

The Art of Celebration
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Care Group Guide

Introduction

Romans 15:13

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 13:9

The life of the godly is full of light and joy, but the light of the wicked will be snuffed out.

Philippians 4:4

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Chapter 13 of Richard Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline* is dedicated to the "Discipline of Celebration." Celebration is not random nor circumstantial. Rather, celebration is a mindset, action, and habit for the believer. This discussion will take you deeper toward the discovery of barriers to joy and suggest tools for building Celebration into your life as both foundation and outcome.^a

READ

Luke 2:10

At the birth of Jesus, what was the message to shepherds and what would be the implications for "all people".

John 15:11

Jesus left the world bequeathing his joy to the disciples: "these things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

DISCUSS: Describe some of the ways Jesus has brought JOY into your life.

Celebration Gives Strength to Life

Celebration brings joy and joy makes us strong.

Neh. 8:10

“The joy of the Lord is your strength”

DISCUSS: Can you think of a time when joy gave you, or someone you know, strength to endure a very difficult time?

The Path to Joy

- In the spiritual life only one thing will produce genuine Joy, and that is Obedience.^a

Eph. 5:15-20 NLT - Living by the Spirit's Power

15 So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. 16 Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. 17 Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. 18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DISCUSS: What principles do you see in the verses above that would help bring joy into life that you can celebrate?

Scripture does not command us to celebrate the presence of evil.^a Rather, as followers of Christ we can celebrate in the presence of evil, because of what Christ has accomplished on the cross and the hope of salvation.

The Spirit of Carefree Celebration

Phil 4:4-7 - This is how we enter into joyful celebration.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious [aka. KJV "Careful"] for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- Do not be full of care. (see also Matt. 6:25 "do not worry about your life")

DISCUSS: What is the antidote for anxiety, according to the verse above?

- o Prayer is the means by which we connect with God and "right-size" the issues of life

Phil. 4:8 - Prayer is also how we set our mind on the right track:

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

DISCUSS: Make a list of things that fit “true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.”

- God has established a created order full of excellent and good things, and it follows naturally that as we give our attention to those things we will be happy. This is God’s appointed way to joy.
- The decision to set the mind on the higher things of life is an act of the will. That is why celebration is a discipline.
- Celebration is the result of a consciously chosen way of thinking and living.
- When we choose this way, the healing and redemption in Christ will break into the inner recesses of our lives and relations, and the inevitable result will be joy.^a

DISCUSS: How will you make some of your list a part of your regular thought life?

The Benefits of Celebration

The following is a list of Benefits of celebration from Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline*.

DISCUSS: Which of these would you or do you think you would benefit most from?

- Celebration saves us from taking ourselves too seriously. Foster says “it is an occupational hazard of devout folks to become stuffy bores. Of all people, we should be the most free, alive, interesting. Jesus rejoiced so fully in life that he was accused of being a winebibber and a glutton. Many of us lead such sour lives that we cannot possibly be accused of such things.”
 - o This is no invitation into sin, rather, we do need deeper, more earthy experiences of exhilaration. It is healing and refreshing to cultivate a wide appreciation for life.
- Celebration helps us relax and enjoy the good things of the earth.
- Celebration can be an effective antidote for the periodic sense of sadness that can constrict and oppress the heart. Celebration can fight depression.
- Celebration gives us perspective. We can laugh at ourselves. See our causes are not nearly so monumental as we would like to believe. Celebration is an equalizer. Rich and poor, powerful and lowly celebrate together before God.
- Celebration frees us from judgmental spirits.
- Finally, celebration leads to more celebration. Joy begets joy. Laughter begets laughter. It is one of those few things in life that we multiply by giving.^a

The Practice of Celebration

- Celebration is primarily a corporate discipline. But we've lost many of the common modes of expression in our culture today.
- One way to practice celebration is through singing, dancing, shouting. Because of the goodness of God, the heart breaks forth into psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Worship, praise, adoration flow from the inner chambers.^a

READ

Psalm 150

- Children celebrate with NOISE! Lots of Noise. Nothing wrong with noise at the appropriate time.^a

Exodus 15:20

- Dance after freedom from Pharaoh.

2 Sam. 6:14, 16

- David leaped and danced before the Lord with all his might.

DISCUSS: The following is a list of ideas for practicing celebration. Which stand out as interesting options for you and your family/friends?

- Singing, dancing, and noise-making are NOT required forms. They are examples.
- Laughter is a way to practice celebration. Clean jokes, laugh at yourself. "Try poking at fun and awaken it in your soul"
- Encourage celebration through creativity, fantasy and imagination; aka, PLAY. "Only those who are insecure about their own maturity will fear such a delightful form of celebration" Foster.
- Admire art. Sculpture, painting, photography, plays, music. Attend or host an art show, talent show, concert or play.
- Celebrate the little things. Important events like finishing a major project, securing a job, receiving a raise.
- Take advantage of cultural festivals and really celebrate. ^a
- Make up your own holy-day

"The world offers a counterfeit form of celebration. We as the Church ought to show them how it's really done."

Celebration gives us the strength to live in all the other disciplines. When faithfully pursued, the other disciplines bring us deliverance from those things that have made our lives miserable for years which, in turn, evokes increased celebration. Thus, an unbroken circle of life and power is formed.^a

So, begin the journey.

^a Richard Foster. *Celebration of Discipline*. 1978 (excerpts from p. 190-201)