

A Night to Remember – Sturdy Joy – by Marcy Lytle

What a phrase – joy that can't be knocked down even when circumstances aren't good – that's the sturdy kind we all need! And that's the *Joy to the World* that Jesus came to give all of us. Joy down in our hearts to stay!

Preparation: Have the song Joy to the World cued up to play at the start of this devotion. Then find three "sturdy" things that are no longer so and have them ready to reveal (maybe a table or chair with a broken leg, a toy or decoration that used to sit up but now falls over, or even your car that now has miles on it and needs repairs)

Joy to the World, the Lord is come, Let earth receive her King

Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing

And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing!

The whole world was waiting on the promised Messiah, the Savior of the World, and he came as a baby who would then become our King. That's the message of the Christmas story. A Savior born so that all who believe could have sins forgiven and eternal life with him! He is the Joy of the World. And now that Christmas is over, we can still enjoy the lyrics to that song!

What brings you joy? (Let kids answer and write them down) – maybe family, toys, pets, friends, snow days, candy? Why do those make you feel joyful? (Let the kids answer).

Joy is a feeling of great pleasure or happiness.

Now, what if you lose one of the things that brings you joy, or that thing is broken or somehow doesn't bring you joy anymore? Has anyone ever lost a toy? Or had one break? What about a pet that ran away? What happens to our joy when we lose the things that bring us joy? (We are sad, we cry, we want it back...)

And... what does the word sturdy mean? (It's strong and powerful). What are some sturdy things in our house or family? What about the fridge! It's heavy and can't really be moved very easily. What else?

But even the most sturdy things or people we know can still be moved or broken or lost...

Jesus came to bring us sturdy joy, the kind of joy that can't be knocked down or destroyed!

The beginning of *Joy to the World* says to let heaven and nature sing. What two lights shine in our skies by day and by night? (The sun and the moon). Would you say they are sturdy? They appear every single day and night and nothing can stop them!

Jesus was born as a baby, he grew up and obeyed his parents and then began to love others as his Father sent him to do. And then what happened to Jesus when he was a grown man and was taken to a cross to die? Do you think he lost his joy?

Guess what? His joy is us – in our knowing Him – the sturdy joy that never leaves us or disappoints us...or Him!

(Bring out the three items that were once sturdy but now they're not. Or have them ready to show, one by one.)

Every sturdy thing that we can buy or place in our homes can eventually get scratches, wear out, or break...and even tumble over or quit working.

But guess what? Jesus is our sturdy joy that cannot ever be taken from us! Romans 15:13 says this,

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.

You might be sad some days, because something that was once sturdy in your life is now broken, but you can talk to Jesus and find that He was, and will always be, the *Joy of the World*.

Let's prepare our hearts to receive Him now: (read the prayer and have family repeat each line)

Jesus, thank you that you are our sturdy joy.

Jesus, we invite you into our hearts to stay.

Jesus, thank you for all of creation...

That reminds us that you are our King.