



An Order of Worship for the Home

February 7, 2021

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: We gather to worship. We gather to pray.

Reader 2: We gather to our God and to his word.

Reader 1: We gather in the name of our God who is...

Reader 2: Father, Son and Holy Spirit...

Together: Amen.

Psalm 100

¹ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

² Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

³ Know that the Lord, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!

⁵ For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.

Christian Confessing: Jesus, you alone are my guide. Yet, I have often followed the guidance of this world or presumed to guide myself. You alone are the goal of my life. Here too, I have made substitutions, and I've allowed lesser goals to capture my heart. Forgive me and change me. Discipline my heart to love you, my will to follow you, and my hands to serve you. Grant this, Lord, by your grace.

Christian Responding: Your Lord always hears your confession, and he faithfully answers with grace, mercy, and pardon. When his children ask, he forgives. This promise is for you, and his forgiveness yours! Further, in Baptism he's given you his Holy Spirit. God's Spirit will guide your heart, your will, and your hands in every calling he's placed on your life.

Together: Amen.

Revelation 19:6-9

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure” –

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God”

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

John 2:1-12

¹ On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴ And Jesus said

to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Message

The Discipline of Celebration

Celebration is a great capstone for this conversation about spiritual disciplines. Think about it: If these disciplines really are ways we receive the abundant life of Christ, then they will always lead us to celebration. Celebration is the natural outflow of practicing the other disciplines.

Yet, celebration is also a discipline in itself. Celebration can take effort, or intentionality at the least. The type of celebration we want to talk about is what we could call holy celebration. Not all celebration is holy celebration. People celebrate all kinds of things – some good and some not-so-good. People also celebrate in all kinds of ways. Again, some are good and others are not-so-good. Holy celebration is always good. It’s a discipline worth our effort and attention.

With that in mind, I want to look at two sections of Scripture today. The first gives an example of celebration as a discipline. It’s a case study we can learn from and

apply. The second passage is part of a story which will help us appreciate the benefit of learning this discipline of celebration.

Before we jump into those two sections of the Bible, let me share this definition of holy celebration.

Celebration happens as we share in God's joy and generosity.

We saw joy in the story we read last week about the shepherd finding his lost sheep. We saw generosity in the story we read earlier today, where Jesus turned water into wine. The joy of God's people is a gift from God. God's generosity allows his people to share. Like our definition says, holy celebration happens as God gives us joy and generosity to share.

With this in mind, let's look at Deuteronomy 14. This is a great case study in the discipline of celebration. God lays out a practice of celebration for his people, and invites them to be intentional about it. He wants them to plan for celebration. He wants them to personalize the celebration. He also sets some guidelines for this celebration. In short, God wants his people to be disciplined about celebration.

You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. ²³ And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. (Deuteronomy 14:22-23)

Just to be clear, that part is not the celebration. God's people were instructed to tithe. That means they gave 10% of their income to God. The instruction was to do this when your income was received. In an agrarian setting, that would mean once a year. When you harvest from your fields or your livestock bear young, you set aside the tithe as a gift for God.

What would this mean in our setting? I don't think any of you are farmers. You get paid more than once a year. If tithing means setting aside 10% when you get paid, then we would tithe once a month, every other week, or job-by-job.

Let me make a quick aside, because sometimes a question comes up about the place of the tithe in the New Testament. It's a good question, and here's the short answer. The Old Testament tithe was always the minimum. In the New Testament, believers are invited to imitate God's generosity. In short, you and I are invited to follow Jesus not by giving a minimum amount, but by giving generously.

Now, let's get back to Deuteronomy. We needed that tithing context, but we haven't even come to the true celebration yet. Listen to God's instruction on how the tithe is to be delivered to his temple. This is the discipline of celebration.

²⁴ And if the way is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, when the Lord your God blesses you, because the place is too far from you, which the Lord your God chooses, to set his name there, ²⁵ then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the Lord your God chooses ²⁶ and spend the money for whatever you desire—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, whatever your appetite craves. And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household. ²⁷ And you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you. (Deuteronomy 14:24-27)

This is your God giving instructions for how to make celebration a discipline. Notice, this is different from the feasts of Israel. At those holidays, everybody was celebrating. Those were important events, but God thought it was important for families to celebrate on their own schedules too. God gave his people just enough structure for the practice of celebration as a discipline. He gave just enough guidance to point them toward a holy celebration.

