

## The Pieces of Celebration

### I. Preparation readies our minds, our schedules, and our homes to celebrate God.

- John 19:14; I Corinthians 11:33-34; Luke 10:38-42
- We live in an overly-busy world. We move at an unhealthy, frenetic pace, and unless we purpose to plan, we find ourselves skimping by on last-minute ingenuity and luck. But is that how we want to approach our celebration of God? Is flying by the seat of our pants and squeezing in by the skin of our teeth really the heart posture God desires?
- We want to prepare our minds, schedules, and homes so that when it's time to celebrate, we can give ourselves wholly to it. When it comes time to do the right thing, we don't want to be distracted getting *ready* to do the right thing.
- The Bible has much to say about being prepared. Matthew 24 and 25 is all about being ready for the return of Christ. In chapter 25 Jesus tells of 10 ladies who were waiting for the wedding party. The party arrived very late, so when they awoke, they immediately needed to trim and relight their lamps. Five of the girls had prepared and had enough oil, but the other five were not ready. The parable of the talents follows this one and talks about three servants. Two of them worked hard and were ready for the master's return, but the third servant was found unprepared.
- So what kinds of things should we do during our Preparation Days?
  - **Prepare Your Space.** Whether it's your dining room, Celebration Wall, yard, conference room, or sanctuary, you're likely going to want certain decorations. You may also want or need certain items you hope to use during the celebration. There's likely going to need to be food prep of some sort. These are the normal things people consider when preparing for a holiday.
  - **Prepare Your Schedule.** You need to make sure you know what you have to do and what you want to do and that you're actually able to get it all done.
  - **Prepare Your Heart.** Preparing your heart — by the way, heart and mind are nearly interchangeable from a biblical perspective — preparing your heart is the most important thing any individual or family or congregation can do.

### II. Observation is for events that are not joyous, but must not be forgotten.

- Within the Celebration of God, Observances are extremely important because — though we wouldn't celebrate what we're observing — it's important enough that we don't forget it.
- It's appropriate to celebrate what the Crucifixion accomplished for us, but it's actually quite difficult to celebrate the process of crucifixion as we visualize it happening to our Lord. And according to I Corinthians 15, if it weren't for the Resurrection, the Crucifixion wouldn't have meant anything and our faith would be in vain.
- But that doesn't mean that it's not important to consider the pain and agony of the Crucifixion. In the vernacular of The Celebration of God, this would be considered a Solemnity. It's a solemn reminder. It's desperately important to remember, there are powerful lessons to be learned, but we wouldn't exactly say that we're celebrating it.
- Within The Celebration of God calendar, we will observe three solemnities; one in autumn, one in winter, and one in spring. The Crucifixion is the solemnity for Spring. But there is no solemnity for Summer.

**III. Celebration gives full vent to our joy and rejoicing.**

- We must celebrate God's will for our moment-by-moment obedience with the same fervor we celebrate His incarnation.

**IV. Anticipation causes our hearts to yearn for future promises.**

- The final piece of celebration is what we call the Anticipation. In the same way that each holiday has a Preparation, so each has an Anticipation.
- Anyone who's ever been a child understands the painful anticipation of Christmas break, and the additional angst of waiting for Christmas morning.
- Anticipation is a good thing as long as it's rooted in a love for God and not merely an impatient desire to please myself.
- One of the beauties of The Year Long Celebration of God is that the major holidays are no longer viewed as individual events. They're all part of a majestic tapestry of praise and adoration for our Lord and King.
- We love Christmas not just because of the incarnation, but because we're now anticipating His perfect life, death, and resurrection for our sins. We don't only celebrate the Resurrection that saved us of our sin, we anticipate the day we will no longer have any sin.
- But it's not just the next holiday for which we'll anticipate. As we mature and grow in our love for God, we will start anticipating our daily sacrifice for Christ. We'll start looking forward to serving Him and His people, denying the flesh, and spending yet another day fulfilling the will of God in our lives instead of worshipping at the puny altar of self.

**V. Discipleship Application**

- One of the most overlooked facets of biblical discipleship is the life-on-life aspect. Discipleship is not a program. It's not a booklet, class, or small group curriculum. Discipleship is a lifestyle that works best when the disciple and the discipler spend time together following Christ. The parent/child relationship has the greatest potential of mirroring the best discipleship relationship.
  - But how do so many families handle major holidays? We don't want the kids decorating because they're too young or too immature or they won't do it the right way or they'll get in the way.
  - But what if I invite my child to walk side by side with me through the process? If I as a parent want to help my child know God better, involving them in the Preparation time becomes extremely important. That's the time we're preparing our hearts, talking about the significance of the upcoming festivities, and working together to make sure we all can pour ourselves fully into celebrating God.
  - What if I walk with the young man I'm discipling through the Observation or the Celebration becomes desperately important.
  - What about inviting our fellow church members into the Anticipation — talking together about what's to come, the significance and the joy, the potential obstacles and the power of God to overcome them?
- The Celebration of God is a beautiful discipleship tool not because it provides a curriculum to follow, but because it provides you amazing opportunities for life-on-life . . . life. (Deuteronomy 6).