

## Rediscovering the Joy of Joy of Being with God and his People—Week Twelve

### Practicing the Discipline of Celebration at Christmastide

This past Friday, we **celebrated** one of the central events of the Christian faith—the **incarnation of Jesus Christ**. God loved the world so much that he came in human form like us, to dwell with us, that he might be born in us and do his redemption work in us—what a miracle and mystery! But one day is really not enough to celebrate God’s amazing demonstration of his love for us. On Christmas Day, we moved from Advent to **Christmastide**—the celebration of Jesus’ birth that takes us all the way to Epiphany on January 6th: the day that marks the arrival of the wise men to worship the new born King. These are the original 12 days of Christmas, and we can still celebrate even as we return to work and our regular schedules.

#### Consider

Have you found it hard to celebrate Jesus this Christmas under the pall of COVID, in the shadow of so much loss and the sorrow of not being able to gather with family in the way we usually do? Can you take this opportunity to celebrate the birth of Jesus without all the traditional Christmas trappings that can distract us from what we’re really celebrating?

#### Pray

Ask God to help you set your mind on the wonder of Christ’s birth that set into motion his plan for our redemption. Pray for the joy of the Lord to warm your heart as you celebrate.

#### Act

- Keep those Christmas carols coming! Sing your heart out with a different one each day, letting the meaning of the words sink deep and cheer your soul.
- **Play** a family game of name that Christmas carol by playing or humming the first few notes of a Carol. Once someone has guessed it, sing a verse or two together.
- **Remind yourself** each day of Christmastide of the **good news of great joy** by re-reading a part of the Christmas story or one of the Old Testament passages that predicts the birth of Christ: Micah 5: 2-5, Jeremiah 23: 1-6, Isaiah 9: 2-7, Luke 1: 26-38, Luke 2: 1-7, Matthew 2: 1-12, Phillipians 2: 1-11
- **Adorn** your dinner table with extra candles each evening and focus on Jesus’ light shining in the darkness by recounting the small and big ways **you have seen God at work** in and around you this year.
- If you have a **nativity scene** set up, select one participant/element each night and talk with your kids about their role and significance in the story—Joseph, Mary, the manger, the shepherds, their sheep, the angels, the star, the wise men, the gifts of the Magi, and of course Baby Jesus. Rewatch the kids’ segment of our Christmas Eve service for some heartwarming inspiration for this activity!
- **Bundle up and go outside** on a clear, starry night—hopefully we’ll have one before January 6th! Imagine the shepherds looking up and seeing the host of angels and the wise men following the star. Blast out Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus or read from Psalm 19: **The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.**
- Stir up that favorite batch of cookies you never got round to making in the hectic run-up to Christmas and **treat yourself and your kids** to one or two each day in celebration of Christmastide.

We are praying for you to experience the joy of the Lord as you celebrate King Jesus!