God told them *when* to celebrate. It would be sometime after the harvest, or sometime following the calving season. Maybe this was within days, or possibly weeks later. There was flexibility, but this would happen at least yearly.

God told them *how* to celebrate. They were told to have a meal, and include all the things they liked most!

God told them *who* was included. This was a family event. Everyone who had benefitted from the harvest would be there. Plus, they were told to invite the Levite. Levites were the tribe in Israel who did not receive land like the other tribes. Instead of living off the land, they were dedicated to serve in the temple. Their job was to make sure the rest of Israel could worship. God said to include a Levite family or two in this party.

That's a great example of celebration as a discipline. God wants his people to celebrate. He wants to create patterns of holy celebration.

Celebration happens as we share in God's joy and generosity.

Let me ask, what if you adopted a practice like Deuteronomy 14? Imagine what that could look like in your life. When would you celebrate? Maybe you could do this yearly, or maybe more often. How would you celebrate? You could host a meal at home, or go to a favorite restaurant. Who would join you? In the New Testament church, we serve as priests to one another. You could invite that person or family who helps you stay connected to your faith.

God has shared his joy and generosity with you. How could you share it with others? How can you be intentional about this discipline of celebration?

I told you we had two places we wanted to go in Scripture today. Deuteronomy provided a great example of celebration as a discipline. Next, I want to tell a story from the rebuilding of Jerusalem. We'll look at a specific celebration recorded in the book of Nehemiah.

The setting is this: Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people of Israel taken into exile. Some 70 years later, captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem. At first, not many returned. The city had been ravaged in war. Worship in the temple had come to a full stop. The city's defenses were useless, and the wall around the city had been pulled down in numerous places.

Ezra and Nehemiah emerge as leaders for God's people at this time. Nehemiah organizes the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. He brings supplies, and rallies the people to press into this work. In 52 days the task is completed.

At the same time, Ezra arrives in Jerusalem. Ezra was trained as a priest, and he's come to Jerusalem to reestablish temple worship. He's also come to teach the people about a God who loves them, but whom they've forgotten over time.

At the completion of the wall, Ezra and Nehemiah set a date for worship. One month after the work is completed, everyone gathered in Jerusalem to dedicate the wall, the city, and themselves to God.

When the people gathered in Jerusalem, Ezra read to them from Scripture. He told them the same stories we read in our Bibles today – the creation and fall; the flood; the calling of Abraham; Joseph sold by his brothers; how God provided for his chosen family by bringing them to Egypt; freedom from slavery to Pharaoh. Then Ezra read the laws given through Moses. He read God's expectations for his people, and his warnings that if they should disobey, he will give them over to other nations. The people heard the warnings and prophecies which had gone unheeded, and they recognized their current condition as the result of disobedience.

The eyes of the people began to fill with tears. You could hear sobs as Ezra was reading. The gathered people began to cry for the sorrow they carried.

This is one work of God's word. It cuts us down. The truth of God's word shows us where we've fallen short. Guilt and sorrow are brought to the surface when God's word confronts our sinful lives.

Ezra and Nehemiah saw what was happening. They knew this sorrow was the right response, but they also knew God wanted to provide hope for his people. I love what these two leaders did in response to the people's sadness. Instead of Ezra trying to preach a more upbeat sermon, he stopped preaching.

⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:9-10)

Ezra is done reading, because the people need something else. They declare a feast. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the people it's time to practice celebration.

Now, if you've wondered about the benefit of celebration as a discipline, I hope this story makes it apparent. Ezra and Nehemiah told the people to do the exact opposite of what they felt like doing. The people were crying from guilt, sorrow, and shame. The response of their leaders? Let's celebrate!

That could sound like a tone-deaf response. It could come across as a shallow answer to a very deep hurt. It could be received as an immature suggestion by a couple leaders lacking any empathy. Unless...you carry the definition of celebration we've laid out in this message.

Celebration happens as we share in God's joy and generosity.

The celebration to which Ezra and Nehemiah pointed was not centered on the wall they had just built. The celebration wasn't a rally to declare, "We're an amazing people!" This was not fantasy-land escapism. It was not the typical empty belief that the future will be better simply because we want it to be better.

Ezra and Nehemiah want their people to remember God's joy and generosity. They want the people to live in that joy and generosity. It's enough to share, so they tell the people to do just that.

“Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

The joy of the Lord is your strength! You may have heard that line quoted before. Did you know that this strength is realized in celebration? How else did you imagine you were going to experience the joy of the Lord?

