

Back to School: *Graduation Party*
November 22, 2015

Introduction

In the Bible, we discover that God is a party-giver who loves a good time. It's why, in addition to giving the Israelites a number of commands to follow, the Lord also told them to celebrate a whole host of feasts & festivals (i.e. parties). It's why Jesus spent a large amount of time socializing with friends and strangers alike and He oftentimes spoke of the "kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God" in terms of it being like a party (i.e. banquet where everyone is invited). However, unlike many secular parties, a Christian celebration brings renewal, rejoicing and responsibility.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 9-12. Remember that many Israelites had been exiled to a foreign land and years later were allowed to return to their homeland. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, they set out to rebuild the walls and did so in only 52 days! Upon completion of this undertaking, an assembly of the people was held. Discuss how their celebration in the form of a worship service differs from worship services you attend/have attended.
2. Why is it refreshing to be among a community of believers?
3. God's people were renewed by the reading of His Word. Look at v. 6. How did they show a renewal of faith after hearing the Word of God read aloud?
4. Describe a worship service where you have felt renewed afterwards.
5. After hearing God's Word read and explained, the Israelites became convicted and wept (v. 9). Why do you think Ezra and Nehemiah told them to stop weeping? (see v. 11-12)
6. Discuss the difference between "joy" and "happiness."
7. Verse 10 points out that as a result of God's blessing on us our responsibility is to provide for the needs of others (see also Luke 12:48). Discuss some ways our church has answered this call.
8. What are some steps you can take to prepare your heart and mind to come to worship next week expecting to encounter the presence of the Lord?

CONCLUSION

Every time we gather in Jesus' name we can expect to encounter the presence of the Lord. Being renewed by His power causes us to rejoice in His goodness. Then it is our responsibility to share what we have received by ministering to others.