

Celebration of Discipline 13: CELEBRATION

1. **REMEMBERING** What were memorable and meaningful celebrations you were able to participate in growing up? (Don't restrict yourself to "holidays.")
2. **REFLECTING** What was it about these celebrations that made them so memorable and meaningful?
3. **DISCOVERING** Read Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8-12 and answer the question that follows.
Note: The people of Israel are celebrating one of their lesser known annual festivals, the feast of trumpets.

All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. ²So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law....

⁸They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. ⁹Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. ¹⁰Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." ¹¹The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve." ¹²Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

- What do you learn about what made celebrations memorable and meaningful for the Jews from this brief description of a single feast? Note: the root of the Hebrew word for *feast* means to *dance*.
4. **CONNECTING** What could you do to make celebrations a more memorable and meaningful part of your personal and family practice on a regular basis? (Take some time to brainstorm as a group. Employ your creativity and come up with a list.)
 5. **RESPONDING** What will you do in the weeks ahead—especially considering the approaching holiday season—to make celebration a regular part of your personal and family routine?

Joy is the serious business of heaven.

- C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer*