

Reclaiming Joy: The Art of Celebration
Philippians 4:4
Dave Geldart
2015-4-12

Announcements

Duell read our passage and then pray for me

INTRO – VERY Briefly recap series.

- SDs Like Reclaimed Wood. Good stuff there, though fallen into disuse.
- **Series Big Idea:** Let's reclaim Gospel-powered spiritual disciplines for the sake of godliness (i.e. good works to the glory of God and for the good of His people).

TODAY: Reclaiming JOY: The Art of Celebration

PRAY

1) Are you a JOYFUL person?

- a) What would you say if there was a \$500 reward for honest and accurate answers?
- b) What would others say about you? Would they describe you as a joyful person?

2) What IS Joy

- a) We may talk about joy, read it in our bibles and sing about it on Sunday mornings, but likely have very little idea what it really means!
 - i) How would YOU describe it, if you were asked on that test?

b) Biblical Definition:

- i) Joy is ALL OVER the bible. Both NT and OT!
- ii) Hebrew – most of OT – perhaps the most JOYFUL language. 13 words for JOY and 27 more for expressing joy.
 - (1) THAT'S A LOT

iii) 2 main Uses of joy used in Bible

- (1) **JOYFUL** – Noun. state of being/condition of the soul. Deep happiness. Rich inner life. Fullness. Settled state of Hopeful Contentment. Connection with the living God that makes you alive inside no matter what.
 - (a) Profound contrast to our culture's experience (at best, elation or spurts of pleasure).
 - (b) HAPPINESS COMES IN to you from external circumstances. Joy comes OUT OF YOU into your world, into your messy circumstances.
 - (c) **Beethoven's 9th Symphony**, his final symphony, final movement of that symphony, is his famous ode to joy. BEAUTIFUL. Some of the most beautiful and moving music ever written. BUT, did you know at the time he wrote it he was completely deaf??? NO access to the auditory world around him. IT JUST CAME OUT OF HIM! It's beauty just came out from his very soul, out into his world. This is like the JOYFUL kind of joy.

- (2) **REJOICE** – verb. Joy IN God expressed in some action or decision. **To Celebrate!** A defiant stance of “nevertheless” in the face of our messy broken world. Though I experience pain and fear and sadness in GREAT quantity in this world, NEVERTHELESS, I will rejoice IN God – my great loving God who has moved heaven and earth to restore relationship with me, both now AND forevermore.

3) Our current state – why we NEED to reclaim/rediscover joy

a) Why talk about this?

- i) Not often talked about as a Sp Discipline any more.
 - (1) Might not have made it on your list of Sp. Disciplines
- ii) Dallas Willard calls Celebration “one of the most important disciplines ... yet most overlooked and misunderstood.” --The Spirit of the Disciplines

b) We’ve largely lost joy. Forgotten it. Misunderstood it. Sneered at it. Substituted in mere feelings of happiness, or bursts of pleasure. We’ve become cynics, stern, dour, suspicious, negative, sad, serious. – As a culture, but YES, even Christians!

- i) “It is an occupational hazard of devout folk to become stuffy bores. This should not be. Of all people we should be the most free, alive, interesting. ... After all, Jesus rejoiced so fully in life that he was accused of being a wine-bibber and a glutton. Many of us lead such sour lives that we cannot possibly be accused of such things.” -- Foster, Celebration...
 - (1) When you picture Jesus, what comes to mind?
 - (2) We tend to think of God as stern and serious.... Even angry. But happy? Laughing? JOYFUL?
- ii) Most of us spend our lives desperately trying to avoid pain and difficulty. When we suffer we cry out to God and others WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME??? – SOMETHING’S WRONG!!!
 - (1) something is seriously wrong not when Christians suffer but when they do not have the joy of the Lord. -- *Fernando, Ajith (2007-09-07). The Call to Joy and Pain*

c) Our general lack of deep, true Joy is evidenced by our age of rampant anxiety and depression.

