

Radiant Church, July 19, 2015
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Gospel Rhythm #2: Celebrate
We gather together to celebrate God's extravagant blessings in Jesus

"God calls people to regularly celebrate His goodness and grace. We gather regularly in gospel communities and weekly as a larger family, to share stories and celebrate all that God is doing in and amongst us. We invite everyone to these celebrations as a way of displaying and declaring God's glory, exhorting each other in the Gospel and encouraging each other in Mission."

Leviticus 23:3 six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation.

Sabbath was devoted to "intentional rest"

Setting work aside in order to "work" at worship w/out distraction

Emulating our being in God's Image by resting the 7th day

Leviticus 23:4 these are the appointed feasts of the Lord, the holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.

The Passover (to recall deliverance from Egyptian bondage)

The Feast of First Fruits (to recognize God's provision before harvest)

The Feast of Weeks (to remember the day Moses was given the Law)

The Feast of Trumpets (a reminder of the coming Day of Atonement, including "denying oneself" - fasting and praying)

The Day of Atonement (to receive the forgiveness of God for self and Nation)

The Feast of Booths (commemorate God's care during the 40-year exile)

We are created to worship and one of the ways is through celebration. Each person in every part of the world celebrates.

The question is: To whom or what is the celebration directed? Because of sin and idolatry we are prone to celebrate the creation instead of the Creator.

Romans 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen!

This is our natural-born, sinful tendency...to worship creation rather than the Creator. Ultimately, worshipping creation rather than the Creator is really worshipping self - pride.

Pride will kill you. Pride is the sin most likely to keep you from crying out for and then celebrating a Savior. Those who think they are well will not look for a doctor.

As seriously dangerous as pride is, it's equally hard to spot. When it comes to diagnosing our own hearts, those of us who have the prevailing disease of pride have a challenging time identifying our sickness.

Pride infects our eyesight, causing us to view ourselves through a lens that colors and distorts reality. What is "humility?" An accurate and realistic view of ourselves.

We can't conclude that we don't struggle with pride because we don't see pride in our hearts. The comfortable moments when I pat myself on the back for how well I am doing are the moments that should alarm me the most. I need to be reminded that nothing good dwells in my flesh, and search my heart for secret pride and its symptoms.

In his essay on undetected pride, Jonathan Edwards, the reformed, puritan preacher and former President of Princeton pointed out seven sneaky symptoms of the infection of pride:

1. Fault-Finding

While pride causes us to filter out the evil we see in ourselves, it also causes us to filter out God's goodness in others. We judge them, letting only their faults fall into our perception of them.

When I'm studying a passage and preparing a sermon, it's pride that prompts the terrible temptation to skip the Spirit's surgery on my own heart and instead draft a mental blog post or plan a potential conversation for the people who "really need to hear this."

2. A Harsh Spirit

Those who have the sickness of pride in their hearts speak of others' sins with contempt, irritation, frustration, or a lack of patience.

3. Superficiality

When pride lives in our hearts, we're far more concerned with others'

perceptions of us than the reality of our hearts. We want to fight against the sins that have an impact on how others view us, while we also rationalize and make peace with the ones that no one sees.

4. Defensiveness

Those who stand in the strength of Christ's righteousness alone find a confident hiding place from the attacks of men and Satan alike. True humility is not knocked off balance and thrown into a defensive posture by challenge or rebuke, but instead continues in doing good, entrusting the soul to our faithful Creator.

Defensiveness often looks like this: When a wrong, a sin in us is pointed out...

- a. No it's not. You're not seeing me accurately
- b. My intentions were different/more pure than you see
- c. I was having a bad day (which is not the real me)
- d. It's someone else's fault
- e. I have reasons (my background, my family, etc.)
- f. Okay fine. I'm the worst person in the world. Are you happy now?
(Which is redefining ourselves as perpetrator to now victim)

5. Presumption Before God

Humility approaches God with humble assurance in Christ Jesus. If either the "humble" or the "assurance" are missing in that equation, our hearts very well might be infected with pride. Some of us have no shortage of boldness before God, but if we're not careful, we can forget that he is God.