Ezra knew that God's people needed strength, and he knew it would come from God's joy, not human sorrow. Ezra invites Israel to shift focus from their own sorrow to God's joy.

This is why we need the discipline of celebration. We need the strength of God's joy. Sorrow is too easy to come by. We lose loved ones. We lose our temper. We lose jobs. We lose friends. We lose patience. We lose sight of joy in a world filled with empty promises

You and I get stuck in the sorrows of Good Friday. We feel the pain and hurt for which Jesus went to the cross. We recognize the guilt and sin for which he died. We feel the weight of our own brokenness.

We live in a world corrupted by sin, and we fall into temptation. We hurt when the people we love are suffering, and we hurt even more when we lose them. We struggle to make sense of the anger around us, and sometimes within us. We are overwhelmed with the problems of this world. We are hurt by the words thrown at us, and we hurt others with the words we hurl back.

Like the people listening to Ezra, we grieve. We recognize sin in our world. We confess sin in our lives. We know that anything we've suffered is small compared with the punishment we deserve. You and I need these times of realization. We

need remorse and repentance, but this is not where we live. Our story does not end at Good Friday. We are an Easter Sunday people.

Jesus rose from the dead, and he lives a new life. Death cannot touch him. He has defeated sin. Jesus now forgives you, and gives you his new life. This is his abundant life. This is a life of joy; this is a life of generosity, where he supplies everything we need. This is a life of holy celebration.

Celebration happens as we share in God's joy and generosity.

This is why we need to discipline ourselves to celebrate, and to celebrate well. We need practices which bring us back to the holy celebration God desires to share with us. We need disciplines which highlight his joy and generosity. We need to set patterns where we share that joy and generosity regularly.

A few years ago I was given a book of liturgies for everyday occasions. I know, that sounds like a book only found in a pastor's library. However, this book is not written for pastors. It's written for everyday Christians and the everyday events of life. It includes prayers for preparing a meal, and setting up a Christmas tree, and finishing a good book. It even has two different prayers for the changing of diapers (because there are many diapers to change.)

One of my favorite prayers in the book is titled "A Liturgy for Feasting with Friends." It's a prayer which I've used on a couple occasions. I love it, because it reminds us that our celebrations are a response to the joy and generosity God's given us to share. It reminds us that we are a people of Easter Sunday.

I also love the way that prayer reminds me that all of the celebrations in this life help us look ahead to the celebration our God has planned for us. He is throwing a party, and he has a seat for you at the table. The marriage feast of the Lamb is the party which we anticipate with every one of our celebrations now. That party is unending. That celebration is the ultimate experience of the joy and generosity of your God. You'll receive his gifts, and you'll share his gifts.

We look forward to that day. While we wait, we discipline ourselves to celebrate well.

Amen.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.

Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.

Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.

Reader 2: Receive our offerings.

Together: Receive us as your own.

Blessing *(Numbers 6:24-26)*

Reader 1: The Lord bless you and keep you.

Reader 2: The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Reader 1: The Lord look upon you with favor...

Reader 2: And give you peace.

Together: Amen.

[An Invitation to Daily Discipline](#)

I want to encourage you to continue with FAITH5. If you started, keep it going. If you tried and faltered, that's OK. You can start again. If you meant to do it and just didn't get around to it, here's a chance for a fresh start. If you're wondering what FAITH5 is, [go here](#) to find out more. Let's make it our goal to have a faith conversation in every home every night.

[An Invitation to Celebrate](#)

You're invited to plan a celebration like the one God outlined for his people in Deuteronomy 14.

- First, decide what you'll give as an offering over the next 3 months. This is your tithe.
- Next, as you receive income, set aside that tithe. Separate a portion of your tithe and save it for a party.* Give the rest as you would normally.
- After 3 months of saving for a party, have your celebration as Deuteronomy 14 outlines. Choose your favorite food and/or drink. Involve your family. If your party fund allows, invite an individual or family who keeps you connected to your faith.

That's a small taste of Deuteronomy 14. Imagine if you set aside a portion of your tithe for 6 or 12 months! God wants his people to celebrate. Celebration happens as we share in God's joy and generosity. I'll be excited to hear about some celebrations in the month of May. I'll be celebrating with you. – Pastor Matt

*A great starting point is adopting the same percentage for tithing and for your "party fund." In other words, if you tithe 10% of your income, you also set aside 10% of your tithe. If you tithe 15% of your income, you set aside 15% of your tithe. If you tithe 5%, then use 5% of your tithe for your party.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.