- i) Hardly need to quote stats to you.
- ii) Stats are nearly the same INSIDE the church as outside.

iii) Personal Connection:

- (1) My story of anxiety this yr... last 3 yrs
 - (a) WOTY 2015: Peace
 - (b) Anxiety opposite of joy
 - (i) That’s why the command to rejoice in the Lord always is followed by the command to be anxious about nothing!
- (2) Personal story: my ho-hum attitude towards Benji’s birthday parties.
 - (a) Forgetting how to celebrate
- (3) My realized tend toward negativity and utilitarianism, toward criticism.
 - (a) I’m really good at pointing out the flaw(s) in anything.
- (4) Brothers and Sisters, I NEED TO RECLAIM JOY!!!!
 - (a) I PREACH TO YOU TODAY not as an expert, but as a fellow struggler.

d) REFLECTION QUESTION: Am I more of a joyful Christian, or a stuffy/sour one?

4) What the bible says about joy

a) God is joyful

- i) The overwhelming message of the Bible is that God is a joyful God, and he loves to celebrate.
 - (1) Zeph 3:14,17 -- Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ... The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.
 - (2) 8 different Hebrew words for JOY in these 2 verses alone!
 - (a) Joy Joy Joy!
 - (b) God is a JOYFUL God
- ii) God's entry into our world in the person of Jesus was heralded by angels with words of "GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY" (Luke 2:10)
- iii) Some of Jesus' last words to his disciples were his desire for "my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." – Jn 15:11
- iv) What's the clearest picture we have of the New Heaven/Earth God is bringing?
 - (1) A Wedding celebration. A gigantic party! God's the one throwing it! (Rev 19:6-9)
- v) God is a joyful God. He wants us to be as joyful as He is. And He knows we are otherwise inclined, as so he repeatedly commands his followers to celebrate and rejoice.
 - (1) *That brings us to our next point...*

b) God commands his followers to rejoice and celebrate

- i) That's right: it's a command!
- ii) **FOCUS VERSE FOR THE MESSAGE: And my WOTY 2015 Verse:**
 - (1) Phil 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."
- iii) **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."**
- iv) **3 Parables of the Lost things in Luke 15** (lost sheep, lost coin, culminating in lost son). Where restoration and refinding are cause for great JOY and celebration.
 - (1) Father (God) says to his stick in the mud-religious older son who refused to come in to the party: **"But we had to celebrate and rejoice..."** (HCSB)..... Luke 15:32
- v) **OT Celebration Festivals**
 - (1) OT is FILLED with commanded "Nevertheless" Rejoicing Festivals. Celebrations of God's goodness and faithfulness.
 - (a) *Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), Atonement (Yom Kippur), Tabernacles, Purim*
- vi) **So if God called his people to rejoice and celebrate long before Jesus came, HOW MUCH MORE should we who are Christians rejoice!?**
 - (1) **Christians should be the most joyful, celebratory, yes.... The HAPPIEST people in all the world.**
 - (2) **Even in the midst of pain and suffering.**
 - (3) Nothing anyone else has compares to our GREAT Reason to rejoice. To Celebrate.
 - (a) We who were utterly helpless and guilty. Rebels against a good God. Rightly condemned to death and eternal punishment. We've been SAVED! -- In the 9th Hour. BY THE JUDGE HIMSELF!

- (b) Because of GOD's work on our behalf through Jesus on the Cross, we are not only forgiven of our astronomical sins, but also brought CLOSE to God. Adopted into his very family. Delighted in, Safe. Loved. NOW!
- (c) And after we die, God promises to raise us back to life again... in new perfect eternal bodies on a new perfect earth where heaven is no longer separate, but God Himself will live with us. No more sin, no more suffering. No more pain or disease. No more sorrow or fear. Joy and delight overflowing forever. Our wildest dreams have not only come true, but been far far surpassed.

vii) REFLECTION QUESTION: How well am I reflecting the Joy of the Lord to others?

c) Joy and Pain are connected

i) The GOSPEL brings together the seeming paradox of joy AND pain

ii) Connected intimately in the life of God-man Jesus

(1) Who **for the joy set before him** endured the cross! (Heb 12:2)

iii) See this in Paul & Silas in prison. Acts 16. In Philippi. Singing in jail. Rejoicing.

(1) Nevertheless – GOD is Good and the story ends well. God is with me IN THIS.

iv) **Joy is undaunted by suffering and pain and sadness.** It stands in stark relief to them. Shines all the brighter with a dark background. SHINE LIKE STARS!

(1) **Paul** and Silas' prison cell-rejoicing shined SO brightly, that their jailer and his whole family decided to become Christians! And they formed the beginnings of the church at Philippi.

(2) **Our main verse** was written by Paul to this church years later AGAIN FROM A JAIL Cell, this time in Rome.

(3) NOT really a new idea. All over Bible

(a) OT with Job, Joseph, King David, Prophets like Isaiah, Habakkuk...

(i) *DON'T READ: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation."-- Hab 3:17-18*

(b) NT: Jesus in Mat 5:11-12: 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad [NKJV "be EXCEEDINGLY Glad"], for your reward is great in heaven

v) Joy is more than mere optimism and positive thinking

(1) putting on a fake smile or merely thinking positively in the face of what is true.

(2) not closing your eyes to reality and trying to just think happy thoughts

vi) JOY IS REALISM. Joy is tapping in to how things really are

(1) It's zooming out, lifting your eyes, and seeing the full picture.

(a) It's crying NEVERTHELESS in the face of your suffering BECAUSE:

(b) God is Good, and the Story ends well.

(2) **SPORTS ANALOGY: (MAKE FUN OF MYSELF)**

Same way a running back can still rejoice even right after he fumbles on the 1 yard line. Yes that stinks, but if he zooms out, lifts up his eyes, and sees the scoreboard – sees that there's only 3 seconds left and they're up by 80!!!! – he can rejoice because in CORRECT perspective THEY'RE GOING TO WIN!

- (a) YES he fumbled.
- (b) But YES they're STILL GOING to win. IT'S TRUE

vii) IMPORTANT CLARIFIER we often miss:

- (1) It's Not being happy FOR everything. But IN the midst of everything.
- (2) 1 Thes 5:18 (already read) – Doesn't say give thanks FOR all things. But IN (the midst of) all things! ... (Phil 4:4) rejoice **IN THE LORD**.

viii) REFLECTION QUESTION: When's the last time you consciously chose to rejoice in the Lord?

d) Our Joy in the Lord is our STRENGTH

- i) Neh 8:10 "Then 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." (clearly illustrated and implied in MANY other places)
 - (1) In the midst of suffering and fear, the people of God were called to celebrate for STRENGTH!
 - (2) Joy is not only nice... it is ESSENTIAL
- ii) **The joy of the Lord is your strength. When the joy goes, the strength goes."**
 - (1) WE are in desperate need of strength to live out our Christian lives in the midst of our culture!
- iii) **JOY is like an ocean buoy** – storms come, and waves of suffering swamp us, we go under. But Joy always brings us back up again. Rights us. Joy is our Spiritual buoyancy. Our strength in the storms.
- iv) **REFLECTION QUESTION: When's the last time you were aware of deep joy keeping you afloat in the midst of suffering?**

BIG IDEA for Today's Teaching– Joy and Celebration are at the heart of God, and, as God-indwelt people, He calls us to discipline ourselves to rejoice and celebrate in Him in the midst of our daily lives.

5) How to discipline ourselves toward joy

a) Joy itself is a gift of the spirit. Galatians 5:22-23

- i) JOYFULNESS -- A DEEP fullness. A state of being. A Noun. On one hand, cannot be pursued directly. Only given by the Spirit. It's a result of His work in your life.
- ii) BUT even still, JOY is a spiritual discipline.

b) We CAN choose to Rejoice! To Celebrate -- Verb.

(a) Focus on what is GOOD!

- (i) Phil 4:8 "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
- (ii) Train your mind to think differently. We CAN do this. Act of the will. That's why this is a discipline!
- (iii) This is what Romans 12:2 talks about. Christians should renew their minds!
 - 1. Medical science confirms the Bible's wisdom.
 - 2. We used to think our brains were largely "set in stone" after childhood. But we now know we can very truly REWIRE our own brains by choosing to think differently.
 - a. The more you do it, the more that pathway is strengthened, until it becomes reflex!

- (iv) You can retrain your minds to effectively rewire itself toward joy. To respond differently to your life in light of the Gospel. To Rejoice. To see what is GOOD. Look for it. Celebrate it.
- (2) Choose to edit your thoughts.**
- (a) Choose think WELL about others.
 - (b) TAKE EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE to make it obey Christ. (2 Cor 10:5)
- (3) Choose to edit your speech – don't be negative. Build up. Evidence a functioning hope in God by the way you talk.**
- (i) OLD ADDAGE: If you can't say something nice.....
 - (ii) Unplug for a day, a week, from News and Media**
 1. At least dull our minds and kill reflection thinking
 2. At worst, they train our minds to know and perceive easiest the negative things in life.
 - a. BAD News sells. Not good news. We don't have to know all the bad in the world. Don't need to know all the gory details. Does it really benefit us?
 3. Trains our minds to think about the negatives, and even subtly trains you to think the negatives are more present and pervasive than they really are.
- (b) Engage with Other Spiritual disciplines!**
- (i) memorize scriptures!... read the truth of His Word, preach GOSPEL to yourself daily!
- (c) Embracing a lifestyle of joyful self-giving love. (We'll talk more about this NEXT WEEK)**
- (i) If your joy doesn't lead to this kind of love, you don't have real joy.
 - (ii) Holy feedback Loop here: the more you have joy in the lord, the more you tend to want to share it with others. AND the more you tend to share it with others, the more joy in the Lord you tend to have!
 1. You parents may have heard "sleep begets sleep"
 2. WELL... "Joy also Begets Joy!"
 3. LETS MAKE THIS FEEDBACK PATTERN WORK FOR US!!
- (d) SING, Dance and Laugh!**
- (i) Yes. Like little kids
 1. A child's natural response to joy and happiness!
 2. It's ALL OVER SCRIPTURE
 - (ii) Merriam (Ex 15:20), Deborah (Judg 5), King David (2 Sam 6:12-16), Mary (1:46-55), Paul & Silas (Acts 16), → Wedding PARTY OF THE AGES (Rev 19:6-9)
 - (iii) Noisy time.
 1. Comes out of you
 2. Yes, Quiet time is good. But so is noisy time. Have you cut it out?
- (e) Find a Joy Mentor**
- (i) Identify a person or two who are joyful in the Lord. And learn from them. Emulate them. This is part of discipleship!
 - (ii) Phil 4:9 – "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."
- (f) Celebrate. Yes. . Just like with it sounds like. With people. With Food and Drink and Fun.**
- (4) Choose to celebrate good things.**
- (5) THIS discipline of celebration comes straight from the Gospel.**

- (a) Parable of the Prodigal son, FEAST OF THE FATHER
 - (i) WE HAD TO CELEBRATE!
 - (ii) Big party. Finest food and drink. Invite the whole town!
- (b) OT, God commanded the Israelites to throw big celebration festivals to commemorate goodness. EVERYONE IN THE NATION was commanded to spend the money to have a gigantic party.
 - 1. Read Deut 14:22-27!
- (c) The NT church regularly celebrated the Love Feast together.
- (6) Here is often where our stuffy sourness reveals itself. (VERY OFTEN ME!!!)**
 - (a) NO it may not seem necessarily at the time, AND yes it will often take resources.
 - (i) BUT, its GOOD. It proclaims the Gospel in the midst of a fallen world.
 - (b) It's a defiant push against the fallenness, negativity and cynicism all around us.
 - (i) It proclaims the Kingdom of God!
 - (c) It says YES, things are hard now. **NEVERTHELESS**, God is Good, and the story ends WELL. So we're going to follow God's lead and celebrate that!
- (7) Get creative. FIND good things to celebrate. It's an ART! Takes creativity, thought, and beauty. – IT IS A LEARNED SKILL!!!**
 - (a) **Let hardships and pain be reminders to celebrate and rejoice.**
 - 1. FIND SOMETHING good and true!
 - (ii) You have to pay \$4K on your taxes.**
 - 1. Don't grumble. Celebrate! Because that means God had provided abundant income for you.
 - (b) **Every situation in your life can be opportunities for celebration and rejoicing.** We need to get creative.
 - (i) We need to discipline ourselves to zoom out and see TRUTH.
 - (ii) If nothing else, we can always rejoice IN GOD and The Gospel.
- (8) REFLECTION QUESTION: What's one ways of disciplining yourself to rejoice and celebrate that you need to try this week?**

6) FURTHER investigation and resources:

