



an illustrated
advent
FOR FAMILIES

PREPARING the WAY



WEEK 3: JOY Preparing to Have Joy

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

REFLECTION

The third week of Advent focuses on the word Joy. So it makes a lot of sense that we would read a passage from Philippians together this week. Paul, the author of Philippians, wrote this letter as a way to encourage one of the first Christian communities.

In this passage, Paul invites the people to rejoice, to not worry, and to be thankful. Seems like pretty reasonable things to do from the comfort of our homes or schools or churches. But Paul is writing to the Philippians from jail! Far from anything comfortable or safe. How can Paul have joy in a situation like that?

What is Joy? In our world today, sometimes we might think that the words happy and joy mean the same thing. But was Paul happy in prison? Probably not.

Sometimes it is hard to be happy during the holiday season. Sometimes the holidays bring us anxiety and pain instead of happiness. But Paul isn't asking us to be happy. He is asking us to have Joy. Joy is a gift that comes from being connected to God and others. When you are connected to others that love you, you can feel joy in your body like a warm hug, even if you might be having a bad day. Joy is something that we can practice and experience together through family conversations, worship services, or helping others. This week we invite you to make connections that will foster joy.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page together, ponder these questions:

1. What are some things that make you feel happy? What are some things that make you feel sad? Is it possible to still have Joy if you are sad? Why or why not?

2. What are signs of Joy during Advent? What are some ways you have seen others share joy?
3. What are some ways we can form connections with God? What are some ways we can form connections with each other?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Items needed: hand-sized rocks, paint, small bowl

This week, we invite you to practice two things: mindfulness and sharing joy. As a family, take some small rocks and paint pictures or words on the rocks. Examples include: safe, loved, blessed, smiley face, heart, peace, calm, enough. After the rocks have dried, put them all in a bowl. During the week, if you feel anxious, sad, or worried, take a rock in your hand and practice becoming calm. As you breathe in, say, "God loves me." As you breathe out, say out loud the word on the rock. Example: "I am safe." If you notice a family member needs a reminder of joy, gently invite them to share a rock with you and mindfully invite joy back into your lives.

PRAYER

Peace-filled Creator,

God of our whole lives,
We understand that life can bring us
Happy times and sad times,
Calm times and anxious times,
Peaceful times and conflict.

Give us the courage this week to seek
Connections with others and with you.
Help us to find and experience joy
Within ourselves, with you, and with others.
Amen.