

# GOD WITH US

## Week 3: Advent of

Luke 2:8-20

### OPEN

This is the third week of our series called “God with Us” based on Matthew 1:23 which says, “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “**God with us**”). The story of Christmas is really the story of God coming down in the person of Jesus to bring us back into relationship with the Father. Christmas reminds us that Immanuel, God with Us, gives us **hope, peace, joy and love**. Advent (meaning arrival) is a time of expectant waiting, preparation, with great anticipation, for the arrival of Jesus. We live between two advents. We look back at his birth which gives us hope for his return at the second coming. Advent invites us to slow down and experience Immanuel-“God with Us” anew, who came to bring us hope, peace, joy, and love in the midst of the messiness and busyness of the our lives.

### READ

Read **Luke 2:8-20**. What are all the emotions the shepherds encounter in this story?

- What causes the shepherds fear to turn into joy? How can good news override a fearful or frustrating situation in our lives?
- Luke 2:18 (NIV) says the shepherds were amazed. How has fascination of God overridden fear or lack of faith in your life
- Godly joy transcends changing circumstances because of its source is in an unchanging God. How does this joy contrast to worldly joy? When have you experienced godly joy in your life that held even through trials?

### REFLECT

The bible has a lot to say about joy. Read James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:8-9, Philippians 4:4-7, Hebrews 12:2, Galatians 5:22-26, and Nehemiah 8:10.

- What do each of these passages reveal about joy?
- What encourages you about your each passage? What do you find challenging about each passage?
- James 1:2-4 tells us to consider trials pure joy. How can we look at trials with joy? How can they have purpose in our lives?
  - Is joy a feeling, choice or gift from God?
  - How can we avoid treating joy as a temporary *feeling* instead of a gift from God that is available in all circumstances?
- What are the things that threatened to rob us of godly joy? How can we guard ourselves from those things?
- What is one challenging area of your life right now that you need to experience joy in?

### APPLY/PRAY

- Read Luke 2:16-18. After the shepherds hear the good news of Jesus and experience joy they go out and share it with others.
  - What are some ways you can share the joy of the Lord with others in your life?
  - Is there anything that is *keeping* you from sharing joy with those in your life? Pray that God would help you reclaim joy.
- Reflect on Acts 2:46-47. How does communal worship and fellowship create an atmosphere for joy?
- Make a commitment to perform an act of kindness that will bring joy to someone else, as encouraged in 1 Thessalonians 5:11.
- Pray that joy would characterize Wellspring to those inside and outside our church.
- Pray for our elders, staff, and ministry leaders as we discern God’s leading in this time of transition. Pray for unity and grace as we follow God’s lead during this time.