

Celebrating God: The Importance of Relational Celebration

Numbers 28-29 with Psalm 96 (cf. New Testament passages)

- Psalm 96:1 Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!
² Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!
⁴ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.
⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!
⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!
⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!
¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established;
it shall never be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity."
¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
¹² let the field exult, and everything in it!
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy ¹³ before the LORD,
for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

How do you celebrate the special relationship you have with the Lord? His redemption of you forever? His presence and guiding in your life? His protection in your battles? His provision when you are in need? His promise to give you a future and fulfill all His promises to you?

What do you do – very specifically and outwardly and regularly – to say to God, “Lord, what You’ve done for me is special. What we have together every day is absolutely wonderful. What I’m looking forward to in the years to come, and in eternity, couldn’t be more thrilling to me?

How do you celebrate God? It’s a very important question. Because worship...

Regular relationship celebration – we might call it
eager worship -- is the tuning fork of walk by faith.

This important Biblical truth permeates the entire Bible, and not surprisingly, we find it coming to the end of the *Book of Numbers*. Admittedly, the end of NUMBERS is a mixed bag. In Numbers 22-24, we watched God reaffirm his relentless commitment to Israel through Balaam, the reluctant *baru* of Mesopotamia. Even when hired by Israel’s enemies, all Balaam could say was, “How can I curse whom God has not cursed” (23:8)...“the Lord their God is with them” (23:21).

But you also realize that even this new generation of Israelites is not perfect. As they prepare for God’s signal to cross the Jordan, some of the Israelites were invited to worship the gods of Moab,

and, yes, they began to worship (i.e., *Israel yoked itself to*) “Baal of Peor” (Numbers 25:1-9). Moses called the judges of Israel to court, a large # of the chiefs of people were hung in broad daylight. God’s judgmental anger arose; yet another 24,000 Israelites die in a plague.

So another “who is ready to fight” census is taken (Numbers 26:1-65), and the Lord designates Joshua to succeed Moses as Israel’s leader in a solemn ceremony (Numbers 27:12-23). And then? Then...God speaks to His people about eager WORSHIP. The question: will we regularly celebrate God?

Regular relationship celebration – we might call it ***eager sacrificial worship*** -- is the tuning fork of walk by faith.

Numbers 28:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the people of Israel and say to them, ‘My offering, my food for my food offerings, my pleasing aroma, you shall be careful to offer to me at its appointed time.’ ³And you shall say to them, This is the food offering that you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs a year old without blemish, day by day, as a regular offering. ⁴The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; ⁵also a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with a quarter of a hin of beaten oil. ⁶It is a regular burnt offering, which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. ⁷Its drink offering shall be a quarter of a hin for each lamb. In the Holy Place you shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the LORD. ⁸The other lamb you shall offer at twilight. Like the grain offering of the morning, and like its drink offering, you shall offer it as a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Sabbath Offerings

⁹“On the Sabbath day, two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering: ¹⁰this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

Thus begins two chapters of instructions about sacrifices and offerings. Gordon Wenham helps us wrap our minds around these directions. He writes: “The sacrifices [to be offered by the Levites in the Tabernacle] are arranged according to their frequency [in their calendars].”

1st come the DAILY BURNT OFFERINGS (28:2-8)

Every day, Levitical priests offer two male lambs
One in the morning, one in the evening
Grain offering and drink offering

2nd come the WEEKLY SABBATH OFFERING (28:9-10)

Each Sabbath, two male lambs, two tenths of ephah
Of fine flower, mixed with oil, and a drink offering

3rd come the MONTHLY OFFERINGS (28:11-15)

On **Day 1 of each month**, two bulls, one ram, 7 unblemished male lambs
With each bull a grain offering mixed with oil
With each ram a grain offering mixed with oil
With each lamb a grain offering mixed with oil

Finally, come the ONCE-YEARLY OFFERINGS (28:16-29:38)

PASSOVER – Day 14 of **1st Month** (March/April)
> *celebrating the lamb slain, blood on doorposts*
Feast of Unleavened Bread – day 15 of 1st Month

