

Rhythms of Grace Week 4 - Feasting – Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

1. God wants us to enjoy His good gifts. (See Genesis 2:16-17).

“He’s a hedonist at heart...Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure. He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore...He has filled his world with pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least – sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be twisted before it’s of any use to us” C.S Lewis - Screwtape Letters

- A) What are the good gifts, the good pleasures God has given us to enjoy in our lives right now, big and small? Take a few moments to share with each other if you're willing, and celebrate these things together.
- B) What gets in the way of us stopping, recognising, appreciating, and enjoying these good gifts?
- C) How might the enemy try to twist these good gifts into temptations to sin? (See Genesis 3:1)

2. God wants us to enjoy relational pleasures. (See Proverbs 5:15-20)

- A) How might the joy slowly fade from a marriage and spouses drift apart over time without intentional celebration, time set aside, pleasure, and enjoyment of one another? How about in a friendship?
- B) What is stopping us from truly enjoying and honouring the relationships God has given us right now?
- C) What will it look like in all our busyness, commitments and struggles, to “feast” and celebrate the people God has put in our lives as a regular rhythm? - Whether a spouse, friends, children or otherwise.

3. God wants us to enjoy the challenging pleasures. (See Genesis 2:15; Colossians 3:23-24).

- A) Do we struggle to see our day-to-day work (our job, keeping the home, our activities in retirement, etc) as a gift from God to be enjoyed? Why?

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. – Ecclesiastes 9:10

“Work is not the curse, it is the frustration we experience in our work that is part of the curse.” – Lee

- B) How might it give us joy to know that something we've created or done has benefitted others, provided for our families and others, provided the means to

experience other pleasures, and given glory to God?

4. God wants us to know the difference between good things and ultimate things.
 - A) What are some good things in our lives that can easily become distorted into "God things", taking the place of God in our hearts, heads and hands?
 - B) Practically, how can we keep pleasures in balance- receiving them as good gifts from God not to be feared or ignored, but celebrated – yet not over-indulging in them or worshipping them as if they and not God were our ultimate satisfaction?
5. How does our enjoyment of eating, drinking, relationships, work and other pleasures point us to God – who He is and the eternal relationship He has called us into?

Doing the word this week:

Confess and repent of the ways in which you have ignored, avoided or taken for granted the good gifts of God in your life. Confess and repent of the ways in which you have allowed God's gifts to take the place of God Himself in your life, seeking comfort, peace, hope and fulfilment in these things. Ask for His help to see the simple pleasures in your life, your work, your spouse, your friends as His amazing grace toward you, to be feasted on and enjoyed for His glory.

Choose at least one area (a relationship, an occasion, a work endeavour, etc) and commit to feasting in that area to the glory of God. This could be a time set aside with a friend or group of friends to enjoy good food and drink and each other's company, a special date night with your spouse, a fun activity, a fresh commitment to prayerfully tackling a job with passion and joy. Share your commitment with your group or a group member, keep each other accountable, pray for one another and check in and share with each other about it.

In as many things as you can remember day-to-day this week, big and small, make a habit of giving thanks to the Lord with glad hearts for what a great God He is, and the incredible pleasures of life He has given us to enjoy!