**Celebration:**

**Getting to Know You:**  What is your favorite thing to celebrate?  (Christmas, Easter, another holiday, a birthday or anniversary, a graduation, paying off a debt, not having to stop at any red lights,…)

**Watch:**  “You are Good” by Israel Houghton (Live Recording)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=708opj5poOc>

1. What aspects of celebration are seen in this video?
2. What did this video make you feel – was it exciting?
3. Would you like to worship this way?  Why or why not?

**Read:  Psalm 118:19-29 New International Version (NIV)**

***19*** *Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.*

***20*** *This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.*

***21*** *I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.*

***22*** *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;*

***23*** *the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.*

***24*** *The Lord has done it this very day;let us rejoice today and be glad.*

***25*** *Lord, save us!  Lord, grant us success!*

***26*** *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  From the house of the Lord we bless you.*

***27*** *The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us.  With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.*

***28*** *You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

***29*** *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

4.   Psalm 118 is what the crowds were singing when Jesus rode into Jerusalm on Palm Sunday.  Read Luke 19:37-40 “***37*** *When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:****38*** *‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!’‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’****39*** *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’****40*** *‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’”*

*What reference to Palm Sunday (Luke 19:37-40) can you find in Psalm 118?  (hint: the Hebrew word “Hosanna” means “The Lord saves!”)*

5.  Palm Sunday took place as people traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.  What does the Bible’s emphasis on days of celebration, feasts, and festivals say about God?

6.  Sometimes, we think we are being super-spiritual when we give things up.  How can feasting and celebration show our devotion to God?

7.  The people did not just say Psalm 118, they SANG it to Jesus on Palm Sunday.  Why is singing an important part of our worship? How does singing help us convey (emotionally, intellectually, corporately…) our appreciation of God?

8.  Look at Psalm 118:24.  John Ortberg says, “If we don’t rejoice today, we will not rejoice at all.  If we wait until conditions are perfect, we will still be waiting when we die.  If we are going to rejoice, it must be in ***this*** day.  This is the day the Lord has made.”

If celebration is always dependent on circumstances would you celebrate enough?

9.  We often look at our future hope of heaven.  Why is it important to rejoice today?

10.  Now, each person will fill out a heart application survey to help determine what your heart application is.  The “test” is on the next few pages. Do the test, determine your score and answer the following questions.

**Heart Application Inventory**

(Adapted from Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways*

and John Ortberg, *An Ordinary Day with Jesus*)

**Directions**: On the answer sheet, score the following statements on a scale of one to five, with one being not true at all and five being very true.  After you have scored each statement, total each column to discover your preferred Heart Application.

**Not True     1      2      3      4      5       Very True**

1. \_\_\_\_\_I feel cut off if I have to spend too much time indoors, just listening to speakers or singing songs.  Nothing makes me feel closer to God than being outside.

2. \_\_\_\_\_I feel closest to God when I’m participating in a familiar form of worship that has memories dating back to my childhood or other high points in my faith life.

3.    \_\_\_\_\_I experience a deep inner joy when I am in a quiet place, free from distractions.

4.    \_\_\_\_\_ I grow weary of Christians who spend their time singing songs while a sick neighbor goes without a hot meal or a family in need doesn’t get help fixing their car.

5.    \_\_\_\_\_God is an exciting God, and we should be excited about worshiping him. I don’t understand how some Christians can say they love God, and then act like they’re going to a funeral whenever they walk into church.

6.    \_\_\_\_\_ I feel closest to God when I learn something new about him that I didn’t understand before. My mind needs to be stimulated.

7. \_\_\_\_\_I would prefer to worship God by spending an hour beside a small brook than by participating in a group service.

8. \_\_\_\_\_Individualism within the church is a real danger. Christianity is a corporate faith, and most of our worship should have corporate expression.

9.    \_\_\_\_\_I don’t understand how Christians can be so busy and still think they can hear from God.

10. \_\_\_\_\_Helping others is easy for me, even when I have personal problems.

11. \_\_\_\_\_I spend more money on music and worship cd’s than on books.

12. \_\_\_\_\_ It’s very important to me that I know exactly what I believe.

13. \_\_\_\_\_Seeing God’s beauty in nature is more moving to me than understanding new concepts, participating in a formal religious service, or participating in social causes.

14. \_\_\_\_\_The words tradition and history are very appealing to me.

15. \_\_\_\_\_My family and friends sometimes tease me about being such a hermit.

