



HEAVEN
Touches Earth
Growth Group Guide



METRO
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



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A Message from Our Pastor

When Jesus was born, everything changed. Our world was filled with darkness and the effects of a sinful, fallen humanity. But on that inaugural Christmas, the birth of Jesus signified the intersection of the divine and the demoralized. Christmas is where Heaven Touches Earth, and the Light of the World has come! And when Jesus comes, He doesn't arrive empty handed — He brings the gifts of hope, peace, love, and joy. This Christmas season, we will take a modern approach on the traditional celebration of advent, as we proclaim that Heaven has arrived on Earth.

— **Brandon Q. Ahu, lead pastor, Metro Christian Church**

Growth Group Tips

- **Start and finish on time.** Doing this will show that you honor one another's time and will help you get through discussions.
- **Be comfortable with silence.** A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A pause gives space for quieter individuals to participate and gives people time to figure out what they would like to say.
- **Confidentiality is important.** What is shared in the group stays in the group. Confidentiality is key to building trust.
- **Make group a priority.** Communicate in advance if you are unable to attend by texting or calling your leader. This will help your leader plan accordingly, especially for in-person gatherings.
- **Avoid talking or teaching too much.** The purpose of Growth Groups is for spiritual growth in community. Allow for others to share their thoughts and perspectives.
- **How to best use this guide.** Take time each week before your group meeting to reflect on the journal questions. Also peruse the second set of questions in preparation for group discussion.



Week 1

From Despair to HOPE

INTRODUCTION

Humans are well-acquainted with hope. Even our youngest ones experience it when making a birthday wish or waiting up for Santa on Christmas Eve. Hope is found in everything from small trivial circumstances to big life-changing ones, and every human on the planet has experienced both the elation hope ushers in when what we want comes to pass, as well as the devastation that comes when we don't get our way.

Hope is an especially important concept for Christians because in a world filled with despair, we can rest in the knowledge that Jesus follows through on all His promises. It's easy to take matters into our own hands, turning to alcohol, drugs, money, friends, work or sex when we feel hopeless and stuck, but Jesus brings hope that's rooted in expectation and certainty.

Instead of despairing that our best days are behind us or feeling stuck in a rut, our hope as Christians is forward-facing toward God's unfailing goodness and ultimate victory.

ICE BREAKER

What is one thing you were really hopeful for as a kid? Did you end up getting it? How did you feel about the outcome?



JOURNAL QUESTIONS - FOR REFLECTION

Jesus came to change people to be more like Him. Before you knew Christ, how did you used to react during difficult times? How has knowing Jesus affected your hope during life’s challenges?

As we begin this Advent season, we remember Jesus and the hope that He secured for us. The Psalms speak of putting our hope in the Author and Perfecter of our faith. What does it mean to put your hope in the Lord? How will you practice this daily?

Hope is one of the greatest gifts God gives us, and it is something we’re called to share with those around us. In what ways do you feel God calling you to be a source of hope for others?



Week 1 From Despair to HOPE

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The promises of God are steadfast and sure, and we have the assurance that God will do what He said He would do. The Bible is filled with scriptures that tell of God's goodness and promises. What are some specific promises God has made that give you hope?

Verses like Romans 8:28 and Job 42:2 encourage us that there is purpose in the waiting and even in despair. In what ways can you use my struggles and trials to deepen your trust in God and His hope?

God's vision of hope is different than the world's because Jesus gives a hope that does not disappoint. What differences do you see between biblical hope and worldly hope? How does that difference impact your life?

Week 1 From Déspair to HOPE

PRAYER REQUEST

Lift your list of hopes and dreams up to the Lord: your time, finances, family, friends, community, etc. He wants to hear these hopes and dreams, but He also wants us to surrender them to Him with trust and thankfulness. He is the beginning and the end, He knows all things, He controls all things. Ask God to change your heart as He does what He knows is best.

ACTION STEP

At the end of each week, we encourage you to put what you've learned into action. This week, pray with expectation. You've lifted up your hopes and dreams to God, but that's not where the journey ends. He tells us in Psalm 5:3 and Psalm 27:14 to pray and hope in the Lord, and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 says to pray without ceasing. Be in constant communication with God this week!

