

17. Celebration

NB: This topic is not so much a principle of Scripture but rather an underlying theme that I believe is still relevant and has application in our own lives.

Principle: In a reflection of the Old Testament celebrations focussed on God's goodness to his people, we should consider celebrating God's goodness towards us.

Key Scripture:

Exodus 10:9 Moses answered, "We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to **celebrate** a festival to the LORD."

Deuteronomy 16:16 Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Ecclesiastes 3:3 ...a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

Mark 6:21 Finally the opportune time came. On his **birthday** Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

John 2:1-2 On the third day a wedding took place at **Cana** in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding (and attended).

Revelation 19:9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the **Lamb**!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Luke 15:23-24 Bring the fattened **calf** and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Comment on Scripture

There is a strong theme in the Old Testament of God's people celebrating the centrality of God's in both their family lives and the life of the nation. There were the prescribed annual religious celebrations which people were to adhere to as families and as a nation, some of which went for days. There are also references to the celebration of significant events such as weddings and birthdays. The wedding feast is a particularly strong image which is carried through the New Testament. It was the occasion on which Christ chose to perform his first miracle, it is also the image used to describe the level of celebration when Christ and the Church are united at the end of this age. Jesus used the picture of a feast to describe the level of celebration on the return of the "lost" son in the parable of the "Prodigal Son".

Application in daily life??

- ♦ I believe that collectively we have lost the art of celebrating that we are God's people and that he is central to our lives. My understanding is that the Old Testament religious festivals were for the Jews and that Christ fulfilled these as he did the law. Thus we are no longer required to celebrate them "religiously". It is of note that the term "Feast" was part of the title given to many of these celebrations and it interests me that we no longer have such things in our Church culture other than perhaps for weddings. Even our "celebration" of the Lord's supper does not resemble the "celebrations" of the Jewish festivals/feasts. (Sadly, the world does a better job of "celebrating" significant events than does the church!)
- ♦ My view is that as a family we can at least do something to address this by celebrating significant events in the lives of our family members. If our faith is genuinely part of our lives, this will be reflected in these events and God will also be acknowledged and celebrated as part of the reason for the occasion. We are good at celebrating weddings but what about the regular family events such as

birthdays, graduations, milestones in life (eg a new job, or leaving one), birth of a baby, etc. These can all be opportunities to celebrate the life that God has given us as individuals and families.

- ♦ We need to form a view about whether or not we celebrate Christmas and Easter. If we accept that they have a place in our lives then celebrate them enthusiastically (however that may be). Otherwise we give those around us, particularly the unsaved, the clear message that we are not really excited about such celebrations – and then by association, - that we are not serious about our professed Christian faith. If we choose not to celebrate them (and there are quite legitimate reasons for making this choice -in my opinion), consider what celebration (if any) you might replace them with.
- ♦ These celebrations (or lack of) will become part of your family “tradition”/heritage so they are worthy of serious thought.

Your view?? Have you considered the question as to whether or not you are known as a family (and Church) who are eager to celebrate God's provision in our lives?