parties to attend, gifts to wrap and open, homes to decorate. The joy is overflowing! Here's the thing...what if you aren't feeling the joy? What if joy is the last thing you are feeling right now? It can seem as though you are expected to feel joy this time of year. But the feelings happening inside of you are anything but joy. Maybe you find yourself feeling something like Riley felt in the film, *"Inside out"*. In the movie, Riley has her world turned upside down when her family moves from Minnesota to San Francisco. Her life is suddenly turned upside down. And her "joy" was nowhere to be found. Many of us can relate to Riley, when our world gets turned upside down joy can seem to disappear. In the Christmas story, Mary, the mother of Jesus gets her world turned upside down!

Imagine Mary, being engaged to Joseph. Then she finds out she is pregnant. Talk about getting your world turned upside down! She must have experienced all kinds of emotions! We know that she experienced joy, as was written in Luke 1. But she also may have felt fear, maybe even sadness. Think about it; her life with Joseph was in jeopardy. What was going to happen? How was she going to explain this and what were people going to say? The life she had planned with Joseph was going to look completely different! Her world was getting turned upside down and would never be the same. Yet, somehow, she was full of joy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share a story about something that gives you joy this time of year.
- Think about Mary's experience. What emotions would you be feeling? Would joy be one of them?
- Where can we find joy, even when our circumstances don't feel joyful? How do we embrace that?
- Why does this message of joy matter to us today, in this Advent season?

APPLICATION: This week, spend some time with God in prayer and embrace the joy you receive through the Holy Spirit. Lean into the promise that God is with us at all times, filling us with joy we can share with others.