



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

COMFORT AND JOY

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Series Summary

Christmas is all about the news of comfort and joy. That is what we are going to call this series over the next few weeks – Comfort and Joy. Whether you're looking forward to the holiday season, or you're struggling with feelings of sadness and loneliness this time of year, there is hope for you in the message of Christmas. In this series, we'll be diving deeper into how as Christians we can always experience comfort and joy because of Jesus, no matter what circumstances they're facing this Christmas season.

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Jump For Joy

Comfort and Joy | Week 1 | 1 John 1:1-4

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How does knowing Jesus was a historical person impact the way you experience Christmas?
2. How can you experience comfort by knowing that God offers eternal life?
3. How can we strengthen our fellowship with God and with each other to experience complete joy?

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Comfort Zone

Comfort and Joy | Week 2 | 1 John 1:5-10

INTRODUCTION

As Christmas approaches, it's easy to feel surrounded by cheer—festive songs, colorful lights, and gatherings with loved ones. But for many, this season is far from “the most wonderful time of the year.” Studies show a majority of Americans feel loneliness and sadness during the holidays, and the post-Thanksgiving Monday is a peak day for appointments related to anxiety and depression. In this series, we're learning how Christmas can bring comfort amid the hardships of life. The message of Christmas is not just joy, but comfort—rooted in God's light and His invitation for us to be eternally right with Him.

KEY POINTS

1. We Take Comfort When We Are Convicted of Sin

The world's biggest issue is not external problems like poverty or war; it's the internal issue of sin. Like a patient unaware of their sickness, people often fail to realize their need for healing from sin. Christmas is the arrival of Jesus, the light of the world, who reveals our need for salvation. The conviction of sin, while uncomfortable, is a gift from God, helping us see our need for His forgiveness.

2. We Take Comfort When We Confess Our Sin

Conviction should lead us to confession. When we try to deny, dilute, or defend our sins, we distance ourselves from God. However, confessing our sins brings freedom, healing, and restored fellowship with God. Confession means agreeing with God about our sin and receiving His forgiveness. This shows us that ultimately, confession leads to comfort.

3. We Take Comfort in Being Cleansed of Sin

If conviction leads to confession, then confession leads to cleansing. God promises not only to forgive but to purify us from all unrighteousness. Jesus' birth, life, and death offer complete forgiveness—a “done deal” for all who confess and turn to Him. God's promise of forgiveness is grounded in His faithfulness and justice. Our relationship with God becomes unbreakable because of Jesus, who fulfilled the justice of God through His sacrifice.

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Comfort Zone

Comfort and Joy | Week 2 | 1 John 1:5-10

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why might people resist feeling convicted of sin?
2. What is one way that conviction can be a source of comfort?
3. How does God's promise of forgiveness and cleansing through Jesus give us comfort, especially during difficult or lonely times?

Christmas To The Rescue

Comfort and Joy | Week 3 | Luke 2:11; Matthew 1:21

INTRODUCTION

We've all had to put on a brave face at some point in our lives when we received a Christmas gift that wasn't exactly what we wanted. But then, we've all received those perfect gifts too: the ones that show someone really saw us, really knew what we needed. In a way, these gifts remind us of the perfect gift that all of humanity received in Jesus—a gift prepared for us personally and purposefully. Today, let's look deeper at our Savior, our greatest gift, as we reflect on Luke 2:11.

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KEY POINTS

1. The Savior Tells Us Who Jesus Is

In Luke 2:11, the angels announced to the shepherds that a Savior was born. This title, Savior, is not just an identifier but the essence of who Jesus is. His name itself—Jesus or Yeshua—means “God saves.” Even before his birth, the angel instructed Joseph to name him Jesus because he would save people from their sins. His name, repeated throughout Scripture, reminds us each time of His role as rescuer and redeemer.

2. The Savior Tells Us Why He Came

Jesus's mission was clear: to save humanity from sin. Matthew 1:21 reinforces this purpose, explaining that Jesus would save people from their sins. Though He came to give us life, joy, and purpose, His primary role was to bridge the gap between us and God, rescuing us from the sin that separates us. His love met our deepest need: forgiveness and restoration to a relationship with God. It's important to hear about sin, but also about salvation—Jesus came with the ultimate solution to our greatest problem.

3. The Savior Tells Us What We Need

Beyond His identity and purpose, Jesus shows us our own need: a Savior. Sin creates a barrier we can't remove on our own. The primary reason we needed Jesus was not for material gain, knowledge, or entertainment, but for the forgiveness of our sins. As Rick Warren put it, “You don't need a Savior because you may die tonight; you need a Savior because you have to live tomorrow.” Recognizing that need is the foundation of understanding and truly experiencing the significance of Christmas.

Christmas To The Rescue

Comfort and Joy | Week 3 | Luke 2:11; Matthew 1:21

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Think of a time when you received a gift that took you by surprise, in a good or bad way. How does that experience shape your understanding of Jesus as the “perfect gift” to humanity?
2. In what ways do we sometimes overlook the significance of sin and our need for salvation in our daily lives?
3. How does understanding Jesus as a personal Savior impact your perspective on Christmas?
