

The Life You Have Always Wanted (But Need Spiritual Discipline to Obtain) #2 Celebration

Introduction

“Celebration:” To honor someone by solemn ceremonies or to mark something by festivities. Showing pleasure at an important event or occasion. Richard Foster sees “celebration” as a corporate spiritual discipline. But it can be done individually as well.

Some examples of Biblical celebrations:

Memorials

“Memorial”- to remember, to rehearse, to mark something as important

Jacob (Gen. 28:10-22)-marking his dream/vision with the Lord at Bethel

Joshua (Josh. 4:1-8)-when crossing the river Jordan on their way into the Promised Land

Samuel (I Sam. 7:7-12)-noting his win over the Philistines, he raises his Ebenezer

Feasts and Festivals

These were kept by Israel (See Lev. 23, Num. 28-29, Deut. 16).

As a community, these 7 feasts were observed as both civil and religious celebrations.

As an agrarian society, some of these marked either the beginning or the end of the harvest. Others commemorated historical events in the life of the nation.

All of the feasts were a time to remember, offer thanksgiving and to celebrate the faithfulness of God.

Spring Feasts:

Passover -celebrated on the 14th day of Abib (the first month in the Jewish calendar) Commemorated the time in Egypt when the Hebrew children smeared blood on their doorposts so the death angel would pass over their homes.

Unleavened Bread- celebrated the day after Passover, commemorating the unleavened bread that the Israelites carried with them in the exodus.

First Fruits- celebrated shortly after the festival of the Unleavened Bread. This feast celebrated the fertility of the land.

Harvest, Weeks or Pentecost (Ex.)-celebrated in the third month of the year (late May or June) marking the summer harvest.

Fall Feasts:

Trumpets (Lev. 23, Num. 29)- celebrated in the 7th month (September), this feast celebrated the liberty the Israelites enjoyed in their land.

Day of Atonement -also celebrated in the 7th month, this is the highest of the Holy Days. It is a day of confession and personal denial.

Tabernacles or Booths (Ex. 23, Ezra 3)- celebrated in the middle of the 7th month, this feast commemorates the wandering of Israel in the wilderness and God's provision for them as they journeyed towards the Promised Land.

Special Events

The dedication of the Zerubbabel's restored temple (Ezra 6:13-22)-led by Ezra
They *"celebrated with joy."*

The dedication of the wall in Jerusalem (Neh. 12:27-47)-led by Nehemiah
They *"offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and the children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away."*

The dedication of Solomon's temple (II Chron. 7:1-10)-led by Solomon
They *"worshipped and gave thanks to the Lord...and he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart for the good things the Lord had done..."*

The triumph of the Jews over King Xerxes in Susa (Esther 9: 18-23)- led by Mordecai and Esther. They *"rested and made it a day of feasting and joy..."*

God clearly believes in Celebrations

The occasion of Jesus' first miracle was a wedding celebration (John 2:1-11)

C.S. Lewis: "Joy is the serious business of heaven."

Lewis Smedes: "To miss out on joy is to miss out on the reason for your existence."

Apostle Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord, always and again I will say, REJOICE." (Phil. 4:6)

The Purpose for Biblical Celebrations

1. To remember or rehearse God's faithfulness (see I Sam. 7:12)
2. To mark a major achievement, so others can note His faithfulness as well (see Joshua 4:6-7)
3. To memorialize a place or event (see Gen. 12: 8)

The Elements of a Biblical Celebration

1. Reflection and confession-see Ezra 6:17 (note the offerings for their sins)
2. Thanksgiving: see Isa. 9:3
3. Praise and Worship-see Isa. 12:6
4. Music: see Ps. 27:6, Neh. 12:27-28
5. Physical expressions like dancing -see II Sam. 6:14

The Results of Biblical Celebration:

1. Reflection will bring perspective. It will help us “stay in the moment.” It will help us savor simple goodness. It will move our focus off self.
See Ps. 118:24
2. It will provide Joy (not just happiness over pleasant circumstances). And that joy will provide strength for the journey.
See Nehemiah 8:10 (“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”)
3. It will give us the tools to deal with anxiety and /or trials.
See Ps. 94:19 and James 1:1-2
4. Ultimately, Godly celebrations of His blessings will transform our lives. It will feed our faith and we will grow!
See I Peter 1:8-9

So What?

Some questions to consider:

1. Do you find it difficult to focus on joy in your life?
2. Is celebration (personal or corporate) a vital part of your spiritual disciplines?
Why or why not?
3. Can you identify a few people in your life who regularly celebrate the goodness of God and seem to effortlessly pass it along to others? Are you a “joy carrier”?
4. Have you ever “memorialized moment” with the Lord? Set up a stone monument in your garden to remember a particular blessing from the Lord? Written a poem or a song about His faithfulness? Taken a picture of something important so you can share His graciousness with others? If not, GO do so!

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