VERSES FOR REFLECTION

- Isaiah 40:31
- Romans 12:12
- Jeremiah 29:11-13
- Romans 15:13
- Hebrews 11
- Psalm 130:5-7



Week 2 From Anxiety to PEACE

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, more than 40 million adults (or 19%) of adults in the United States has a diagnosed anxiety disorder and there are even more that go unreported. Anxiety can lead to feelings of unease, fear, dread and despair, which experts say are normal responses to stress. But God says it doesn't have to be that way. Rather, He came to bring peace to the world.

We live in a world rife with unease, social media overload, constant news cycles and living up to other people's expectations. No wonder we're anxious! But in the midst of uncertainty and insecurity about the future, God shows us a different path to peace (John 14:27). If we let Him, He will lead us from overwhelm, anxiety and isolation to introspection and eventually trust that the future isn't based on circumstances, it's based on a God that never changes. All this means that peace isn't the absence of worry, stress and anxiety, it's the presence of God (Matthew 1:23).

ICE BREAKER

Imagine you can plan a self-care day for yourself. What would you schedule that brings you peace? This can be a facial, massage, fishing trip or hike — anything that you feel is peaceful.

Week 2 From Anxiety to PEACE

JOURNAL QUESTIONS - FOR REFLECTION

Think back on time when you felt God’s peace. What did it feel like? How did you recognize it? What circumstance was causing you anxiety or stress? How did God’s peace change your view of the troubling situation?

Based on God’s definition of peace (John 14:27, John 16:33, Hebrews 12:14), how is it different than what the world says “peace” is? Can you describe times when you’ve experienced God’s peace and the world’s peace in your life? What made God’s peace more fulfilling?

Reflect on Philippians 4:6-7. What does this kind of peace mean to you? How can you apply the idea of “peace that surpasses understanding” to your current circumstances?



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are some areas in your life where you feel a lack of peace? How can you invite God into those spaces? What would it look/feel like to exchange those worries for His peace?

Think about the “fruits of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23. How can you cultivate peace in your interactions with others? Regarding peace, how can you bring peace into your family, job, friend group, etc.?

There’s no doubt that we are living in contentious times, and this can be true locally, nationally and internationally. How does trusting in God’s sovereignty influence your sense of peace about the future?



PRAYER REQUEST

Bring before the Lord areas of your life that need biblical peace. Surrender to him your anxieties, relationships, stressors and trials. Then, invite Him to fill the spaces that those worries once inhabited. Allow God to fill your heart with His peace, and ask Him to show you how you can be a beacon of peace to those around you.

ACTION STEP

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus calls peacemakers “children of God.” Now think about yourself. Are you a peacemaker in your social circles? Whether you are or aren’t, there’s always room for improvement. Think about some practical steps can you take to be a peacemaker in the following areas that could apply to you: family, marriage, work, school, community, friend group or church?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION

- Philippians 4:6-7
- Psalm 4:8
- 1 Peter 5:7
- Psalm 119:165
- John 14:27
- Isaiah 26:3



Week 3 From Sorrow to JOY

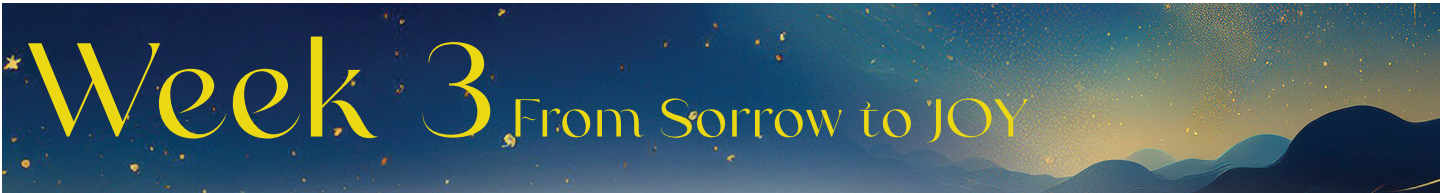
INTRODUCTION

During the Christmas season, you might see the word “joy” adorning decorations, cards, gift wrap and signage. But do you know what it means to have true joy? People can find it in people, things or experiences, but joy is not merely being in a good mood after interacting with things we love, nor is it the absence of sorrow. Rather, joy is a key concept throughout the Bible, which shows us that joy is an attitude Christians choose to adopt no matter the circumstance (Psalm 30:5). How can people persevere and find joy even in less-than-desirable situations? Because we serve an all-knowing, all-powerful God who’s love endures and who always keeps His promises.