> *celebrated the exodus from slavery/Egypt*
Feast of Weeks – **3rd Month** (50 days after Passover)

> *celebrated the end of barley harvest*

In the **7th Month** of the Jewish Year (Oct/Nov):

A Holy Convocation – Day 1 (Num 29:1-6) “trumpets”

Day of Atonementⁱ – Day 10-14 (Num 29:7-11, cf. Lev. 16:29-31)

> *sacrifices to atone for sins of people, beginning with the High Priest*

Feast of Tabernacles – Day 15-22 (Num 29:12-38, cf. Lev 29:39-43)

> *celebrating their days of sojourning in wilderness*

Numbers 29:39 “These you shall offer to the LORD at your appointed feasts, in addition to your vow offerings and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings.”

Again, Dr. Wenham:

Every year in the future the priests will have to sacrifice 113 bulls, 32 rams, 1086 lambs and offer more than a ton of flour and a thousand bottles of oil and wine.ⁱⁱ These chapters list the minimum number of sacrifices that can be offered (by the Levitical priests) in a year; sacrifices initiated by laymen (i.e., regular Israelites) due to (personal) sin, impurity, vows, or any other reason are in addition to those listed here (29:39).ⁱⁱⁱ

Now...your reaction might be “Wow, that seems like a lot! I’m glad we don’t have to do all that.

I mean, why would we want to do all that just to celebrate our relationship with God?”

Well, the truth is, we do *sacrificially celebrate* all kinds of things. Annually^{iv}...

- We spend \$7.1 billion celebrating the 4th of July (\$800 million alone on fireworks)
- We spend \$8 billion each October celebrating Halloween (\$75 for every adult over 18) – note, we spend \$310 million for Halloween costumes, for our pets (cf. ^{iv} below).
- We spend \$16.5 billion each Spring celebrating Easter (\$140 per person)
- We spend 18.9 billion each February celebrating Valentines day (\$142 per person)
- We spend 21.6 billion in May/June celebrating Mother’s Day and Father’s Day
 - \$115 on dads
 - \$173 on moms
- We spend \$631 billion each November/December celebrating Christmas
 - \$805 on themselves/own family
 - \$462 gifts for other family

All told, we as individuals & families spend around \$703 billion dollars celebrating our country,

Halloween, Easter, Valentines, dads and moms, and Christmas/Winter Holiday. That is about \$2,350

per man, woman, or child. By contrast,

- Americans in only 2 states give 5% or more of their income away. Those in only 7 states give away 4%; in 18 states 3% (including Iowa). In the other 23 states 2% or less.
- More narrowly, Evangelical Christians make \$6.72 trillion in annual income. We give \$545 billion to any and all Christian causes (note: less than what we spend on Christmas).
- For every \$100,000 that Christians make in income, we give \$1.00 to reach the unreached peoples in our world who have never effectively heard the gospel.^v

“Hey, Pastor David. What’s your point?” It is simply this: The Spirit of God asks us to learn

from a people called to exercise faith in the wild. Here is a new generation about to go in with God and their leader Joshua to conquer a land flowing with milk-and-honey. “Clearly,” notes Gordon Wenham, “Israel was destined (under the blessing of God) to be a prosperous agricultural community.” Soon a young Israel would hear from Moses declare (in Deuteronomy 28) that

^{Deut 28:1} if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

GOD: “But when I do, LET’S CELEBRATE!” In the midst of all that blessing, regularly and sacrificially celebrate their unique relationship with Him.

- Bring the best animals of your herd to the Lord to be sacrificed so that you do not grow complacent about their sins.
- Bring the firstfruits of their fields to recognize the boundless goodness that comes uniquely from the hand of their God.
- Celebrate their miraculous exodus from slavery.
- Sing harvest songs as the crops are being brought in.
- Confess their sins and have them washed by the blood of the lambs.
- Vividly recall the days when in the desert God provided water from rocks and manna from heaven and victories over their enemies.

