

The image features a central, glowing cross with a bright white light at its intersection, set against a dark blue, starry background. Below the cross, an open book is depicted with its pages fanned out, showing some text. The overall composition is centered and symmetrical, with a soft, ethereal glow emanating from the cross and the book.

Step Into the Story

A SERMON SERIES FOR ADVENT

**Christmas is about
an Upper Story that
we are all a part of.**

Christmas is about
an Upper Story that
we are all a part of.



**Immanuel isn't just Jesus
coming as a baby
2,000 years ago...
It's God with us today!**

God is calling us...

From despair to HOPE.

From hatred & hurt to LOVE.

From misery to JOY.

From anxiety to PEACE.



STEP INTO

Joy

JAMES 1:2-8

What's the
difference between
happiness & joy?

Happiness is external.

Joy is internal.

Happiness is temporary.

Joy is ongoing.

Happiness comes
from what's happening
in the moment.

Joy is a gift from God
(a Fruit of the Spirit)
and is activated by a
determined choice.

“Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of every detail in my life...the quiet confidence that ultimately everything will be all right, and the determined choice to praise God in all things.”

Kay Warren

...no matter what we're
going through at
the moment.

**Joy has many
enemies.**

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

 (a determined choice)

Consider it pure joy
whenever you face
trials of many kinds.

This has to be one of the most difficult passages (commands) in the entire Bible to put into practice in our lives. It seems basically IMPOSSIBLE to view the various trials that we encounter with a view to considering them as PURE JOY. Several Sunday's ago in a sermon that I preached, I invited our congregation to pause and take a moment to give thanks for the struggles that we are going through. Many came up to me after that message — "complaining" that my asking them to do that was "just too hard."

I'll say it again...

Joy has many
enemies.

We find 3 of joy's
greatest enemies in
the Christmas story...

**We find 3 of joy's greatest enemies in
the Christmas story...**

Fear & Anxiety

Hurt & Resentment

Confusion & Doubt

Mary had to overcome
Fear & Anxiety
to find joy.

Luke 1

**You can't be fearful and
joyful at the same time.**

- When Mary was afraid, she chose to trust God and accept His plan.

Luke 1:38

Luke 1:46

*“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit finds its joy
in God my Savior.”*

Joseph had to overcome
Hurt & Resentment
to find joy.

Matthew 1:18-21

**You can't be resentful and
joyful at the same time.**

- When Joseph was hurt he chose to offer grace and let the pain go.

Matthew 1:19

...and God blessed him
with the joy of being
the step-father of Jesus.

The Magi had to
overcome Confusion
& Doubt to find joy.

Matthew 2:1-12

**You can't be filled with
doubt and and joy at
the same time.**

- When the Maji were confused they chose to follow God's light one step at a time.

Mary, Joseph & the Magi
made the choice to trust God
—even in the face of hurt &
confusion. And in each case,
the result was great joy.

Matthew 2:10

**So how do we
step into joy?**



**Is your heart full
of anxiety & fear?**

- **Choose to trust God and
believe He has a plan.**



Is your heart full of
hurt & resentment?

- Choose to offer grace and
give the pain to God.



Is your heart full of
doubt & confusion?

- Choose to follow God one
step at a time. He will
light your path.

Communion