Just like how Jesus brings us from despair to hope, He also brings us from sorrow to joy (Isaiah 51:11). Our joy isn’t determined by our current circumstances. It’s based on our future victory in the birth (Luke 2:1-20), life and resurrection of Jesus, and His second coming. Because Jesus is our joy, we can have joy in every situation!

ICE BREAKER

What is something you do just for fun — something that brings you joy — even if no one else is around? What is it about the activity that brings you joy? Has that activity always made you feel relaxed or happy, or has your relationship with it changed over time?



JOURNAL QUESTIONS - FOR REFLECTION

Early Christians were known for being full of joy, even while being ridiculed and persecuted. While we might not experience the same things, we've all gone through hard times. Can you recount a time that you experienced biblical joy even during difficult circumstances?

God loves it when His children are joyful! How do you experience joy through your relationship with God? Can you think of a recent time when you felt His presence brought you joy?

Joy is a choice we make despite the circumstance. What are some things in your life that distract you from experiencing the joy that God offers? How can you find joy in simple, every day moments?



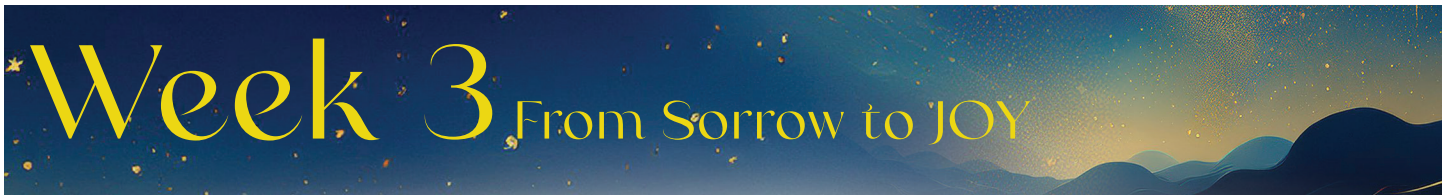
Week 3 From Sorrow to JOY

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Bible says in Nehemiah 8:10 that the “joy of the Lord is your strength.” How do you see this principle at work in your life? Can you recall a specific moment in your life when you felt God’s joy carrying you through a difficult situation?

Life can get busy, especially during the holidays. What are some things in your life that distract you from experiencing the joy that God offers? How can you begin to create space for joy?

Joy can be infectious! How have you seen God’s joy at work in the lives of others? Is there someone whose joy in the Lord impacted you? How can you exude a godly joy that positively influences others?



PRAYER REQUEST

Take time to thank God for all He’s done in your life — big things and small things — because there’s no shortage of His goodness. Think about things He’s blessed you with that bring you joy. Rejoice and revel in those gifts. Then, tell God about areas of your life that are hard for you right now, and ask Him to help you find joy even in those circumstances.

ACTION STEP

Think about ways you can share the joy of Christ with others this season? It can be through words or actions, or simply by praying for them. What other ideas can you think of? Write down a list of ways you can be more intentional about showing God’s joy through your daily interactions with others.

VERSES FOR REFLECTION

- Luke 2:1-20
- Mark 12:28-31
- Psalm 30:5-11
- John 16:20-22
- Psalm 33:21
- James 1:2-3



Week 4 From Selfishness to LOVE

INTRODUCTION

All humans are naturally selfish. Selfishness can manifest as anger, pride, cruelty, unforgiveness, bitterness, busyness, brokenness and rejecting others. To combat selfishness, many try to live by the golden rule, but did you know that the phrase “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” actually stems from Mark 12:31?

You might think the opposite of “love” is “hate,” but it’s actually selfishness. When we’re selfish, we make ourselves the focus, but the Bible tells us to put others above ourselves. In the same way, we should be putting God as No. 1 in our lives. And if you think that you can love God but not love others, you’d be wrong (Matthew 22:37-40) — they are two sides of the same coin.

