



Living with Joy is based on stories from early in Jesus' life and ministry, we will explore what it means to live a meaningful, joyful life. In contrast to common New Year's themes such as resolutions, plans and starting over, this series will help us find the joy already present in our lives and reflect on God's continuous presence and inspiration for our daily living.

Questions for Reflection:

- Why do you think the people in the Nehemiah passage responded to hearing the reading of the law with mourning and guilt? How did Nehemiah respond to them?
- What words of celebration and hope does Jesus offer in the Luke passage?
- Why do you think the people of Jesus' hometown were upset by Jesus and his words?
- How will you choose to respond? With despair or hope?
- In what ways have you discovered that life with God is something to find joy in and to share with others?
- In what ways do you see God's kingdom around you? In what ways are you called to be God's kingdom now?
- Why is God's kingdom and all that God offers us enough to survive, to live, to love, to be in this life?



"Blessed for Good" Art created by Logan McNutt, Faith United Young Adult

Spiritual Practice: Celebration



We are all probably familiar with celebrations for birthdays and holidays and other special occasions. Gathering with friends and family in honor of a special event are important moments in our lives. The spiritual practice of celebration invites us to celebrate in light of God's love, provision and blessings. When we practice the discipline of celebration, we intentionally recognize that our world, the beauty around us, the food we eat, our relationships, and all our blessings come from God. In his book *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard wrote: "We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty and goodness." Celebration is about finding joy

in living our lives in relationship with God. Celebration is about showing appreciation and respect for God. The spiritual practice of celebration is not a feeling, but a choice we make. Even in challenging times, the spiritual practice of celebration helps us to remember that God is with us in and through all things, helping us to find peace in the presence of God. Celebration as a spiritual practice reminds us that God in Christ Jesus makes all things new. The Bible is full of examples of celebration and remembering what God has done!

Read a Psalm, then pray it and then try singing it. Make an effort to remember God's goodness, even when you are having a bad day. Sit in a quiet space and listen for the sounds of nature echoing their celebration to God. Celebrate alone or with family and friends, in silence or out loud. Celebrate the goodness of God in all you do!

"This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD..."
(Exodus 12:14)

"Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 CEB)