

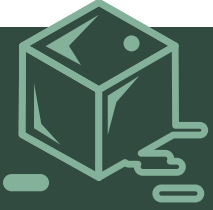


Christmas  
at LifePoint

Week of December 17, 2023

**Jesus Brings Joy In Times of Great Grief! (Luke 2:10-11)**

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette



## ICEBREAKER

What is your snack of choice?

### Introduction

- Share how you're celebrating Advent this year or any Advent traditions you've had in the past. If this is new to you, what is something you'd like to start doing to celebrate the arrival of Jesus at Christmas?
- Is it easy for you to choose joy? If not, what holds you back? How can you be more conscious about actively choosing joy?
- Joy is the choice to respond to life with an inner contentment and satisfaction because we know God and we know God is with us in all things. What reminders do you have that God is walking with you in the midst of mourning and grief?

Five clinical stages of grief, according to counseling world:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

- Pastor Mike identified the 5 clinical stages of grief. Think of a time when you went through grief. Were you presently aware of those stages when you were going through them?
- How do these stages look different in the body of Christ?

- How can knowing these stages equip you to help someone else going through grief?

Six stages of grief that God can use to point us towards Him (according to Pastor Rick Warren):

1. Shock
2. Sorrow
3. Struggle
4. Surrender
5. Sanctification
6. Service

- Rick Warren lists the 6 stages of grief. Do these better equip you to understand your own process or even better help someone else?
- Have you truly experienced sorrow from your spirit? Do you truly believe that Jesus can identify with your sorrow?
- Learning to accept that pain has occurred and we can move forward with God, that is the only pathway to peace, and that is choosing joy in spite of pain. Why is it important for us to surrender?
- Sanctification is a process that sets us apart, where the Lord starts turning our pain into purpose. God uses our grief to shape us to bring blessings to others. How does hearing Pastor Mike's explanation on sanctification give light to your pain in hard situations?
- When is a time when God used pain you went through and turned it into something good? Could you see the growth in your or others afterwards?
- What things have you surrendered to God that he has used for your sanctification and to serve other people?
- Are you stuck in any of these steps and have not reached the point of service? Can you identify what is keeping you stuck in that spot?

- Do you allow other people to help you through these stages of grief?
- Sharing your testimony is choosing joy in grief. Not just accepting and surrendering to your pain points, but this allows you to give your grief to God, and to give your growth to others. What grief have you not surrendered?

### Three Titles Given to Jesus

1. Jesus Our Savior
2. Jesus the Christ
3. Jesus Our Lord

- Share a time when you can reflect on God's faithfulness in your life?
- We love the idea of God's salvation and forgiveness, but do you struggle with allowing him to rule over your life?

# ACT ON IT



## ENCOURAGE

In times of great tragedy, it can be very difficult to talk about joy, especially if we see joy as a sign of happiness. But joy is deeper than that. If we start seeing joy as a Fruit of the Spirit, we can choose to have joy in painful times because of our assurance, trust, and confidence that the Lord is walking through it with us. We can give our grief to God and allow Him to turn our pain into purpose. Pain and grief are inevitable, but with the Lord, we can look forward with hope that He will help us process our hurts in a healthy and holy way. Choosing joy allows us to give our grief to God and give our growth to others. God is here to be with us, to live with us, to walk with us, to be inside of us, and to empower us to live for Him. What a great gift that we get to have during this season!



## ASK

What are you grieving right now? What stage (both clinical and spiritual) do you think you're in now? What do you need to walk through that stage in a healthy way? How can the Lord use your pain for purpose? Would you allow Him? Have you truly received the gift of Jesus in your life? Is there someone in your life grieving now? Being equipped with this message, how do you plan to come alongside them?



## CHALLENGE

As we're going into the last shopping week before Christmas, be intentional about taking time to worship and give praise to God, even in the small moments.

# Prayer

Lord, we thank You for this message. Thank You for the reminder that we can still have joy in times that are beyond joyful. Thank You for walking with us through all times, both good and bad. As we continue to encounter hard times, help us process our grief and walk through the different stages in healthy ways. We don't want to get stuck in our grief, and if we're dealing with that now, help us move to the next steps. Help us surrender our pain to You, Lord. Help us see the hope on the other side of pain. We don't want the temporary feeling of happiness but rather instill in us an everlasting joy. Build within us an inter-contentment and satisfaction that You are with us through it all. We pray Your Word in Nehemiah 8:10, that we be reminded that the joy of the Lord is our strength. And for the people in our lives who are walking through grief, give us wisdom and discernment to come alongside them and walk with them in their difficult times. Give us the words we need to encourage and support them and above all, turn them back to Christ. All of this, we surrender to You, Amen.

Week of December 10, 2023

## God is Our Refuge and Strength (Psalm 46)

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette



### ICEBREAKER

Take a moment to join us in praying for those impacted by the natural disaster. After that, share your favorite Christmas song with the group.

#### Introduction

- What makes you feel safe and secure?
- Take a moment to think about all of the things that God is to you, then discuss it as a group.
- Pastor Mike shared that the help of our God is stronger than the pain or crisis we face. How do we walk that out and how do we be an example of that to those around us? Especially during this time in Clarksville?

#### God is Our Refuge

- A “refuge” can be defined as “a condition of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or trouble.” Where do you go when you are being pursued, in danger, or in trouble? Why do we turn anywhere else, when God is right there all the time?
- What are some of the ways that you have sought refuge in, other than God?
- God is our refuge! He’s our habitation, our hiding place, our place of safety! What are some ways you can be intentional and pursue and run to Him?