We should look to Jesus, who died for our sins, as the ideal definition of love. He loved both those who persecuted Him and those who sang His praises. In this way, when we love those who mistreat us or have differing view than us, we imitate the character of God Himself.

ICE BREAKER

The Bible is rife with joy-filled moments. If you could time-travel to witness any joyful moment in the Bible, where would you go? Why would you go there? What do you imagine the people back then were feeling leading up to that feeling of joy?

Week 4 From Selfishness to LOVE

JOURNAL QUESTIONS - FOR REFLECTION

Christians are changed by Jesus to live like Jesus. In what ways do I actively show love to others in my daily life? Is there a person in my life whom I find challenging to love? What steps could I take to extend love to them in a meaningful way?

John 4:19 says that we love because God first loved us. How does my love for others reflect God's love for me? Is how I love others reflective of God's heart?

The opposite of love isn't hate. It's selfishness. What thoughts, fears or habits tend to lead me to act selfishly? How do I feel when I put my own needs first? On the other hand, how do I feel when I put the needs of others first?



Week 4 From Selfishness to LOVE

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Love is more than just a feeling. It's choosing to give unselfishly of your time, talent and resources. In what areas of my life could I offer more of myself to serve others? What prevents me from being willing to sacrifice for others, or even for God?

Loving people who have hurt us is hard. How do I respond when I am hurt by others? Am I willing to forgive, even when it's difficult? Are there people in my life whom I view as "enemies" or with whom I feel resentment? How might I begin to love or pray for them?

In a world full of selfishness, Jesus brings love. How would my life look if I consistently prioritized selflessness and love as Jesus teaches? What small, daily acts of kindness and love can I incorporate into my routine?

Week 4 From Selfishness to LOVE

PRAYER REQUEST

Everyone is selfish in one way or another — we're human, after all. Moving from selfishness to love requires introspection and a willingness to admit you need help. Ask God to reveal to you the areas of your heart that struggle with selfishness. If there's anyone in your life that you struggle to forgive or love, ask God to change your heart to be more like His.

ACTION STEP

Gratitude can help you let go of selfish tendencies and embrace a heart of love. Each day, set aside a few minutes to journal five things you're grateful for. It can be a person, item, situation or result — anything that God has blessed you with. By focusing on gratitude, you'll shift attention from your own needs and wants to the giver of every good gift.

VERSES FOR REFLECTION

- Matthew 22:37-39
- 1 Corinthians 10:24
- Acts 20:35
- Romans 5:8
- 1 John 4:9
- 1 Peter 3:8



INTRODUCTION

Merry Christmas from your Metro ohana! For this special devotional, we want to reflect on the gift the holiday bestows. John 3:16 says that God loved the world, so much so that He sent Jesus to be born as a baby, to live a perfect life, to be an example of how Christians should live on this Earth and to die as an unblemished sacrifice for our sins. Thanksgiving might have passed, but there is still so much to be thankful for as we reflect on the Christmas story.

Christmas is a reminder of God’s incredible love. In this season, let’s embrace the light of Christ, sharing His peace and joy with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and even strangers. Our prayer for you is that your hearts reflect His love to everyone you come into contact this Christmas Day — and every other day of the year!

ICE BREAKER

Think about your favorite Christmases over the years. What is the best Christmas you have ever had? What do you remember about it? What made it special? What are you doing now to try and make Christmas special now?



Christmas Devo

JOURNAL QUESTIONS - FOR REFLECTION

There are so many great elements of the Christmas story (the angels approaching the shepherds and wise men, Jesus' actual birth, Mary's courage, Joseph's humbleness, etc.). What is your favorite part and why?

The weeks leading up to Christmas can be hectic and busy, but if we're honest, busyness can hit at any point during the year. How can I shift my focus from busyness to the quiet moments where I can feel God's presence?

It's easy to feel like you're getting pulled in a million directions during the holidays. How can I let go of expectations or pressures during the holiday and instead embrace the simple joy of Jesus' birth?



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We read the Christmas story in depth during December. But beyond just this month, how can the Christmas story challenge me to trust in God's plan, even when things don't make sense?

