

## Chapter 18 - Celebrate Good Things

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the story.
  - A) One of the blessings that sometimes comes out of suffering is the celebration that comes at the end. Think about times in your life when darkness and difficulty were followed by spontaneous celebrations. Is this easy for you or is it hard to think of times of celebration?
  - B) We often prepare for routine celebrations like birthdays and anniversaries, but have you ever thought of preparing to celebrate the end of a difficult time? How would engaging in such an exercise help keep your faith and hope alive?
  - C) Think of a task that is taking a long time to complete or a goal that you've been striving to reach or a relationship you want to see restored. Think about how you'd want to celebrate when your hope is fulfilled. What would it be like? Who would you invite?

2. Oddly enough, Christians often aren't so good at celebrating. Perhaps it is because in our more conservative sub-culture we have rejected worldly ways of celebrating. Instead of replacing them with our own expressions of joy, we just don't celebrate, at least not in a way that most people would recognize. Write a few lines about the most wonderful celebrations you've been part of.

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3. Reread the "Biblical Background" section and make a little list of all of the different ways of celebrating that are mentioned.

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4. Some of the things on your list may be not culturally appropriate for Christians in some places. Others would be concerned about the element of excess that is often associated with celebrating in the ways mentioned in the biblical passages we looked at. Jot down your ideas for making our

celebrations truly joyful while, at the same time, avoiding specific things which do not fit with your culture or would be seen to be wasteful.

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5. Think of a time when you were able to celebrate God's goodness at a really dark time. Reflect on what makes that particular moment stand out to you now and jot down your conclusion.

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6. Jot down some of the things you could celebrate in your life. Include things like personal milestones, achievements (even humble ones), unexpected blessings, works of grace in your life, and special times of intimacy with God.

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7. Think about the things on your list above and consider whether you ever really celebrated them adequately. Did you let the world know that God had blessed you with another year of life, that He'd given you strength to reach your goal and so on. What would you like to do to draw more attention to God and His goodness in your life?

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8. One of the reasons Christians sometimes experience disappointment with God is that they get focussed on a particular outcome. God is able to give us the result we're looking for, but often chooses to surprise us with something different. Sometimes, since it's not what we're expecting we don't even recognize it as a gift from God. Think back over your Christian life and try to identify some of God's surprises. Jot them down and celebrate them!

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**For Group Leaders:**

Congratulations! You've just about made it to the end of the book. Maybe you should think about celebrating. Once again, we're touching on an area where doing it is more helpful than talking about it in terms of driving the lesson home.

Here's a group activity which might be useful: Have everyone write down on a slip of paper something they are celebrating, or would like to celebrate, now that they've studied this chapter. Collect the slips and then have people draw them randomly and read them out. Try to identify what motivation to celebrate goes with what person. Then do it!

Discuss ways to celebrate that would bless other people. Try to include others who might not normally be included in such things or expect to be included. Use some of the ideas generated in your group time together to intensify the joy as you celebrate God and the good things you enjoy from His hand.