

2022 Community Groups

WEEKLY GUIDE

Apr 10 - Community Guide

Make It / Take It: Personal Rhythms for Profound Renewal

Throughout this sermon series, we have been learning about how the intentional practices of the spiritual disciplines can help us connect with God in important and life-giving ways. Regular rhythms of practicing these disciplines can create space in our busy lives to find a deep and meaningful connection with a God who loves us and wants to be with us. These biblical disciplines, practiced throughout the centuries, help keep our focus in the right place, leading into much needed rhythms of refreshing and renewal. The focus this week is on the discipline of Celebration. It may seem odd to think of celebration as a discipline, but the bible has a lot to say about this important practice.

Community Prayer:

Lord, as we look more deeply into the discipline of Celebration, we ask for your Holy Spirit to guide our conversation. The world can be a shallow place where only our own self-interests are celebrated, but we know that you have created us to live differently. You created us to celebrate who you are and what you are doing in the world. Open our eyes to see you in a new way through this time of study and conversation. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen

Opening Questions:

1. Last week we talked about the discipline of silence and solitude. Did you try it? If so, what did you do and how did it go?
2. In what ways do you imagine you might benefit from engaging in this practice again this week?

Exploration:

In her book, "Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives For Spiritual Transformation", author Ruth Haley Barton explores the spiritual disciplines in an interesting way. Each sin or negative pattern listed



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here also has a spiritual discipline that helps us to know how to confront our habits in a healthy biblical way.

Sins & Negative Patterns

Gossip/sins of speech
Busyness
Avoidance patterns

Lack of faith
Selfishness

Corresponding Disciplines

Silence & Self-examination
Solitude, Sabbath
Community, Spiritual
Friendship
Prayer & Scripture
Prayer and Worship in
Community

“Without joy penetrating all the disciplines, they will quickly deteriorate into another set of soul-killing legalisms.” ~Richard J Foster, Celebration of Discipline

As we observe the season of Easter, we are reminded that on Palm Sunday the people of Jerusalem welcomed Jesus into the city with a great fanfare and celebration. Have someone read the following verses out loud. As you hear the words, try to imagine what it would have been like to watch Jesus riding into town on a donkey as people shouted his praises.

Matthew 21:1-10

3. What did you notice in the passage?

In verse 4 we read, “This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet...”

Jesus knew what was ahead of him, he knew the angst and anger of the religious authorities and he knew that they wanted to get rid of him. But



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was this a moment to sneak in under cover of darkness? No, this was the moment Jesus was on earth for! It was the fulfillment of prophecy given centuries before.

In verse 8 we read, "A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road."

It was customary in those days to spread cloaks (outer garments) out in front of someone who was important. This would have been seen as an act of recognition, of loyalty and as a promise of support. Similarly, palm branches were used as emblems of victory and success. Both the cloak and the branches were used as a way for people to show their admiration.

4. What are some of the ways you use to show your admiration or support to others?
5. What are some of the ways you express your admiration or esteem to God?

In verse 9 the crowds shouted out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

The word "Hosanna" can be use both as a blessing and a prayer. It can be used to acknowledge Jesus as the "Savior", or it can be used to cry out "please save".

6. In your life right now, which way would you use this word? As a joyful acknowledgement of Jesus as your savior or as a prayer to him, "please save"? If you are willing, share why you answered that way.

We see the evidence in the early church of Jesus' followers reminding one another of the power of a joyful connection to God.

Acts 2: 41 Then those who *gladly* received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. NKJV



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1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 *Rejoice* always, pray continually, *give thanks* in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. NIV

We need to be careful here to recognize that we are told to rejoice and give thanks **IN** all circumstances not **FOR** all circumstances. The kind of rejoicing we see here is a discipline and an attitude, not a feeling.

7. In what ways do you cultivate a practice of giving thanks continually to God?
8. What are the kinds of circumstances that make this challenging for you?

"Joy is a spiritual discipline. We as a people are much more inclined toward negativity and cynicism. We don't find it easy or natural to pursue joy. And that's why God in His Word actually commands us to celebrate. We come by a Gospel worth celebrating before a celebrating King. We need to get down to the serious business of joy. We must wrestle for our blessing. We must fight for our joy." ~Gareth Gilkeson

The Discipline of Celebration in:

- Sacrifice
 - Time
 - Energy
 - Money

2 Samuel 24:24 "...No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

- Suffering

Philippians 4:4-7, 9 "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus...Whatever you have learned or



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received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Take a moment to slowly read that passage again. Pay attention to what stands out for you.

9. What stands out to you from the passage?
10. How might the practice of celebrating God even in difficult times be helpful for you?

“Joy born of deep suffering is nourished by moments of celebration...Celebration properly understood is the acceptance of life in an ever growing recognition that it is so precious.” ~Marva Dawn

- Simplicity

Joy is found in noticing the small things and stopping to say thanks. So send the text, make the call, let your joy be expressed as an act of celebration.

- Spirit

John 4:24 “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

Just like worship, in order for our celebration to be a spiritual discipline, it must be focused on God. It will involve both our emotions and our thoughts. The discipline of celebration is so much more than just a happy or joyful feeling, it is placing all our hope on Almighty God and celebrating that he is worthy of that hope!

- Sanctuary

“If you will not worship God seven days a week, you do not worship Him on the one day a week.” ~A.W. Tozer



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Our goal is to integrate the discipline of celebration into our everyday life. Even now, as we prepare for Easter, we can all take time to remember what God has done for us and respond to that love throughout our celebration!

11. How do you and your family prepare your hearts and minds to celebrate the true meaning of Easter?
12. Are there additional ways you could prepare yourself this year?
13. Who have you invited to join you at Hillside for Easter?

The Takeaway:

Celebration is a biblical discipline that we are called to practice as followers of Jesus.

Our purpose for gathering together every week at church is to encounter the presence of God. We describe it as "Experiencing God's Love."

Easter is a great time to celebrate God's amazing love and to invite others to join you so that they can experience God's love for themselves.

Easter Service Reminders:

Fri - April 15 @ 6:30PM (Family Service)
Good Friday Service and Communion

Sat - April 16 @ 4:00PM
Easter Celebration and Baptism

Sun - April 17 @ 8:30, 10:00 & 11:30AM



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