



# JOY

## CHOOSING JOY DURING DIFFICULT & HARD TIMES

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### Activity

We often distract ourselves from pain and sorrow, soothing our discomfort with fleeting pleasures like a good cup of coffee, a night out with friends, a shopping spree, a Netflix binge etc. We all do this, and these things are not necessarily bad, but pleasure can quickly become an end in itself - we can spend more effort trying to feel comfortable and happy than we do trying to grow closer to Jesus. What if instead of avoiding our sorrow, we leaned into it and searched incessantly for the presence of God?

This week, choose one day to limit these pleasures. You might fast from social media or television. Maybe you turn off your phone for the evening. You could choose to fast from food or eat simpler. If you feel brave, you could do something for an entire week - like skip Starbucks, only eat meals from home, or choose not to buy anything you don't need. Write your choice here!

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As you resist these things, feast and celebrate who God is. Use this as a breath prayer or mantra, "**The joy of the Lord is my strength!**" You might also start the day with a gratitude practice, like writing down a few things you are thankful for in a journal. Or write them down here!

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## Next Steps

*Share your Activity answers and discuss with one another.*

*Pray the prayer below.*

*As you light the **pink candle** of your Advent wreath,  
you can recite the Blessing below together!*

## Prayer

Jesus, 2020 has been a year of sorrow - we long for your tangible presence this season. Please help us to experience joy as we search for you and focus on our life-giving transformative relationship with you. *Amen!*

## Blessing

As you turn your focus to Jesus during this season and put your trust in Him, may *everlasting joy* fill your hearts, even in the moments that are filled with sorrow.

