

## **The Discipline of Celebration** **November 2, 2014**

### **Reflections/Principles to Study & Apply**

- A. At the heart of it all, we strive to seek God in our lives and give an expression of adoration and thanksgiving to Him. Often times we lean more on our own understanding of what it means to celebrate and turn it into a tradition rather than an expression of true joy and appreciation for who God is. We should always seek to include God in the heart of our celebrations by not just having parties, but look to express the joy we have through a relationship with Him.
- B. Developing a celebration of joy comes from seeking God more deeply. When we do this we are shown His heart for His creation. He made us and wants us to come to a deeper appreciation of the way He sees our lives. In seeking to give God the glory in all corners of our lives we share our successes and failures with Him and give the opportunity for Him to shape our outlook on life. As He shapes it, we find unconditional joy despite life's circumstances. This perspective gives us a true understanding of how to celebrate.
- C. Verses for further exploring Celebration in scripture.

2 Chronicles 7:1-10  
Psalm 150:1-6  
Luke 15:3-10  
1 Corinthians 10:31  
1 Corinthians 15:10-30

## **November - Celebration**

It may seem strange to call celebration a discipline, but remember one of the definitions for spiritual disciplines - any activity that prepares us to either hear or follow the leading of God in our lives. Disciplines help us grow as disciples of Jesus.

Celebration prompts us to look at life through the lens of what life will be like when Jesus returns one day and the Kingdom of God is present in all its glory, wonder and freedom. Celebration is choosing to view life through the perspective of what has been done through Christ for us today and what is yet to come.

This is not easy some days; it takes discipline to remember and rest in the promises of God, rather than to look at our circumstances. This is not blind optimism, but learning to walk in the victory Jesus brought us on the cross. Celebration is cultivating a deep confidence in God's goodness, knowing that while battles will still be fought, the war against sin, death and its consequences have been won by Jesus.

Celebration requires our chipping away at bitterness, resentment and anger. It requires knowing and proclaiming the promises of God. It helps motivate and assist our practice of our disciplines. For example, what would worship be without a spirit of celebration? It would be an empty shell of an activity.

Joy is to be the hallmark of a disciple of Jesus. If you are not joyful, than celebration is a discipline that can help refresh your spirit, reminding you of the good God has done for you already, and the good God will bring in the days ahead.

### **Celebration Ideas for anyone:**

- Choose to have a positive attitude today. If that is not possible for you, talk to someone you can view as a spiritual mentor to help you discover what issue in your soul is spoiling your outlook.
- Organize a celebration (family, church, small group) just to celebrate God's goodness in your life, or in your family, small group or church.
- Do something that immerses you in God's creation. (Walk outside, zoo, aquarium). Try to imagine what the Garden of Eden was like. Try to imagine what the new earth will be like. How does that help shape your perspective on life?
- If you encounter, or are experiencing, a difficult circumstance this month, acknowledge the difficulty of it, and then find a way to express the greatness of God over your circumstances.
- Start planning now for your Christmas celebration(s). How will you make it less connected to commercial activity and events, but about the gift of Jesus to all humanity?
- Reflect on Deuteronomy 28:47-48. Do the people you spend time with help you serve God with joy and gladness? If not, are they the issue, or are you the source of anti-celebration? Likely it is a combination of both parties. How can God lead you to encourage those around you to celebrate God's goodness?
- Write down all the complaints you make for one day (including the ones you think, but don't speak). Then at the end of the day, reflect on the day past and write down all the reasons you have to give thanks. Which list is longer? Take the complaints and look for different ways to think about them.
- Memorize the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and use it as encouragement when you are discouraged.
- Have you ever wanted to 'dance before the Lord' out of joy? If so, what did you do with that feeling? If not, what is your reason(s)? Spend some time meditating on 2 Samuel 6:12-23
- Be intentional about encouraging everyone you can (not everyone you want to) today.

### **Activities with children:**

- Plan a small surprise for someone you know could use a lift in their spirits. (Bake cookies, make a card, put together a gift basket, for example). Prepare the surprise with your child(ren) talking to them about the value of blessing others. Pray for them as a family before you deliver the surprise.
- Hold your children in your lap or sit beside them depending on how old they are. Ask them what kind of person they would like to be when they grow up (not what job, but character qualities). Tell them how much you love them and how proud of them that you are. Imagine Jesus holding you, while you hold or sit with them.
- Buy some finger paints and some paper to paint on. Make some finger paintings as a family. Hang up the artwork to remind you what it means to just have fun together.