

Questions

March 7th

The God of Celebration

How do you see God as Father? What do you feel is true in your heart about Him as Father and what do you think is true about Him as father?

For most of us, majority of that image comes from our circumstances. The facts of what have happened to us come above the truth of who God is and what He has revealed and said about himself (both in Jesus and in the Bible)

Example 1. God forgives my sin...I have experienced that in my life, so for me it is a circumstantial fact .. so I believe. I see God as the one who forgives my sins. *But how about hearing that God is also the one who wants to heal me physically?* I may not have experienced that so the truth that God is my healer, comes underneath my circumstantial

Example 2. I may not have experienced people forgiving me and so circumstantially I find it hard to believe that God wants to forgive me. The facts of my circumstances can easily become bigger/more influential than the truth of who God is and what he is like.

We are meant to live with Truth of who God is, above our factual circumstances...that is faith!

We see this with Adam in Genesis 3:

1. **Adam walked with God in intimacy.**
2. **Fruit? Peace and Joy.** Why? I am so aware of what God is like that I do not doubt that He is strong and loving and able to lead and provide for me. Therefore worry and fear do not rob me of peace and joy. The truth of who God is, is larger than the circumstances of my life. Both Peace and Joy are strength!
3. **God is the most joyful and peaceful being!** There is no fear in him as he is complete and secure and so joy and peace are unlimited. *God does grieve and get sad but His default character is joy and peace.*
4. **Devil's strategy is then to come and question what God is like.** "Did God say? Surely he meant this..." *ie to cause us to doubt the truth and look at circumstances*
5. **Then God comes, "Adam where are you?"** God didn't ask cos he needed an answer. He was giving Adam a chance to repent "Where are you? What has sin done to you? Look at you know! "
6. **I was naked and afraid so I hid.** When I sin, I feel uncovered by love, and feel exposed. The truth of who God is (ie He loves me unconditionally) is replaced by shame and guilt.
7. **SIN robs us of the peace and joy that we are meant to live in, as we know God.** This is why Adam hid!
- 8.

How can I keep restoring this peace and joy that God wants me to experience?

....get someone to pray for me/yes but not enough!

....read a good book that imparts faith to me again/yes... but not enough

...go to a conference to hear about God again?/yes but none of this will bring it fully

INSTEAD I have to learn to walk daily with God and surrender to the truth about who He is and what He is like. Surrender when I am fearful or anxious, rebellious or full of pride! Ouch that sounds painful! yes...cos I like to be in control.

One spiritual discipline that God gives us to do this.....Nehemiah 8: 9..... "Don't grieve or mourn, instead celebrate and feast, this day is holy, (HOLIDAYS) sacred to the Lord, for the joy of the lord is your strength"

- **Celebration is a grace gift from God designed to enable us to see again what He is like?** It confronts us with how good He is and how much more able He is.
- **Celebration is the discipline that engages us with the JOY and PEACE that God always enjoys**
- **Celebration is the gift that replaces the truth of who God really is above our circumstantial factual nitty gritty of life**

This is not hedonism! That is focussed on self. The demand for more and more pleasure for me! Hedonism follows the law of diminishing returns. I do it and enjoy but I do it again and it bores me...SELFISHNESS.

CELEBRATION in God causes us to see how good He is and how His ability to satisfy me is unending. When we celebrate God, my capacity for joy increases!

HOW?

1. **Now!** "This is the day that the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it." We need to learn to take joy in everyday activities. Watch children and they do this. They ask us to do things again and again and again. They are thankful for simple things. Children are not stuffed with self. Cares and worries don't rob them of seeing the good and feeling safe. So they are light and celebrate. AGAIN AGAIN
2. **Get a Joy Teacher.** There are joy bringers and there are victims! Which do you spend most time with?
3. **Spend time with God.** What spiritual discipline do you need to engage with today so that more of the life of God drips or floods into yours and brings you life? How do you experience God and learn about Him? Work that out each day? Do you need to engage with something or disengage?
4. **Set aside specific times or days in the week.** Know what enables you to celebrate. Discuss this with friends and discover what activities enable you to have fun and celebrate life and see God again
5. **Book your next holiday!** Holy Days. Holidays are designed to enable us to connect with God again and know peace and joy.

Joy should mark us out as the church!

Isaiah 55: context is seeking God and finding him

"You will go out with joy and be led forth in peace, the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown for an everlasting sign which will not be destroyed.

Q1. What is it that you are already doing today that you can turn into celebration, thanksgiving or gratitude, which will bring joy and peace. E.g Chris gave examples of:

- getting up early in morning and enjoying the stillness, "This is life right here right now,
- bath time with children,
- coffee with a friend (why not celebrate and make real coffee instead of instant?!)
- a meal with friends or family.
- Stop in the sunshine for a minute and enjoy it

Q2. Do you need a joy mentor/teacher and if yes, who? If you don't, who could you bring joy to today without pushing it on them? What action do you need to take?

Q3. What specific activities bring you replenishment, fun and celebration of life (and in so doing will remind you directly or indirectly of who God is like).

Q4. What "holy" days or "holy" times of the week do you need to start planning into your daily, weekly, monthly life that will replenish you, enable you to have fun and celebrate life? When is your next holiday planned for?