

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



Longing for Joy

December 13, 2020

These days, Joy is illusive, seemingly nonexistent. Do we push aside our feelings of joylessness and forge ahead into Advent? Maybe we pause to see what we've learned about ourselves, about God, about others. Maybe we notice the pockets of joy and experiences with the Divine. Advent is gaining momentum and we are anticipating more than ever the power of God with us.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: LUKE 1:46-55

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

The passage from Luke 1 is called the Magnificat. This is Mary's song of praise; it's Mary's response to the announcement that God would partner with her to gift the world with the Messiah. It's Mary's joyful response to the Good News that through her the world would come to know the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Savior. And just in case we think she was "all about it" without any apprehension, without any second thoughts, we might think again.

To fully appreciate the power of her prayer, we only need to imagine the really dire situation that Mary was in when she sang this song. With the announcement from the messenger of God that she would bear this gift to the world, Mary became troubled in her soul. Mary was confused about what she was hearing, and because she was about 13, a virgin and about to become pregnant without a husband, Mary was afraid for her life. In the first century, being connected to a husband was almost mostly about security. And being pregnant, for Mary, was almost literally a death sentence. At the very least there would be the strong possibility of her engagement being called off her being ostracized, canceled by the culture. She could even be put to death. But in the face of all of that – and more, Mary's trust in God led her to a point of deep commitment. And her prayer, the song, the Magnificat rolled out of her like the rush of a mighty wind. What must that have been like for her?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share about a time when you experienced joy. How did you know it was joy and not simply happiness?
- Spend some time discussing Mary's situation. How might you see her in a new light?
- What resonates with you most from this story?
- How can we share joy with others, especially this year in the midst of a pandemic?

APPLICATION: This week, practice dwelling in God's Word through *Lectio Divina*. What is God speaking to you during this sacred reading time? How is He revealing His joy in your life?