

Celebration as a Spiritual Practice

By Reclaim Today

Prayer. Fasting. Meditation. Bible reading. These are the sorts of spiritual practices that tend to be explored most frequently when thinking about the ways in which we worship God. But, celebration? Celebration often gets left in the realm of "the world" because it's not exclusively a spiritual discipline. And, other than a few big guys each year (hello Easter and Christmas), we tend to follow the rhythm of celebration for the culture we find ourselves immersed in (i.e. 4th of July and New Year's Eve). While there's nothing wrong with partaking in these festivities (believe us, we love a good party), celebration is first and foremost a gift from God!

Celebration was at times commanded in the Old Testament and often practiced in the New—from formal feasts such as Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Booths (Deut 16) to spontaneous moments of joy such as David dancing before the Lord's ark (2 Samuel 6), or Paul finding reasons to sing although he was imprisoned (Acts 16). In fact, the whole story of the Bible ends with a big celebratory party (Rev 19)!

But these days, we can get so focused on narratives of brokenness and sacrifice, that sometimes we forget God created a good world. And, while not everything is as it should be, there's still a need for wonder and delight. Just as we would desire a father to be generous, the Lord has given good gifts (Matt 7:11).

Here's an example: in the midst of the Old Testament Law, we see a section on tithing in which Israel is asked to set aside a tithe—1/10 of their harvest each year—probably sounds familiar, right? In fact, if you're like us, you may have just thrown up in your mouth a little bit because of how often this passage has been abused in the church. Yet, for two out of every three years, these first fruits are set aside for that household to enjoy, "in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose [typically the Tent of God or Temple of God] as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always" (Deut 14:23). And, for those who had too big of a tithe to carry all the way to the Temple? They were to exchange the tithe for money—easier to carry—and, "[u]se the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of



the Lord your God and rejoice" (Deut 14:26). Y'all. We had to quote it because this is a portion of scripture that we just... missed?! Israel is being asked to enjoy the fruits of their labor because this is how they remember the Lord is good! This is why we must celebrate.

Celebrating is vital because it's too easy to forget. Celebrating is vital because times aren't always good. Celebrating is vital because it can remind us that the bad times don't last forever. Celebrating is part of the joy we have in partaking in Christian life.

When we find reasons to celebrate, we express gratitude to the Lord while giving ourselves a reminder of the hope that is to come. So, regardless of the season we are having in life—one of abundance or one of lament—celebration can be an act of worship that allows you to, once again, see the goodness in the world around you and recognize that God is the one who, in love, created us to experience joy and fullness.

Are you ready to party yet? We know we are! So, we came up with a few unique ideas to help you with this practice of celebration, encouraging you to see and share in the beauty of the world around us.

Unique Ways to Celebrate

Celebrate a friend

Thank God for an incredible person he put in your life. Whether it's a birthday, a baby, accomplishing a goal, or just because—find someone else to shower with joy. This could be a meal, a congratulatory phone call, or a wonky homemade knit scarf. Showing your love helps to share God's love with others.

Commit to a "strange holiday"

Check the calendar for interesting holidays coming up this month. Pick one that resonates with you and create a plan to celebrate. These days can help remind us of the incredible gifts God has given you, from pastimes to people. Seriously, you guys. National French Fry Day? I mean, come-on.

Host a game night

Taking time to gather people for games and laughter can create joy in an otherwise ordinary day— it's okay to keep it simple. Praise God for people to gather with, a mind that can strategize, the jokes that ensue, and the humility that it requires to lose at Catan AGAIN.

Visit a special place

Find a place that's meaningful to you and drop by. Spend some time reminiscing and thanking God for the gifts the place represents. This can be especially meaningful during a period when times are tough- it will not always be this way.

Join a community event

Maybe it's a yearly festival or a grand opening. See what celebrations are happening in your area that you can simply drop in on! God put you in this place for a reason. Explore the ways that the community around you is blessed- even if they don't realize it just yet.