

STUDY GUIDE



TIS THE SEASON 11.26.2017

[set up]

Have you ever had your joy, hope, or peace fade or shaken? Why? What happened? Did you get it back? How?

During this holiday season, the words joy, peace, and hope are often seen, sung, heard, and spoken. But so many people do not seem to be experiencing these gifts from God. Why?

[digging deeper]

How is gratitude a game-changer to experiencing hope, peace, and joy that can't be shaken so easily?

A likely discouraged and troubled Mary breaks out in a song of praise and gratitude of God at the divinely inspired encouragement she receives from her cousin Elizabeth. **Read this account in Luke 1:39-55.**

Why did Mary seem so joyful?

What are some specific things for which she expressed great gratitude to God?

How can you relate to what Mary is singing out here? What feels like a disconnect?

Mary seemed to focus her heart on God, His character, and His faithfulness. How is her gratitude being centered on the Lord's unchanging nature? How do we set ourselves up to have our faith, hope, peace, and joy shaken when we focus our gratitude on that which can change, fade, or be taken from us?

Psalm 9:1 says, "I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds."

List several wonderful deeds God has done for you. Which ones can diminish and be taken away and which ones are untouchable or eternal?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:25-35. How does this echo some of what Mary said? How do you see yourself in these verses, and how can what you have seen here help you be grateful to Christ?

Brainstorm a list of ways we can fight to keep our gratitude centered on Christ (use a note sheet/large post-it note).

[living it out]

Memorize and daily repeat Luke 1:49—“for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name”—to help you focus on having a Christ-centered gratitude this season and beyond, especially when you feel like your joy, your peace, and your hope are being tested or attacked.

Gratitude can be very contagious if it’s consistent and intentional. Last Sunday you were challenged to write 3 “Thank you” cards—one to God (you can do this in your journal or Bible as well), one to a family member to bless and encourage them, and one to a neighbor to express gratitude to them and utilize gratitude in a strategic missional way. Did you do that yet? If so, how did that feel and what sense did you get in how God did, or might, use it?

Close this time in prayer. Let the prayer time be focused on prayers of Thanksgiving. You can just take turns in your LifeGroup, just lifting up continuous prayers of gratitude long before you ask anything of the Lord.