16. \_\_\_\_\_ I sense God’s power when I am counseling a friend who has lost a job, preparing meals for or fixing the car of a family in need, or spending a week at an orphanage in Mexico.

17. \_\_\_\_\_People who know me would describe me as enthusiastic during worship.

18. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel close to God when I participate in several hours of uninterrupted study time – reading God’s Word or good Christian books and then perhaps having an opportunity to teach (or participate in a discussion with) a small group.

19. \_\_\_\_\_A beautiful sunset can give me a spiritual high that temporarily blocks out everything that is bothering me.

20. \_\_\_\_\_I would really enjoy developing a personal rule (or ritual) of prayer.

21. \_\_\_\_\_When I face a difficulty, being alone feels most helpful.

22. \_\_\_\_\_ I would rather nurse someone to health or help someone repair their house than teach an adult Sunday school class, go on a prayer and fasting retreat, or take a lonely walk in the woods.

23. \_\_\_\_\_God touches me every time I gather with other believers for praise and worship.

24. \_\_\_\_\_  A book on church theology would be appealing to me.

25. \_\_\_\_\_When faced with a difficult decision, I am drawn to walk in the woods, on the beach, or in some other outdoor setting.

26. \_\_\_\_\_I enjoy attending a “high church” service with printed prayers and formal communion.

27. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel closest to God when I am alone and there is nothing to distract me from focusing on his presence.

28. \_\_\_\_\_People around me sometimes tell me they admire my compassion.

29. \_\_\_\_\_When I am tired, I look forward to going to a church service.

30. \_\_\_\_\_ I spend more money on books than music.

31. \_\_\_\_\_Things in nature often teach me valuable lessons about God.

32. \_\_\_\_\_ Symbols help me to center my attention on Christ and remember what He has done for me.

33. \_\_\_\_\_ I would describe my faith as more “internal” than “external.”

34. \_\_\_\_\_Even when I’m tired, I find I have the energy and desire to care for people’s problems.

35. \_\_\_\_\_It is easier for me to pray when I am in a group with others than when I am alone..

36. \_\_\_\_\_In a church service, I most look forward to the sermon.

37. \_\_\_\_\_God is so real when I’m in a beautiful, natural setting.

38. \_\_\_\_\_ I like to keep track of the Christian calendar (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, etc) and have traditions that I like to repeat for each observance.

39. \_\_\_\_\_ Taking an overnight retreat by myself at a monastery where I could spend large amounts of time alone in a small room, praying to God and studying his Word, and fasting for one or more days are all activities I would enjoy.

40. \_\_\_\_\_I am happiest when I find someone who really needs help and I step in and offer it.

41. \_\_\_\_\_I don’t think there is a good excuse for missing a worship time or coming in late during the music.

42. \_\_\_\_\_I worship best in response to theological truth clearly explained.

**Results:**Record your answers in the box below.  Then total each column.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 |
| 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_       \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Nature       Ritual        Solitude    Action    Celebration    Study**

The highest possible score is thirty-five.  The higher your score, the stronger the dominance of this spiritual temperament in your life.  Remember that most of us have more than one spiritual temperament. Any score of 18 or higher indicates a tendency towards a particular temperament.

Another thing to keep in mind, is that this is just a tool to help us understand how we can experience and connect with God more.  Most of us have multiple Heart Apps and can combine them to deepen our relationship with God.

After taking the Heart Applications inventory test:

1. Share within your group what your main heart application is.  Do you agree with your results? Do other people in the group agree with your results?

1. How do you plan to grow in or apply your heart application?  What steps are you going to take to connect to God in this way?

**Application:**If you are able, try to do one of these activities.

1. Ask God each morning to bring someone in your path who you can minister to.

1. Go through old picture albums and reflect on how God moved in different seasons of your life; think about people He used, conversations that drew you closer to Him, successes and failures, or special events and focus on the faithfulness of God.

1. Be the first to celebrate what God is doing in your life and in the lives of others by throwing dinner parties, writing cards of congratulations, or looking for “Atta, boy!” or “Atta, girl!” moments.

1. Celebrate big events like Christmas and Easter, trying to incorporate new ways of focusing on Jesus.  Celebrate little events like cleaning the garage or having no cavities, realizing that God is with you in the big and the small.
2. Watch:  10 ideas for a Christ Centered Easter <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4dV6pHt64U>

What are some things you could do to celebrate Easter?