## God is Our Strength

- The Bible says we build up our faith through prayer and through reading God's word. Read Jude 1:21 and Romans 10:17. Talk about how this relates to you, considering the difficult things many of us are facing right now.
- What does it look like to pursue things in your strength versus pursuing things with the strength of God?
- When you remember you are a child of God and that He is your refuge and strength, how does it affect the way you look at problems in your life?

## God is an Ever Present Help

- Think of a time when life was spinning out of control. What did you need to help you regain control? How can you help someone else whose life is spinning out of control today?
- God is with us for every high and low. Who in your life needs to hear this right now? How can you be the one who tells them?
- How have you experienced God as an ever present help?

# ACT ON IT



## ENCOURAGE

We're not meant to handle the problems of life in our strength and capacities. The help of God is stronger than any crisis we face. The help of God is greater than the pain of this world. When you are threatened or in distress or when your life falls apart, seek God as your refuge. You can run to and hide in God, your refuge. When you feel anxiety, hopelessness, fear, or shame, run to and hide in your refuge. Make the Lord your safe place. When you are weak, He is strong. When you are honest in your struggles, God is faithful in His provision. Whatever you're navigating at this moment, remember that He is our very present helper, and because of that, we will not be fearful. Trust that God is still our Good God, refuge, and strength.



## ASK

Up until today, how have you been seeking refuge? What has been your safe place? What does it look like for you to seek refuge in the Lord? How can you come alongside someone who is struggling with this?



## CHALLENGE

Pray for your city and your church family. Give like crazy to the disaster relief fund and efforts in place right now. Go out and SERVE your city! Can you bake? Do you have a chainsaw? Are you good at mobilizing groups of people? You can get involved with disaster relief efforts today by going to [lifepointchurch.tv/disasterrelief](http://lifepointchurch.tv/disasterrelief).

# Prayer

God, thank You for being our refuge and our strength during this time. We don't know what's headed our way, but what we do know is that You're ever present with us. You are our refuge, You are our strength, You are our ever present help in times of need. We're seeking You for our safety, our peace, and our provision. Equip us to stand up against the problems of life. Give us strength when we feel weak. Protect us. Quiet our thoughts and worries. Take them and replace them with faith and trust. Use us to help remind others of Your goodness, strength, and presence. Use us as conduits of Your love and helping hand during this time. However You have gifted us, we want to use those gifts to help others experience Your love. Thank You for hearing our prayers. Thank You for using us to spread Your glory. We place it all in Your hands. Amen.



Week of December 3, 2023

## Stay Awake with Hope

Speaker: Pastor Mike Burnette



### ICEBREAKER

Apple or Android?

#### Introduction

- Pastor Mike shared that the ancient view of hope is better understood as “full dependence and assurance on something that is yet to happen.” What did hope mean to you before hearing today’s message?
- Read Titus 2:11-14. How does God’s grace train us? How has it trained you?

#### Our World Needs Hope

- What are some of the ways that you see hopelessness in our world?
- How does the hope of Christ followers differ from the hope of the world?
- Who do you take your honest questions to? Do they help point you back to God?
- Read James 1:2-4. What does joy mean to you? Share some practical ways that you use or have used in the past to find joy in a trial.
- What areas of your life have matured because of the difficulties you’ve walked through this year?

## Jesus is the Hope of the World

- Matthew 1:23 calls Jesus “Emmanuel”, which means “God with us.” So where do you search for hope when things are hard? Does that align with “Emmanuel”?
- When you’re struggling, how do you remind yourself of the hope of Jesus?
- What do you tell your non-believing friends when they’re in pain?

## Live Ready for Hope to Return

- What are some practical ways that you live ready for hope to return now?

## How to Stay Awake:

1. Build a solid devotion life
  2. Commit to the Lord’s Church
  3. Repent from Dead Works and Sin
  4. Live Out God’s Missions on Earth
- Share the effect that one of these four areas have impacted your life the most.
  - Which area(s) do you need to work on in order to stay awake?
  - Read Mark 13:32-36. We don’t know when Jesus will return, but we are called to hope for His return and live ready for his imminent return. Are you ready?

# ACT ON IT



## ENCOURAGE

We're so thankful that the first theme of Advent that we get to dive into is hope! Our world needs it! People spend so much time and energy putting their hope in all sorts of things because they are desperate for something to hold onto and believe in. Our world needs to know that there is only one true source of blessed hope: Jesus Christ. In a broken world, pain is a part of our reality. But we don't have to give in to that pain. We can have joy in chaos because our Lord walks with us through our pain. No matter how hard it gets, our hope is the person, work, ministry and life/death/resurrection of Jesus. And because of that, we know and trust that Jesus will be coming back for us again, even though we don't know when. Don't get caught sleeping at the return of Jesus. Stay awake!



## ASK

What are you hoping for right now? What is holding your hope hostage? What honest questions are you struggling with? Have you asked them to God? What is God producing in you this year? Are you living ready for Jesus?



## CHALLENGE

Start building a solid devotion life through prayer, reading your Bible, worship, fasting and living fully surrendered. Commit to the Lord's Church and take your next step in attending, serving, giving and leading. Live as the new creation in Christ and repent from dead works and sin. Start living out God's mission on earth by witnessing to others, inviting people to join you and sharing the Good News.

# Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the message of the Gospel. Thank You for Jesus Christ, our Blessed Hope, who makes it possible for us to live redeemed and transformed lives. Thank You Jesus for dying for us and raising from the dead so that we can have new lives, eternal lives and eternal living here on earth now. You are our Blessed Hope, nothing else compares. We repent of the temporary things in which we've been searching for hope because we now know they'll never last, but You will. While we wait on our Blessed Hope to return, help us be on fire for things of God. Make us zealous for good works. Make us passionate about the things of God. Empower us with Your Holy Spirit to live ready for You each and every day. We thank You and we praise You. Amen.