Christmas is associated with gifts, and God didn't forget His children either. What gifts or blessings has God given me this year that I can celebrate and give thanks for?

PRAYER REQUEST

Christmas marks the moment heaven touched down on Earth. It started the life and influence of Jesus and was the beginning of God's promise of salvation. Jesus being born changes things. Think about areas of your life where you need heaven to touch down on. Ask God to meet you where you're at and allow Him to renew you from the inside out.



A Special Family Devo for Christmas Day

GATHER TOGETHER

For this special Christmas devotional, we want you to gather with your family at some point during the day. We hope that today's step-by-step suggestion helps you start a new family Christmas tradition or that you can somehow be encouraged to incorporate the birth of Jesus into an existing tradition.

WHAT YOU CAN SAY

“I love that we are together for Christmas! Our family is so blessed, and we want to take time to give Jesus our attention and thanks on this special day. One thing we can be thankful for today is the birth of Jesus, which is at the heart of the Christmas story.”

READ OUT LOUD

Luke 2:1-20

ASK EACH OTHER

What is your favorite part of the story of Jesus' birth and why? What do you want to thank Jesus for today? What else are you thankful for today?

TAKE TIME TO PRAY

“Thank you, Lord, for Christmas! Thank you, Jesus, for being born and for bringing heaven to Earth. You are better than the lights, the tree, the gifts and everything else. We worship you this Christmas morning and are grateful for you and each other. Amen!”



INTRODUCTION

It's the last week of 2024, and what a year it's been. We've experienced joys and sorrows, we've gone through ups and downs. But no matter the season of life we're in, God remains the same.

As Christians approach the end of the year, Christmas provides a meaningful time to reflect on the journey we've traveled. It's a moment to celebrate the birth of Christ, who brought light into the world and reminds us that hope, peace, joy and love aren't just buzz words for the holiday. He wants us to take these concepts and make them part of our daily lives.

As the New Year nears, we look forward to embracing the opportunities and challenges ahead, trusting that God's love and guidance will remain steadfast.

Christmas reminds us of God's promises, and with renewed hope, we step into the new year filled with gratitude and eager to share His love with others and live with purpose and faith.

ICE BREAKER

2025 is right around the corner! As we prepare for January 1, what is your New Year's resolution? Do you normally make resolutions? Have you ever kept a New Year's resolution? Why do you think New Year's resolutions are hard to keep?



JOURNAL QUESTIONS - FOR REFLECTION

God is good all the time, and all the time God is good. In what ways have you seen God’s faithfulness over the past year? What blessings or lessons can you carry from the past year into the new year?

Christmas celebrates Jesus as God’s greatest gift to us. What does this gift mean to you personally as you begin a new year? What are some “gifts” (like love, forgiveness, or time) that you feel led to give to others as a response to Christ’s gift?

Jesus came into the world in humility, born in a stable in a manger. How can His example influence the way you approach your goals and relationships in the coming year? How can you practice more humility, and how do you think that will change your interactions with others?



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The beginning of a new year brings with it a sense of a fresh start (Lamentations 3:22-23). What spiritual disciplines (like prayer, Bible study, or service) do you want to commit to more intentionally in 2025?

What fears or doubts do you need to release to God as you enter the new year? How can you surrender your plans and desires to God’s will? Furthermore, how will you cultivate a heart of hope and expectancy for what God will do in your life?

Who are the people in your life that God is calling you to support, encourage, or reconcile with? What steps can you take to strengthen your family or faith community ties this year?



PRAYER REQUEST

Mary and Joseph trusted God’s timing and plan for their lives. Think about the areas of your life do you need to place in God’s hands as you step into the new year. Speak them out loud. Hold your hands out in front of you and place your hopes, fears and uncertainties in His hands.

ACTION STEP

Daily Bible reading is an important part of a Christian’s walk. Metro Christian Church goes through the Bible in One Year program. Make a commitment and plan to read through the entirety of God’s Word with us in 2025! Find the plan here: bible.alpha.org/en/classic.

Along with reading, find a notebook and journal what God is saying to you as you go through His Word.

VERSES FOR REFLECTION

- Isaiah 43:18-19
- Lamentations 3:22-23
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Philippians 3:13-14
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Romans 12:2



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