

## WORSHIP

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Joy to the World, O Come All Ye Faithful, Hark the Herald

## WELCOME

**Christmas Tradition.** Briefly share how you and your family celebrate Christmas every year.

## WORD

### MATTHEW 1, PSALM 16:11

*You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

We all long for happiness. Whether we are aware of it or not, in every action and every decision that we make, our primary motivation behind all our choices is a desire to be happy.

Sadly, many people look for happiness in their own way. More often than not, the happiness they find is temporal and last only for a short time. But the happiness that God offers is different - it is everlasting.

God has great plans for each one of us. God designed us to fulfill our full potential and experience true joy that can only be found in Him. God is a joyful God and He wants to teach us the path of life. We are made by God and for God. In the presence of the Lord, there is fullness of joy (**Psalm 16:11**). Apart from God, it is impossible to be truly happy.

### CHRISTMAS IS OUR ASSURANCE

The way we celebrate Christmas reveals our understanding of who Jesus is. For many people, Christmas is a time of gift giving, taking a vacation and spending time with family. These are all wonderful; however, Christmas is more than these.

Christmas brings the good news of great joy to all people with God's greatest gift to us, Jesus Christ our Savior (**Luke 2:10-11**). Christmas is God's assurance to us that He loves us, God's assurance that we can be full of joy.

**Fulfillment of God's Promise** - Christmas was not forced upon the Lord; He initiated it. Matthew 1 traces back the historical ancestry of Jesus from Abraham and David to whom God made a promise that the Messiah will come from their lineage (**Genesis 18:22; 3:14-15; 2 Samuel 7:16**). Jesus'

birth was God's promise fulfilled in the fullness of time (**Galatians 4:4-5**).

**Freedom from Bondage of Sin** - In Jesus' genealogy, there were six 7-generations from the generation of Abraham to the birth of the Messiah (**Matthew 1:17**). Jesus' birth marks the start of the seventh seven. In the Old Testament, after the seven sevens, 49 years, is the 50th year also called as the Year of Jubilee. At this time, all debts are cancelled and all slaves are set free.

When Jesus, the Messiah, came down to earth, He paid all our debts by His death on the cross and set us free from the bondage of sin. The Messiah was sent as the ultimate sacrifice and the reason why people can finally enjoy 'rest' from striving in their own effort of rituals and sacrifices to please God.

**Four Women Chosen by Grace** - The genealogy of Jesus mentioned four women who did not come from nobility but rather had a bad reputation: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba (**Matthew 1:3-6**). Tamar pretended to be a prostitute to manipulate her father-in-law Judah; Rahab was a prostitute; Ruth was a Moabite, a religious outcast; and Bathsheba consented adultery with King David.

These women were included in the lineage of Jesus to give us a picture of God's grace. God could have chosen reputable women to be the ancestors of Jesus, but He did not. This is to show us that there is no sin so deep that the grace of God cannot reach; no mistake so fatal that the grace of God cannot redeem; and no past so dark that the grace of God cannot transform. God used these four women to show us that we have the assurance of the grace of God and that Christmas is for all people. Regardless of our

## WORD (cont'd)

past, we can have the assurance of God's grace, love and a new beginning. Grace can never be bought or earned, if it could be, then it is no longer grace (**Romans 11:6**). We do not deserve to receive His grace but God is telling us that no matter what, He still chooses to love us.

### BELIEVE AND BE JOYFUL

What can we learn from Joseph and Mary (**Matthew 1:18-19**)?

**Joseph** was a righteous man and obedient to the law. The angel of God spoke to Joseph in a dream that Mary will bear a Son in fulfillment of the prophecy (**Isaiah 17:4**). It was not easy for Joseph to believe this as people would laugh at him for taking Mary, an unmarried pregnant woman, as his wife. Yet he trusted and obeyed God (**Matthew 1:24-25**). The evidence of his belief is his obedience. In the same way, we have not believed yet until we obey.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)*

- 1. Fullness of Joy.** According to **Psalms 16:11**, how can we have the fullness of joy? Where can we seek true joy?
- 2. Celebrate Christmas.** What does Christmas mean to you? How does it affect the way you celebrate Christmas?
- 3. Our Response.** How do you experience the joy of Christmas? What is the evidence of what you believe?

## WORKS

### DEVELOPING CHARACTER

God sometimes allow us to experience pressure in life. In Matthew 1, God was more concerned in developing the character of Joseph than in relieving Him of tension or pressure. In the same way, God wants us to learn how to process pressure and learn something through it just like how Joseph did.

Taking a look back at the year 2016, cite 3 situations or experiences which God used to develop your character. How did you respond to them?

**Mary**, at a very young age may not have fully understood what the angel of God told her that she will bear a Son conceived by the Holy Spirit. It was not easy for Mary to believe and obey this considering that in doing so she could be stoned, disowned by her family, rejected by Joseph and carry the shame all her life. But Mary was assured that nothing is impossible with God. She took a step of faith to trust God whatever the consequences may be. Because she believed and surrendered herself to the Lord, she experienced joy (**Luke 1:30-38, 46-47**).

Christmas is God's assurance to us that He loves us and that we can have the fullness of joy in Him. Do you believe this? To believe is not always easy but if we want the joy of Christmas in its fullness, we should believe and be full of joy.

### WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

#### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

#### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

#### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

#### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

#### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends