

# CELEBRATION

DISCIPLINES  
& PRACTICES

Have you ever experienced the contagious cheer of being around someone who is full of authentic joy? Like they can't help but be overflowing with something that transcends what darkness they might be going through? I remember one of the most vibrant Christians I'd ever encountered in the church I grew up at. You could tell he just loved life and cared deeply about the people around him.

Then one day, he was diagnosed with cancer. You may expect a dramatic shift from such terrible news, but his demeanor and joy never really seemed to fade. All the way through the last times I'd seen him at church, he was just as bright a light as ever. A widely known theologian and author who has been highly influential in the field of spiritual formation by the name of Richard Foster might say a person like this is well practiced in the discipline of "celebration."

Now wait a minute, is "celebration" really a discipline? Richard Foster seems to think it's not only a discipline, but worth writing a whole book about it titled, *Celebration of Discipline*. This is what celebration looks like as a discipline: intentionally spending time delighting in and with God's presence, people, and work in the world. Do you ever delight in God? Maybe you get so caught up doing things FOR God that you forget to actually take part in the fruits of his goodness for yourself. Maybe you don't even view your faith as something to be enjoyed, but rather just a necessary thing.

A duty. Something you're just supposed to do. But something deeper has to be at work for someone like the apostle Paul, a Jewish zealot turned prominent Christian, to write from a prison cell "rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!"

Beyond just commands in scripture to rejoice in the Lord, we are simply given really good reasons to celebrate – it's not just some baseless command. Think about this: we have constant access to God through the Holy Spirit to help us live like Jesus – that's reason to rejoice. We get to live from a mentality of abundance rather than need, because all we truly need is found in Jesus – that's a reason to rejoice. We get to experience the joy of salvation, like the best possible gift that no one can take from you and will not fade – that's a reason to rejoice. And really, the more we understand how great and mighty our God is and submit more and more to his will, we get to live life taking ourself less seriously – that's a load off your chest and also yet another reason to celebrate.

But why might I need to have a lesson on celebration, this seems like something everyone would just want to do right? Yet, I know a lot of Christians who live just as hopelessly and pessimistically as the rest of the world. How could it be that Christians are supposed to hold the words of life and have a thriving relationship with God but 90 percent of their life looks the same as everyone else. Perhaps one reason is found in this quote that makes its way in a lot of discussion about spiritual formation. Evelyn Underhill says, "The spirit of joy and the spirit of hurry do not reside in the same home." This quote and ones like it are an inspiration for people like Richard Foster, John Mark Comer the author of *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. Maybe it's as simple as we have so many items on our agenda and it seems like everything is absolutely important and essential to our schedule, so we have nothing to cut out. We move so quickly throughout life from one thing I have to do to another without ever stopping to enjoy a bit of it.

I'll leave you with this thought to chew on: picture what your life might look like if you would actually stop and enjoy the fruits of being in the fold of the eternal love of God – celebrate what God has done and still is doing right now.

## Instructions:

Above, I described celebration as “intentionally spending time delighting in and with God’s presence, people, and work in the world.” This is all about discovering what it is about these areas that bring you joy, and then make room for them. That really is the biggest thing: you have to plan these things into your schedule!

**God’s Presence:** Do you know about the goodness of what God has done for you, or need a reminder? Spend time reading and reflecting on those things. Do you ever just have a conversation with God about life like you’re talking with a friend? Spend time enjoying God’s company. Do you have any activities that leave you in awe of God? (Hiking is a popular example.) Spend time doing things that magnify your sense of awe and wonder.

**God’s People:** Do you have a smaller group of Christians that you are more deeply connected to? If not, find one or come ask and we will get you connected! Take that group and plan some sort of get together. Not every Christian gathering has to be a planned out Bible study/prayer time, and you don’t have to make enjoying each other’s company the complete opposite of doing something “godly.” You can enjoy the presence of God by being around spirit filled people – no need for any more reason other than, “let’s get together and have some fun.”

**God’s Work:** Do you enjoy serving? Serving God doesn’t have to be a complete drain on you. There are different ways you are able to use the things you absolutely love doing to serve the kingdom of God. A huge example is First Capital Films – people who enjoy film production get together to share the gospel through their medium. It may be difficult at times, but they love what they do and they do it for God.