Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

Week 11: March 13-20, 2022

Celebrate Purim

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Purim. Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- Pick a character from the story of Esther. What stress did your character experience in the book of Esther?
- What risks did Esther take in the story? Why did she do them?
- What risks do you believe God is calling you to take?
- How did God show up in the story even though he is never mentioned?
- How have you seen God show up in your past?
- In what way do you need God's deliverance in your life now?

Craft: Purim Grogger (Noisemaker)

Purim is perhaps the most interactive and fun celebration of all Jewish holidays. It centers on celebrating he deliverance of the Israelites from Haman's wicked plot to kill them all. So, we want to get into the celebration. In fact, whenever Haman's name is said in the scripture reading, it is customary on Purim to make as much noise as possible by booing of using groggers, drowning out his evil plot of destruction.

This week, make your own grogger. Be creative. Take an empty can, decorate it, and put something small inside (i.e., popcorn kernels, coffee beans, pennies). You can even take a paper plate, fold it in half, put items inside, and staple/tape it closed.

See who can come up with the best grogger. Then, read through part or all of the book of Esther, making noise every time Haman is mentioned. Have fun! Celebrate!!

Supplies:

- Container/Empty Can
- Small Items (coins, beans, popcorn kernels)
- Tape
- Paper to Decorate
- Crayons/Markers

Foods to Prepare

As with most holidays, Purim has some special food traditions. Here are some highlights provided by SpruceEats:

KREPLACH and HAMANTASHEN: Kreplach are pasta triangles filled with ground beef or chicken and hamantashen are triangles of pastry dough surrounding a filling often made with dates or poppy seeds.

TURKEY: It is written that King Ahasuerus reigned from India to Ethiopia, from "Hodu to Kush." In Hebrew, the word hodu means both "India" and "turkey." Thus, some people eat turkey on Purim while others eat Ethiopian dishes such as Ethiopian lentils.

VEGETARIAN: Queen Esther is said to have eaten a vegetarian diet in order to keep kosher while living in the palace. In her honor, many serve a meatless meal for their Purim feast.

PERSIAN: Since the Jews lived in Persia during this time, some celebrate Purim by eating various Persian dishes such as ashe reshteh and tahdig. More modern Persian dishes include: roast chicken with saffron and citrus or avocado and pomegranate salad. Enjoy!

Activity: Role Play

Regardless of your age, consider watching one of six animated videos each day this week. These videos are taught by Jewish rabbi, David Fohrman, in a series called, The Queen You Thought You Knew. Unlike other video depictions, Fohrman encourages you to put yourself into the story and consider what you would do. Would you do what the character did or something entirely different? Talk about these decisions as a family. The videos are 10-12 minutes long and can be found at: https://www.alephbeta.org/purim .

One of the regular Jewish traditions at Purim is to reenact the story by dressing up and role playing (shpiel). Consider letting different members of the family act out the story. If acting is not your thing, talk through the story and consider the following:

- What would you have done? What should have been done?
- What did happen? How did God work through what happened?

Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. Here are some movies that explain the story of Esther, but you certainly are not limited to this list. Pop some pop-corn, curl up on the couch, and enjoy the show!

Purim Movies:

- One Night with the King
- Esther
- Purim: The Lot
- Megillas Lester
- Esther and the King

Mad Lib

The Hebrew word, megillah (plural, megillot) means "scroll." In the ancient world, books of the Bible were written or rolls of crisscrossed parchment. The book of Esther is a megillah.

For fun, write your own simplified, one-page summary of the events of Esther. Then, mark out various words in the story, identifying what kind of word it is: place, person's name, food, object, adjective, feeling, etc.

Ask members of the family to give you a word that fits each blank (marked out word) without telling them what the deleted word is. Say something like, "Give me a person's name." "What is a feeling that you have?" Write these words into the story.

Then, for fun, read the summary of Esther that you wrote inserting the new words into the megillah. Laugh together as you read this humorous version of the story.

Finally, go back and see if others can guess what the original word was that you marked out before you turned it into a mad lib. Have fun!

