



## December 18 & 19: The Light of Joy Leader's Guide

### Series Overview

Holiday lights are beautiful, but nothing compares to the light of Christ. In this series, we're exploring the true meaning of Christmas and how we can uncover the light, shine the light and even be light to others.



**Take a second look ... visit [cpccweb.org](http://cpccweb.org) to watch sermon or get the highlights here!**

### Sermon Highlights

*Philippians 2:3, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.*

When I read that verse I realize how far I have to grow in the Christian life, because I can't say I never do anything out of selfishness. I do a lot of things out of selfish ambition.

*Philippians 2:4, Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

The Bible is realistic. It doesn't say, "Don't ever look to your own interests." It says, "Not only to your own interests," but be in touch with the interests of others.

*Philippians 2:6-7, <sup>6</sup>Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

Jesus set aside His own interests to become flesh. *Luke 2:6-7, <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup>and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

We are to bring joy to others. Jesus left the glory of heaven for a cave in this world. He had the world at His feet but He came to wash the feet of the world. And now we are to reflect that same attitude. What does that look like?

#### 1. Do nothing out of selfish ambition.

We look out for ourselves. In fact, we learn early on, "If I don't look out for myself, nobody else will." It's our nature, and it's how we're nurtured. In our society it's all about standing up for my right. We make sure that our rights aren't being violated.

But what do you do when you are asked to treat someone you don't even know with love and kindness? That is when the incarnation—God becoming flesh—becomes real. When someone doesn't say thank you. When they give you nothing in return. When someone is unlovable and you show them the light of Christ's joy that you've received. That's the incarnation.

*Romans 5:8, But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

When we show other people His light and put their interests ahead of our own, we bring light to darkness. Paul said, "Consider others better than yourselves."

#### 2. Do everything without complaining.

*Philippians 2:14-16, <sup>14</sup>Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky <sup>16</sup>as you hold firmly to the word of life.*

God sent His Son to save us, but we just whine about this and that. God sends His Son to earth as a baby. "But God, can't you do something about my retirement fund?"

He has saved you from your sins. That's the value of this season. When we are reminded of what we've been given, we realize we have nothing to complain about. When we see what Jesus has given to us, it puts it in proper perspective.

He left the throne of heaven for this world, and He never had a home to call His own. His family misunderstood Him, His friends abandoned Him. He never did one thing wrong, but He was beaten and brutally killed.

But Jesus never said, "It's not fair." He never whined or complained because things weren't going His way. And that attitude of joy is what we are to reflect in our own lives.

This Christmas experience the incarnation in your own life. Let that light change your life and your relationships. Instead of transferring the fear and anxiety of this world, reflect His peace to the people around you.

Instead of transferring bitterness, reflect His forgiveness. Instead of transferring anger, reflect His kindness. Instead of transferring a critical spirit, reflect His encouragement, joy and goodness. Because after all: Joy to the world, the Lord has come!



## Take it to the source ... Bible Study

**Introductory question:** If you could get one ultimate Christmas present, with no expense limitations, what would it be? Why?

### Opening Thought

A lot of people in our society base their happiness on large gifts or the material things that surround them. There is obviously some value to nice things, but often if we don't get what we want, we tend to complain or focus on the negative side of our circumstances. Use this lighthearted question to get your group thinking about true happiness and what really contributes to our sense of joy.

**Read *Philippians 2:3-7, Ephesians 4:1-2* and *Colossians 3:12-14*.**

1. How can selfish ambition or vain conceit hinder our relationship with God? With others?
2. How does humility keep us aware of the fact that we are completely dependent upon God?
3. What are some of the ways that Christ took the nature of a servant? How can we follow His example?

### Key Point

Selfish ambition or vain conceit can cause us to see only ourselves in any situation. We lose sight of God's place in our lives and our relationships with others. As we humbly walk with God and learn to recognize His work in our life and the lives of others, we are better able to serve. This will bring a sense of joy to us and to those we are serving.

**Read *Philippians 2:14-16*.**

1. What do you complain about the most? How does it affect your sense of peace and joy when you complain a lot?
2. How often do you stop to thank God for the blessings in your life? How might that affect a person's tendency to complain?
3. What is the biggest blessing you have had this year? What have you done to show your gratitude to God?
4. What things can your small group do to encourage each other to stay positive as you point others to Christ?

### Key Point

At its most fundamental level, complaining is saying that God isn't taking care of us adequately. We stop trusting in Him and start trying to fix things ourselves. This usually heightens stress and anxiety since we often feel like we have only ourselves to rely on. Taking time to recognize the good things God is doing in your life can help you to be positive toward God, His work in your life and toward other people. This positive attitude will help you remember God's faithfulness in the past and encourage you to rest in His goodness for the future.

## Read *Luke 2:1-20*.

1. What are some of the things that strike you as you remember the events surrounding Jesus' birth? What must it have been like for the Son of God to become a small, helpless baby?
2. As a baby, Jesus was denied a place in the inn. What are some of the ways that we deny Him room in our lives today?
3. What is the direct connection between serving and joy? Why do we experience more joy and peace when we think less about ourselves?
4. As we face a new year, what are some ways that you can look beyond your own circumstances to see how you can bring the joy of Christ to others?

### Key Point

Everything about the birth of Jesus points toward Him humbling Himself for others. He left His place on the throne of heaven to come down and be born as a baby to a poor family. He and his parents were denied some of the most basic considerations at the time of His birth, and throughout His life He often felt rejected and marginalized. He ultimately ended up on the cross, and yet in all of this Jesus was motivated by joy at accomplishing the Father's will. His example shows us how we can live a life of service that brings joy regardless of the circumstances or results.

## Notes...



## Take it home ... Practical Applications

In your time with God this week, ask God to show you places in your life where you need to exchange bitterness for forgiveness and anger for kindness. Ask Him to give you opportunities to bring the positive joy of His life to those that you meet, then take those opportunities to be a practical source of encouragement, joy and goodness.

### Please Note:

**This is the final study guide of the year. The next study guide will be for the sermon series beginning on January 8 & 9 of 2011.**



**Sermons are just a click away! Watch or listen to sermons online @ [cpccweb.org](http://cpccweb.org).**

*All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.*

© Connection Pointe Christian Church 2010