Psalm 96:8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. Bring an offering; Come into His courts.

Regular relationship celebration – we might call it ***eager sacrificial worship*** -- is the tuning fork of walk by faith.

Because without it...***all of the blessings become idols.***

Mark Twain, the 19th Century American humorist, was by no means a disciple of Jesus Christ. But he did have a respect for Scripture, and he often had his eye on what Christians said, and did. On September 27th, 1871, in a parody on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Twain published in the *New York Times* what he called our “Revised Catechism.” It went something like this:

WHAT IS THE CHIEF END OF MAN?

Answer: To get rich

IN WHAT WAY?

Answer: Dishonestly if we can; honestly if we must

WHO IS GOD, the ONE ONLY AND TRUE?

Answer: Money is God. God and Greenbacks and Stock—father, son, and ghosts of same. Three Persons in One; these are the true and only God, mighty and supreme.^{vi}

Without eager, humbly worship of the Lord, all His blessings become idols. This is why

- Eager, sacrificial worship was a gift, an offering which represented the goodness of God in their lives.

- Eager sacrificial worship brought a substitute, which represented the covering atonement for their sins.
- Eager sacrificial worship was an act of obedience, representing their cooperative, covenant relationship with God.
- Eager sacrificial worship was a celebration, representing the joy of what God had done and was doing in their lives.
- Eager sacrificial worship was a provision, supporting the work of God through his people.

EAGER WORSHIP TODAY

So how do we celebrate God today?

As a disciple of Jesus today, I am to be a daily, sacrificed offering to the Lord.

Romans 12:1-2 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers/sisters, because of the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be comforted to this word (J.B. Phillips: *Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold,*) but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Christians in the Body of Christ are called to GATHER in eager worship.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Christians in the Body of Christ are called to CELEBRATE in eager worship.

There's a reason why the Holy Spirit put in our Bibles the Psalms (150 songs right at the heart of the Bible)! There's a reason why Christians sing together

Romans 15:8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” ¹⁰ And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

1 Corinthians 15:14 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, **singing** psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Rev 15:2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations!
⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy. All nations will come
and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Christians in the Body of Christ are called to SACRIFICIALLY GIVE in eager worship

Psalm 96:7-8

Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!

The Apostle Paul’s word to the Corinthian church is here for us today:

² Corinthians 8:1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

Celebrating God – a daily living sacrifice. Celebrating God – Gathering with other Christians to give energy to the body of Christ. Celebrating God – coming to enthusiastically sing of all that God means to you. Celebrating God – coming into his courts with an offering. It’s the way God’s people in any age keep their walk with God in tune. Time for a tune-up?

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ⁱ Leviticus 16:1-34, f. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Day-Atonement-Yom-Kippur.html>

ⁱⁱ Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 1981), 220.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 219.

^{iv} <http://www.annmariejohn.com/2015/11/top-5-most-expensive-holidays.html>

^v From <http://www.messagemissions.com/mission-statistics/>

- Annual Income of All Church Members: \$30.5 trillion.
- Annual income of Evangelical Christians is approximately \$6.72 trillion.
- Given to any Christian causes: \$545 billion (1.8% of our income). That’s also how much we spend in America on Christmas
- Given to Missions: \$31 billion, (0.1%). That’s only 5.7% of the money given to Christian causes of any kind. That’s also how much we spend in America on dieting programs.
- Money that goes toward the Reached world: \$26,970,000,000 (that means 87% of the money given to “Missions” goes to areas with “reached” status or access to the gospel already).
- Money that goes toward Unreached Peoples: \$310 million (that’s only 1% of what is given to “Missions.”). That’s also how much Americans in 2011 spent on Halloween costumes (for their pets).
- The \$310 million (going toward Unreached People Group’s) is only .001% of the \$30.5 trillion Income of Christians. (for every \$100,000 that Christians make, they give \$1 to the unreached.)

^{vi} Cited in Larson and Ten Elshof, eds., *1001 Illustrations that Connect* (Zondervan, 2008), 517.