

CELEBRATIONS

Session 1: Jubilee

GET STARTED

- We all love to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays. **What is your favorite special occasion to celebrate? Why? Share a story.**

TAKE IT IN

- **What encouraged and/or challenged you from the sermon this week? Why?**

TALK IT OVER

- God is a God of celebration. In fact, He established many celebrations within the nation of Israel. During these times, people would celebrate, remember, and give thanks (see 3 examples below). **What is the most joyful event you have ever witnessed or where you've participated? What made it so meaningful?**
- *The Feast Of Weeks* was a festival of joy celebrating the firstfruits of the harvest (Leviticus 23:15-22). *The Feast of Passover* combined Passover, which celebrated the angel of death passing over Hebrew households in Egypt, and the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, which commemorated the first seven days of the Exodus (Leviticus 23:4-8). *The Feast of the Tabernacles* commemorated the Israelites' wanderings in the desert before entering the promised land (Leviticus 23:33-36). **Why do you think God considers celebrating so important? As you continue growing in your relationship with God, what do you need to celebrate more? What do you need to celebrate less?**
- Leviticus 25:1-7 explains sabbath rest in farming, similar to a modern day system of crop rotation for land renewal and productivity. In other words, if we don't establish rhythms of rest, we may burn out. **Why do we often tend to celebrate productivity and performance over rest? How is rest important to celebration?**
- In *The Life You've Always Wanted*, John Ortberg writes, "Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. Hurry can destroy our souls. ... for many of us the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it." **How does this quote encourage and/or challenge you? If we spend too much time being hurried, how will our celebration be limited?**

- Leviticus 25:8-54 outlines the Year of Jubilee taking place every 50 years. It was a time of celebration as debts were forgiven, slaves were set free, and land was returned to its original owners. It served as a reminder of God’s provision and Israel’s dependence on Him. **How would you feel if all of your debts were immediately canceled? What freedom and joy would that bring?**
- **Read Luke 4:14-21.** In verse 19, “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a direct reference to the Year of Jubilee. Spiritually speaking, Jesus came to cancel the debt of sin and set people free. **Look back over verses 18-19; what words resonate with your faith journey? What words do you need to celebrate?**
- Celebration and joy are closely tied together. Joy is not a result of where we are in life, but where we are in Christ. When our joy is rooted in Jesus, celebration follows. Read through the following passages: Nehemiah 8:9-12, Psalm 118:22-24, Psalm 150, Luke 15:7, John 15:11, Romans 15:13, Philippians 4:4-9, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 1:2-4, and 1 Peter 1:3-9. **What do you learn and how do these passages resonate with you concerning joy and celebration?**
- Think about this for a few moments: **would people describe you as a joyous person? If not, how would they describe you in the areas of joy and celebration? In what ways do you need to pursue more joy and celebration in response to your faith in Jesus Christ? As a group, how can we better pursue rhythms of joy and celebration?**

LIVE IT OUT

Joy and celebration come from a heart that pursues them. Consider the following activities to help this pursuit: incorporate more rhythms of rest/restoration, pray for joy, do activities that bring pleasure (time with loved ones, enjoying a good meal, etc.) and reflect on these gifts, set aside a day to spend time with and celebrate the goodness of God, fast from something (food, social media, electronics, etc.) to better focus on God.

Further Study: Listen to this podcast from the Bible Project on the Year of Jubilee at <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/jubilee-radical-year-release/>

Memorize: *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

Luke 4:18-19 (NIV)