

# EATING & DRINKING: WEEK 4

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## BEGIN WITH PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Gather together as a Connect Group in a comfortable setting (around a table, on the couch, the floor of a living room, etc.). Have somebody lead a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together.

## DEBRIEF LAST WEEK'S PRACTICE (15-20 MINUTES)

*Note: if you're short on time, skip this and go to the next section.*

If you are in a Connect Group of seven or more, divide into small groups of 3–4 people each. Spend a few minutes catching up on life. Then talk through the following debrief questions:

1. How did last week's Practice go for you? Who did you end up eating and drinking with?
2. Is this something you want to keep doing? If so, how can you make it happen?

## TRANSITION BACK TO ONE LARGE GROUP (15-20 MINUTES)

Have a conversation around the following questions:

1. The focus of this teaching was on celebration, based on John 2:1-11 (feel free to read as a group first). Do you find that celebration comes naturally to you? Or is it something you have to be intentional about?
2. In the teaching, 'pleasure' and 'joy' were differentiated: pleasure was defined as momentary and leaving you wanting more, and joy was defined as deep places of contentment. Was this a new paradigm for you? Taking an honest look at yourself, do you think you seek pleasure or joy more?

## READ THIS OVERVIEW

In the gospels, we regularly read about Jesus at some kind of party, eating and drinking around a table. To the point that he's accused of being a "glutton and drunkard" (Matthew 11:19). Now, to be clear, he wasn't these things, but the point is that he showed up to their parties often enough to be confused as one. And more than that, Jesus was fun to be around. It gets lost in translation, but not only was he smart, Jesus was funny. For a lot of us, that's not how we imagine Jesus. As the Son of God? Yes. Smart? Maybe. But fun to be around? No way. And yet, everywhere he went, people flocked to him from all walks of life. Ours is the kind of God who goes to celebrations and makes them even more fun.

Jesus is the embodiment of God, so Jesus is like God and God is like Jesus. And Jesus is *happy*. In fact, Jesus was the happiest person alive because God is the most joyful being in all of the universe. And since God's plan for our lives is that we might grow to be more and more like Jesus, we know that Jesus' joy is a dimension of our growth that God deeply desires. So our Practice this week is to get together as a Connect Group and throw a party!

### **TALK ABOUT THE COMING WEEK'S PRACTICE AS A COMMUNITY (10-30 MINUTES)**

The main exercise this week is to plan and throw a party with the people in your Connect Group. Fall is such a great time to bring out the grill and have a cookout. Or to bring out the fire-pit for a bonfire. Or to have a themed potluck at a neighborhood park with all sorts of games and music.

Keep in mind from the teaching, the invitation here is not to throw a party the way the world throws parties, but to have a Kingdom type of celebration in which you get together to celebrate the joy of life with God and to enjoy food and drink as Jesus would. This is a form of worship as you draw near to God through gratitude. In Kingdom parties, everybody is invited to revel in God's presence and to leave with joy.

The purpose of tonight is to start planning, so spend some time brainstorming what you want this celebration to look like. And by the end of the night, hopefully you have at least a rough sketch of a Connect Group party. Now, it should be said that if your Connect Group doesn't have the extra cash to put towards this, that's not a problem at all! There are so many creative ways to throw a party on a budget and the internet is full of ideas!

Some questions that can help you get started:

- What kinds of things is God doing amongst us that we want to celebrate?
- Do we want this party to happen on one of the nights we already meet? Or do we want to plan it on a different day?
- What resources do we have to put towards this? (e.g. time, money, energy, access to venue, etc.)
- Where do we want to have the party?
- Is this party something we want to theme? A theme is not at all necessary, but could be fun. If your Connect Group is into it, some ideas might include: a movie like Indiana Jones, an era like the 80s, or a costume party at the end of the month.
- What kinds of food and drink do we want there?
- Who do we want to invite?
- What games do we want there?

**WORK THROUGH THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (10-15 MINUTES)**

1. What does the idea of God as the happiest being in the universe mean to you for your everyday life? Does it make you see God differently? Does it make you see yourself differently?
2. Do you have any thoughts, creative ideas, or feedback on this coming week's Practice?

**CLOSE IN PRAYER (10 MINUTES)**