

SDS Celebration
Galatians 5:22-25
WRCoB 10.11.20

Today, we discuss the last of the 12 spiritual disciplines.

Foster entitles it “Celebration.”

The coming of Jesus into this world
Is cause for celebration.

We hear it in the angel’s announcement of Christ’s birth.

Luke 2:10 I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all people.

Another cause for celebration in the Bible
Was the year of Jubilee.

In the OT, debts were canceled, slaves released
Land allowed to fallow or rest
Property returned to its original owners

Everyone celebrated the year of Jubilee
Because of the wonderful provisions of God.

A return to an equitable and just
Societal reordering of things.

When Jesus began his ministry
He declared a new Jubilee.

Luke 4:18-19 NRSV The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The word jubilation is rooted in the word jubilee.

We are jubilant participants of Christ's Jubilee.

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Joy is at the heart of the believer

If it is not, then it ought to be.

Joy fills us

Because God, through Jesus, has given new life.

Life that is now and life that is eternal.

Christ has set us free from the bondage of sin!

Our relationship with Christ gives meaning and purpose.

Christ offers the world another way of living.

We, the church, joyfully move forward

Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ

In word and deed.

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Jesus said to his disciples

John 15:11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Joy is the culmination of the spiritual disciplines.

Through, meditation, prayer, fasting and study
In living a simple life, taking time for solitude
Submitting to and serving one another

Sharing deeply and personally our life together
Gathering together to worship God
And allowing God to guide our lives
Brings deep joy..

This is worth celebrating.

The joy that comes from God in Jesus
Is joy the world cannot give it
Nor is it able to take it away.

Psalm 30:5 Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

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According to Paul's text that Barbara read this morning
Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

In fact, coupled with the fruit love
The two become the driving force
Behind all of what Christians do.

It is why we share what we know about Jesus.

It is why we want others to experience God's love in Christ.

It is joy and love

That moves us to continue the work of Jesus
Peacefully, simply, and together.

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My contention is that practicing the spiritual disciplines
Brings a joy-filled life.

And joy is the motivating factor
To continue to practice the spiritual disciplines.

I also contend that a spiritually disciplined life
Is the vine that bears the fruits of the Spirit

Love, joy, peace
Patience, kindness, goodness
Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control!

These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit
The harvest of God's sanctifying work in us
The face of victory in God's redemption!

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All of this is cause for celebration.

Sometimes, Christians take themselves too seriously.
Sometimes we just need to lighten up a little.

Enjoy what God has given us.

Since Foster identifies celebration as a corporate discipline
How do we as a church celebrate?

Let's look to the Bible for some answers.

When the Israelites safely crossed the Red Sea
And witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh's army

Miriam, Aaron and Moses' sister, with tambourine in hand
Led the Israelite women in celebration
With much dancing and singing.

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When they brought the Arc of the Covenant
The special box holding the Ten Commandments
Into Jerusalem

King David leapt and danced in the streets
Dressed only in a linen loincloth.
Much to the chagrin of Saul's daughter Michal.

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Psalm 150 describes celebration this way.

Psalm 150 NRSV

¹ Praise the Lord!

**Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!**

**² Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!**

**³ Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!**

**⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!**

**⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!**

**⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!**

**Psalm 47:1 NRSV Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to God with loud songs of joy.**

Learning from the given examples then
The biblical way to celebrate is by:

Singing and dancing
Playing musical instruments
Clapping our hands, shouting for joy
All the while dressed in loincloths.

Yes? Are you game? No?

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So how might we collectively celebrate
The joy and love of God?

In addition to the before mentioned ways of celebration
I can see other ways we can celebrate life.

The author of Ecclesiastes makes a similar conclusion.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 NLT

¹² So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. ¹³ And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.

A community of faith that eats together
Plays together and works together
Celebrates God's gift of life, together.

Potlucks, eating out, playing, hiking, biking together
Are varied and meaningful ways
To enjoy all that God has blessed us.

One of the congregations I served in the Shenandoah Valley
Had an annual hike to Elliot's Knob
For a mountaintop picnic.

Many of you run together or CROP walk together.

These are activities enjoyed by all generations.

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Arts and crafts is another to celebrate
Our collective joy in Christ.

Sharing our skills and creativity in homespun art shows
Attending art museum exhibits as a church body
History museums
The Bible museum in DC

All these are ways to celebrate together
The joy of being a part of a community of faith.

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How about cultural celebrations?

Why not celebrate our unique ethnicities?

From African, Indian, and Cambodian
To African-American
And Pennsylvania Dutch cultural distinctives

What a way to celebrate the rich diversity
Of the different ethnic groups
Within our very own congregation?

And I think, above all, we need a culture of humor.

Laughter is the best medicine.

Let's not take ourselves too seriously.

Let's enjoy our life together.

Richard Foster in his book
The Celebration of Discipline writes

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.

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A spiritual life will only produce joy through obedience.

Like the old hymn suggests

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey.*

Joy comes through obedience to the way of Jesus.

Practice the disciplines, experience joy.

Not only joy!

My contention is that as you practice
The spiritual disciplines

Focusing not on just one or two
But seeking to equally balance
All twelve of the disciplines

You will begin to experience the fruit of your labor
Through the fruits of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace
Patience, kindness, goodness
Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This is because as we practice the disciplines
We begin to live by the Spirit
And our guided by the Spirit.

The Spirit works in us
Making, molding and transforming us
Into the people God had created us to be.

And this is cause for celebration.

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So get your loincloths on and grab your tambourine

Clap and shout for joy
The Spirit is at work in you.

Joy is the heart of the Gospel.

From the Apostle Peter

1 Peter 1:8 Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.