Bible Study

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." (Ps. 32:7)

The psalmist speaks of God as our "hiding place." The word that is used in this verse speaks of a shelter that is provided as a place of protection. Consider what it would be like to have someone trying to find you to hurt you and your family. The police decide to take you to an undisclosed "safe house" until the assailant is captured. This is what God is for us. He is our "safe house."

God protects us from trouble by surrounding us with his presence and provision. This does not mean that we will avoid experiencing troubling situations, painful heartaches, or alluring temptations. Rather, it means that when trials and hardships come, we can run to God and find him to be a "safe house" of protection.

Will you sing a song of deliverance this week?: On p. 7 of this guide, there are some songs listed to get you started. Use these or others of your choosing to remind you that God is your Deliverer and that you can always run to him. Sing and celebrate God's protection in your life, trusting that he will deliver you through whatever is before you.

Prayer Time

Most of the time when we pray, we bring our requests or supplication to God, asking for his intervention and for relief from the struggles we face. Making these petitions are appropriate in our conversation with God as we surrender to his will and ways in our lives.

However, it is just as important, if not more important, for us to celebrate what God has done and is doing in our lives. Purim is a time of thanksgiving for the deliverance God provides his people. Our delivering God did not just show up in Persia in the fifth century. He continues to be present with us in our trials and deliver us from the destructive ways of sin, Satan, death, and the world.

See if you can spend a whole day or even a week just thanking and celebrating who God is and what he is doing. If you forego your requests, you may just find that God answers them in a way that you can celebrate!

Service: Feed Someone

In the story of Esther, the queen throws a banquet for Xerxes, the king. When God delivers the Hebrew people, they expanded this feast to include all the people, especially the poor (Est. 9:22). The people were especially concerned that everyone was able to celebrate Purim and God's deliverance.

Oftentimes the poor are marginalized and left out of celebrations in our society. If we are not intentional to get to know the poor around us, we can become blind and oblivious to them, their stories, and their needs. As followers of Jesus, we should have a genuine and intentional interest in the "least" of society.

Consider ways you can share food with the poor. Buy a meal for someone on the street corner. Cook a meal at a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Cook a double portion for dinner and take the other half to someone in need. Invite a poor family to your own table. If asked just explain that you are celebrating Purim this week and want them to join in the fun.

Connect: Mishloach Manot

Mishloach manot in Hebrew literally means "sending of portions." It is the Jewish version of a gift basket. At Purim, one of the popular Jewish customs is to give a basket of food, treats, and/or drink to family or friends. In this case, you can deliver the gift personally, but the tradition is to use a third party to deliver the gift basket. In addition, according to Jewish instruction, it is better to give gifts on Purim to more people than to give a more elaborate gift to one person. Kids, age six and older, are encouraged to join in the gift basket preparation.

Mishloach manot is a reminder of the way that the people celebrated Purim by "sending portions" of food to each other (Est. 9:22) upon God's deliverance from Haman's plot of destruction. Find a way to participate in gift giving this week. You will be blessed!

Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs focus on God's deliverance. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

Deliverance Worship Songs:

- My Redeemer Lives
- My Deliverer
- Jesus My Redeemer
- Song of Deliverance
- You Are My Hiding Place
- A Mighty Fortress
- Great Are You Lord
- Lord, I Need You
- Good, Good Father
- Surrounded (Fight My Battles)

Challenge: Take a Risk

God placed Esther in the palace for "such a time as this" (Est. 4:14). She was the strategic instrument used to bring awareness to the king and save the people. This was at great risk, though. By even approaching the king uninvited, she could have been executed. Yet, she weighed the risks and realized that it was far more risky to stay silent.

What is a risk that you have been avoiding? Prayerfully consider whether you are risking even more by not taking the step forward. Here is a helpful article to process how to move forward and to consider taking a risk: https://www.wikihow.com/Take-Risks .

God is with you, and it is worth the risk to follow and trust him. He is our Deliverer!

"It is God that has made us as we are, but it will be God, too, who will raise us up again."

—Anne Frank