

Guidelines for Leaders:

If you aren't doing so already, encourage your people to do their own homework on the questions before your meeting.

There is more than enough material in these questions to fill up your whole discussion time. So, consider these three suggestions for group discussion:

First, choose just one of the 2 Introduction questions.

Second, choose no more than 4 or 5 of the Understanding questions.

Third, be sure to allow enough time for the Application, which is where we really seek the impact of the sermon on our daily Christian lives. The Application is also a great opportunity for group prayer.

Introduction:

1. When or in what circumstances do you find it easy to be enthusiastic about what you are doing?
2. Think back through your own history with God. What key times can you point to as evidence of His goodness?

Understanding:

3. Verse 9 says: "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." What is the connection between "holy day" and holiday? How does the connection help you see how, as Christians, we are free to celebrate?
4. Someone claims, "To be a good Christian you must have a strict vegetarian diet. "How can you biblically respond to that claim? See 1 Timothy 4:3-5.
5. Read Acts 2:46-47. How is this like the celebration in Nehemiah? How does it go wonderfully above and beyond the celebration in Nehemiah? What are the practical implications for our lives in Christian community?
6. Verse 10 states: "Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Why do we *need* celebration in our lives? What happens when we lack the joy of the Lord?
7. Whenever you read Scripture, two basic things come out: *law* and *grace*. *Law* is what God expects from us. And *grace* is what God does for us. To see law at work, consider Matthew 5:48. Can you really live up to that? How do you react to that? But now read Romans 5:8. What is the remedy to being so aware of how we fall short? Why can we never hear this enough?
8. Look up Leviticus 23:42-43. What was this Feast of Booths meant to commemorate? Having just completed the building of a permanent wall, how would living in an impermanent structure for a week remind the people of God's faithfulness?
9. An old John Newton hymn says:
*Our pleasure and our duty,
Though opposite before;
Since we have seen his beauty,
Are joined to part no more.*

Do you serve the Lord mainly out of obligation? How do this hymn and today's teaching help change your attitude?

10. One day in the future, there will be a celebration unlike any other. Read Revelation 19:6-9. Who is the lamb? Who is the bride? What is the significance of them having a supper? Consider obstacles in your life, living in the tumultuous world of 2017. How does knowing that God is preparing a permanent home for us beyond this impermanent life spur you on?

Application:

11. When the 50,000 people of Israel gathered by their new wall, the reason they had this great celebration was that they realized *God* had done this for him. As a small group, what is your own story of how God gave you favor? How do you celebrate it?
12. Pastor Dave stated: “whatever God is calling you to pour yourself into, you don’t have to do it. “ How is this confirmed by Scripture? What are some specific things God is giving you to do, that you can apply this to?