Psalm 2:11 Serve the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.

Others of us feel no confidence before God. Which sounds like humility, but in reality it's another symptom of pride. In those moments, we're believing that our sins are greater than his grace. We doubt the power of Christ's sacrifice and we're stuck staring at ourselves instead of Christ.

6. Desperation for Attention

Pride is hungry for attention, respect, and worship in all its forms.

Maybe it sounds like shameless boasting about ourselves.

Maybe it's being unable to say "no" to anyone because we need to be needed.

Maybe it looks like obsessively thirsting for marriage – or fantasizing about a better marriage – because you're hungry to be adored.

Maybe it looks like being consumed by your own felt needs.

Maybe it's the desire for the right car or the right house or the right title at work: all because you seek the glory that comes from men, not God.

7. Neglecting Others

Pride prefers some people over other people. Our own pride honors those who the world deems worthy of honor, giving more weight to their words, their

wants, and their opinions. There's a thrill that goes through us when people with "power" acknowledge us.

We consciously or unconsciously avoid or pass over the weak, the inconvenient, and the unattractive, because they don't seem to offer us much.

Maybe more of us struggle with pride than we thought.

The gospel runs counter to this basic tendency in all of us.

There's good news for the prideful. Confession of pride signals the beginning of the end for pride. It indicates the war is already being waged. For only when the Spirit of God is moving, already humbling us, can we remove the lenses of pride from our eyes and see ourselves clearly, identifying the sickness and seeking the cure.

By God's grace, we can turn once again to the glorious gospel in which we stand and make much of Jesus, celebrating Him, even through identifying our pride in all its hiding places inside of us.

Just as my concealed pride once moved me toward death, so the acknowledgement of my own pride moves me toward life by causing me to cling more fiercely to the righteousness of Christ.

What does being centered in the gospel through celebrating produce?

...Acknowledging God's Grace

If we truly understand and believe the gospel, we should be the most celebratory people on the planet. God regularly called his people to celebrate through feasts and parties because he didn't want them to forget His grace and abundant provision. The very celebration wasn't just a response - it was also a demonstration of what God is like and has done. It is vital that we enter into a regular rhythm of celebrating God's extravagant blessings.

Acts 2:42-47 and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

To the extent we value God's grace extended to us we will respond to His grace to us and to others in worship, in celebration.

...In My Life

Part of my ability to live out the gospel is dependent upon my regular reflection on the gospel. I need to regularly set my affections on things above - the work of God in Jesus Christ and what is now true of me because of Him.

Exodus 15:2 the Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him.

How is celebrating the gospel a part of my everyday life? How should it be?

...With Each Other

Hebrews 10:24-25 and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

We are called to not give up meeting together so that we might spur each other on to love and good deeds. Jesus himself demonstrates this through his first recorded miracle - at a wedding feast where he affirms the celebration of life together because celebrating life together demonstrates the working out of one of the purposes of the gospel - being reconciled and reunited to God and His family.

How does the gospel inform/dictate our worship celebration when we're together? If we don't really want to gather with the church, what is that saying about us?

...With Our Culture and Community

The people God has sent us to are also celebrating - they happen to be celebrating a different god and a different story. We need to enter into their celebrations and do it unto the true God, truly aware that even their celebration is within His story. Then, within the celebration we are to look for ways to serve, redeem and bring gospel light.

2 Common Errors we can easily make in celebrating with the greater culture:

- Syncretistic - no perceivable difference between the church and culture
- Sectarian - no interaction between the church and culture

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved

What does "being intentional" mean for us when celebrating with believers and with un-believers?

What celebrations should we be creating in order to invite others into the celebration of the Gospel?

As Christians, as Jesus-followers, we should be the most celebratory people on the planet.