

Not First #10:  
**CELEBRATION**

*Word*

**Scripture Reference**

Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-12

**Discussion Questions**

1. How would you describe a spirit-filled, Christ-like person?
2. The bible tells us that joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and that as believers we are to rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4). Celebration is part of being a Christian because we have reason to celebrate every day. How you exude joy in your life announces to the world that Jesus Christ resides in your heart. So how can we practice the spiritual discipline of celebration daily to remind us that we are not first in this world? We learn important principles from how the shepherds and wise men in the Christmas story celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ, and draw out three reasons for why we can celebrate and be joyful daily:
  - a. **Reason #1: There is a Savior, and His name is Jesus (Luke 2:8-12).** For generations, the people of Israel have been looking for the Messiah. There have been many who promised to lead the people out of foreign oppression in the 400 years between the Old and New Testament, but all failed. The people were discouraged, wondering when the Chosen One would come, and now here is a definitive statement, and from a real-life angel, no less! The Savior has been born! This announcement got the shepherds so excited. Every Christmas we see various kinds of announcements that says “Jesus Christ is born!” Think about how you react to that. Do you celebrate Jesus with the same joy and passion as the

shepherds who anticipated His coming? As a follower of Christ, how can you be intentional in anticipating the Savior’s work in your life? What can you do daily to demonstrate that you celebrate His presence in your life?

- b. **Reason #2: We have experienced the Savior (Luke 2:13-20).** The gospel of Luke does not give us many details about what the shepherds did once they saw Jesus. The only thing recorded is that the shepherds heard the news, made the effort to find Jesus, and their experience with Him filled their hearts with joy. Unless you have a personal relationship with Jesus and experienced Him in an authentic way, you will not think that there is reason to celebrate. What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and experiencing Him? When was the last time you really celebrated your experience with the Savior by boldly and excitedly telling others about something that happened to you?
- c. **Reason #3: Faith Rewarded (Matthew 2:1-12).** The wise men from the East saw a star and traveled to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Their journey of faith (they didn’t see the star for a long time) took more than a year. Upon leaving Herod’s palace in Jerusalem to go to Bethlehem, when the same star they saw in the East appeared again to lead them to the place where Jesus was, the Bible tells us “they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.” Matthew used words of extreme description, trying to convey the exuberance of these wise men upon realizing that their journey was not in vain. Faith realized and faith rewarded calls for celebration and laughter (Psalm 126:1-3). Examine your life. How is your faith rewarded by God’s grace and mercy every day? Discuss the difference between a believer and non-believer’s funeral. For a Christian, what is there to be joyful about in death?

*Walk*

Our Asian culture is a culture that loves to celebrate, yet sometimes amidst these celebrations there is still great sadness because the celebrations we have built up in our lives are superficial, empty, and not rooted in what we should actually be celebrating. Read the Christmas story again in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. Ponder upon how Jesus’

coming to earth meant that you have a Savior, and that you can personally experience Him in your life by inviting Him into your heart, and that your faith in Him will be rewarded not only in this life, but in the life to come. Let that thought renew your joy in the Lord, and let that joy spill out in bold celebration so that others may also find reason to celebrate. Then think of how you can be intentional in celebrating Jesus not just in church or during Christmas and Easter, but on normal everyday conversations in your circles of influence.

### *Worship & Prayer*

Father, thank You for Jesus, for sending Him to be my Savior so that I can have a reason to celebrate. Forgive me for not being as enthusiastic about spiritual things as I am about non-spiritual things. I often forget that everything I have, every good thing I experience is because of your grace and mercy. Help me remember everyday that because of Jesus, I am blessed with forgiveness, hope, love, grace, comfort, peace, and joy every day. Give me the boldness to celebrate Jesus, so that in my words, attitude, and actions, others may also be encouraged to experience Him. In Jesus' name. Amen.