- a) "Call to Joy and Pain" – Ajith Frenando - \$10 at Resource Table (and at GH Library)
- b) "The Happy Christian: Ten Ways to be a Joyful Believer in a Gloomy World" by David Murray--GH Library
- c) "One Thousand Gifts" by Ann Voscamp – GH Library
- d) "The Things of Earth" by Joe Rigney – GH Library **added from Q&A time*
- e) "Fighting for Joy" NH sermon series, summer 2013 – online
<http://newhopeks.org/messages/series/fighting-for-joy-2013>
- f) Video: Rend Collective: The Art of Celebration
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VamJcYMFBg>

7) QACT -- Put Closing Questions back up. Can answer those if you like.

Closing Reflection Questions:

- a) Am I more of a joyful Christian, or a stuffy/sour one?

- b) How well am I reflecting the Joy of the Lord to others?
- c) When's the last time you were aware of deep joy keeping you afloat in the midst of suffering?
- d) When's the last time you consciously chose to rejoice in the Lord?
- e) What 1 ways of disciplining yourself to rejoice and celebrate do you need to try this coming week?

8) PRAY -- OFFERING

THE CHOPPING BLOCK (Good Stuff that Got Cut):

- 1) Disciplines of Abstinence (like solitude, silence, fasting, giving -- most commonly thought of with this subject) MUST be counterbalanced with Disciplines of Engagement
 - a) "The disciplines of abstinence must be counterbalanced and supplemented by disciplines of engagement. Abstinence and engagement are the outbreathing and inbreathing of our spiritual lies, and we require disciplines for both movements. Roughly speaking, the disciplines of abstinence counteract tendencies to sins of commission, and the disciplines of engagement counteract tendencies to sins of omission." – Dallas Willard *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

- 2) **Spurgeon QUOTE** -- You are commanded to rejoice, brethren, because this is for your profit. Holy joy will oil the wheels of your life's machinery. Holy joy will strengthen you for your daily labour. Holy joy will beautify you, and, as I have already said, give you an influence over the lives of others. It is upon this point that I would most of all insist, we are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. If you cannot speak the gospel, live the gospel by your cheerfulness; for what is the gospel? Glad tidings of great joy; and you who believe it must show by its effect upon you that it is glad tidings of great joy to you. I do believe that a man of God—under trial and difficulty and affliction, bearing up, and patiently submitting with holy acquiescence, and still rejoicing in God—is a real preacher of the gospel, preaching with an eloquence which is mightier than words can ever be, and which will find its secret and silent way into the hearts of those who might have resisted other arguments. ...You are bidden to rejoice in the Lord alway; you are not allowed to sit there, and fret, and fume; you are not permitted to complain and grown. Mourner, you are commanded to put on beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. For this purpose your Saviour came, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him for this very end, that he might make you to rejoice.

- 3) Discipline of Joy deeply related to other spiritual disciplines we've talked about in this series: Gratitude, Thanksgiving, Preaching Gospel to Yourself, Worship
 - a) "Celebration is central to all the Spiritual Disciplines. Without a joyful spirit of festivity the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the hands of modern Pharisees. ... Often I am inclined to think of joy as the motor, the thing that keeps everything else going. Without joyous celebration to infuse the other Disciplines, we will sooner or later abandon them. Joy produces energy. Joy makes us strong." -- Foster, *Celebration...*

- 9) "[These days] many people are willing to sacrifice joy in order to get some other things that they think are essential for their life. It seems that people don't have a taste for joy and that they would rather have success in sports or in their career or in sexual conquest or through material prosperity or in taking revenge against someone who has hurt them."
 - a) *Fernando, Ajith (2007-09-07). The Call to Joy and Pain: Embracing Suffering in Your Ministry (Kindle Locations 155-157). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*

- 10) C. S. Lewis says, "Joy is not a substitute for sex; sex is very often a substitute for Joy. I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy."⁵ The problem with us is that we are too easily satisfied.
 - a) WE live in a culture (and are often duped ourselves) who are desperately seeking something. And it is rarely joy. We are too easily satisfied.

- b) Like little children who ignorantly refuse the fillet mignon offered them in favor of the hamburger helper they know.
- c) We are too easily satisfied.

