



CELEBRATION IS AT THE HEART OF THE WAY OF CHRIST

From the angels rejoicing and announcing joy at the birth of Jesus to Jesus' first miracle at the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus' presence among us was a consistent cause of celebration! Jesus declared that he came into the world to bring joy and a reason to celebrate to all people. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." - *John 15:11*
"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* Paul reminds us that joy is a Fruit of the Spirit. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Joy provides the energy that fuels our obedience and pursuit of life with God. Joy transforms the way we work and sparks authentic play. "When the power that is in Jesus reaches into our work and play and redeems them, there will be joy where once there was mourning. To overlook this is to miss the meaning of the Incarnation." *Celebration of the Disciplines by Richard Foster*

THE INVITATION TO PLAY

Intrinsically linked, the disciplines of play and celebration fuel life with God.

Celebration is the opportunity to practice freedom from anxiety and care. In celebration, we acknowledge that God can be trusted for all we need. Well-cared-for children know all they need is provided and they can play with joyful abandonment. Celebration encourages us to be like children and it is child-like that we are called to be to enter the Kingdom of God.

The disciplines of play and celebration create new bodily habits and postures toward God. We learn to smile, to laugh, and to let "love leak out." In expressing these postures of joy and delight, we physically show our abiding trust in God to provide what we need. We learn that we "shall not want" and set our minds on higher things, which is not easy or natural for us to do. Play and celebration produce joy and energy for life with God. It is an overriding characteristic of children of God. "Celebration heartily done makes our deprivations and sorrows seem small, and we find in it great strength to do the will of our God because his goodness becomes so real to us."

HANNAH'S EXPERIENCE

"The spiritual disciplines of play and celebration have invigorated my life with God. For years I falsely believed that life with God was fairly serious and solemn and that my body was primarily for hard work. With gratitude and immense joy, I am learning how very critical the disciplines of play and celebration are for all of my life with God. It is indeed a discipline for me, as it is not my natural bodily habit and I must intentionally set myself before God to play and celebrate. It truly is leading to life abundant, the Fruit of the Spirit, and Christlikeness."