11) “Joy is the serious business of heaven.” – CS Lewis

12) Definitions for Joy

- a) Merriam Webster – “1) **a feeling** of great happiness. 2) **the emotion** evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.”
 - i) KINDA – but not quite what we see in the scripture .
- b) even our culture is confused by joy
- c) **Common misconceptions**
 - i) Joy vs. happiness
 - ii) Often confused with happiness which is rooted in our circumstances, feelings.
 - (1) Though of course they are connected. Happiness often gets a bad wrap in Christian circles...
 - (a) The Good News of the Gospel not only leads believers to joy, but also to happiness!
 - (2) Joy and happiness are surely connected, but not synonymous.
 - iii) Joy vs. Pleasure?
 - (1) Many these days also confuse or mistake pleasure for joy.
 - (2) Our culture seems on an accelerating spiral toward looking for deep personal fullness and fulfillment through pleasure. But while joy and pleasure are certainly connected, they are NOT synonymous.

13) After encountering God, and being spared, Isaiah (61:10) says -- I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness”

14) How to Discipline ourselves towards Joy

- a) **By believing**
 - i) Paul’s prayer for the church in Rome: (Romans 15:13) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.
- b) **Obedience in the midst of your real life**
 - i) “To elicit genuine celebration, obedience [to Christ] must work itself into the ordinary fabric of our daily lives. ... [S]ome people live in such a way that it is impossible to have any kind of happiness in their home, but then go to church and sing songs and pray “in the Spirit,” hoping that God will somehow give them ... some kind of heavenly infusion that will bypass the misery of their daily lives and give them joy. But God’s desire is to transform the misery, not bypass it.” – Foster, Celebration...
 - (1) “Trust and Obey” hymn – there’s NO OTHER WAY TO BE **HAPPY** IN JC
- c) **CELEBRATING Well**
 - i) **Birthdays**
 - (1) it is GOOD to celebrate the gift of life for an immortal being created in the image of God almighty.

- (2) Birth is good. Life is good.
 - (3) People matter.
 - (4) We were made to be seen, known, and enjoyed.
 - (5) GOD celebrates over us!
- ii) **Marriage** – spouse
- (1) It is RIGHT to celebrate your marriage. It is a great, and mysterious gift.
 - (2) Even in the midst of messiness and pain, marriage – the slow, progressive uniting of two people who are the same yet different – marriage is GOOD!
 - (3) Marriage points to and prepares us for the intimacy God has within himself!
 - (a) It's no coincidence that God designed sexual intimacy to be intensely pleasurable!
 - (b) Unity in diversity, built upon self-giving love – THE ESSENCE OF GOD – is indeed intensely joyful and pleasing! More than we can possibly imagine.
 - (4) We need to celebrate the commitment of loving marriage.
- iii) **Holidays**
- iv) **Celebrate community and friendship.**
- (1) *This is a gift.*
 - (2) **This is largely what our gatherings are about.**
 - (3) **LIFE Groups** study the Word, pray, dive deeply into each other's lives, and tell others about the Gospel we are discovering.
 - (a) BUT – they also are supposed to be a party! We have more to celebrate than ANYONE else around us.
 - (b) It is RIGHT that we celebrate God's work in and amongst us.
- v) **Get creative. FIND good things to celebrate. It's an ART! Takes creativity, thought, and beauty. – IT IS A LEARNED SKILL!!!**
- (1) **Baby steps of growth in your kids**
 - (a) In your disciple
 - (2) **Let hardships and pain be reminders to celebrate and rejoice.**
 - (i) FIND SOMETHING good and true!
 - (b) **You got in a car wreck. Car is totaled. But you are only bumped up.**
 - (i) Don't mope or complain. Zoom out. CELEBRATE! Rejoice in God's graces and your faith in his care for you.
 - (3) **You come face to face with your own sin.**
 - (a) CELEBRATE!
 - (i) Not the sin of course.
 - (b) But it is an opportunity to CELEBRATE the astronomical grace of God.
 - (4) **Even funerals** can be a deep and meaningful occasion to celebrate if they belonged to JC.
 - (a) YES there is mourning. Even Jesus Himself wept when his friend died.
 - (b) But there is also rejoicing if the person was a follower of Christ