



# PARTY



# CHAPTER 5 | PARTY

## Introduction

In this chapter, we will closely examine God's Word to understand what living a life feasting on God's Word looks like. A life that feasts on God is a fruitful life. This life is not experienced by coincidence or stumbled upon by accident. A fruitful life that feasts on God is built intentionally. Together, we will look at some key disciplines it requires, such as turning down distractions, feeding on what is healthy for growth, and learning the vital role of a healthy community. When these key disciplines are understood through the lenses of God's Word, they will be transformational for our lives.

When we think about parties, we often associate them with a place or environment that makes us feel good. We think about feasting, celebration, and company. However, the party scene also serves as a place of distraction and escape from reality for many. Our desire and pursuit to 'feel good' for the moment leads us to a lifestyle that begins to deter healthy growth and stability in our lives.

This study aims to understand how building a life feasting on God can lead to lifelong fulfillment and wholeness that surpasses the momentary pleasure found in the chaos of the party scene.

*In John 10:10, Jesus reminds us, "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."*

We need to pause and think about a few of these essential truths. The first is the clear distinction Jesus makes between His intentions for us, which are to give to us, and the enemy's intentions for us, which are to take from us. The second important truth to think about is Jesus' promise of abundant life. This word has often been mistaken for the abundance of material things. While God does enjoy blessing us with material things, the blessing of spiritual abundance is His main and greatest priority.

Spiritual abundance means experiencing peace, joy, freedom, hope, contentment, purpose, and ultimately, a life full in Christ and lacking no good thing. Simply, God desires that we find complete fulfillment and satisfaction in Him.

But how can we experience that abundant life today while living in an overstimulated, constantly hyped culture? How can we make room to experience the abundant life that Jesus came to give while being distracted by the “turn-up” culture, which thrives on getting loose and being wild? Music, social media, pop culture, and every major influence in our world continue to build a culture that only increases the distraction level in our lives and widens the gap in our relationship with Christ.

A recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center indicated that Christianity has steadily declined in the United States over the past decade. Of those polled between 2018 and 2019, 65% of Americans identified as Christians, a drop of 12% compared to the past decade. Additionally, church attendance is down 7%. Meanwhile, there was an increase of 26%, up from 17%, in those who identified as agnostic or atheist.<sup>9</sup>

While there are many contributing factors to this decline, these statistics give us a glimpse of the overwhelming reality that unless we intentionally make room for God and cultivate our relationship with Him, it won’t happen by happenstance. However, this does not mean we must bear the burden of building a relationship with God alone.

One of the many encouraging reminders is James 4:8, which assures us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. In other words, for every step we take to seek Him, He takes a giant step closer to us. That is the beauty of building with God: He meets us where we are and longs to make himself known to us.

He calls us to know Him, to feast on Him, so that we may experience the fullness of His love and, in that love, find the fulfillment, wholeness, and satisfaction we deeply long for.

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<sup>9</sup> Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>, accessed September 5, 2021.



# PARTY part 1

*Turning Down the Invitation to Distractions*

# Distractions

Distractions are real, and we live in an endless supply of them. Social media, entertainment, company, and relationships are just some of the many ways we can easily be distracted from our faith.

When COVID-19 hit the world, it forced the nation to quarantine. Large gatherings were banned, causing many to be confined to their homes. The pace of life changed for many, while for others, it created more time to entertain distractions. Even in quarantine, we became highly creative with social gatherings and found ways to be distracted from the reality many of us hated being in. What could have been an opportunity for solitude and growth quickly became an opportunity to welcome in many new distractions that could help us pass the time. Some of those distractions even seemed harmless at times.

Let's pause and look at what the Word of God says about distractions.

*"Look straight ahead and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil." (Proverbs 4:25-27).*

Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

- *What keywords stood out to you?*
- *What does it mean to "ponder the path of your feet?"*
- *Why is there a repeated emphasis to focus on what our eyes are fixed upon?*

## Note to Self:

What we behold, we become; what we have our eyes fixed on, we pursue.

*"We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne." (Hebrews 12:2).*

## Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

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- *What is the common theme shared between this verse and Psalm 4:25-27?*

Jesus fixed His eyes on the outcome of His sacrifice so He could stay the course and fulfill His mission without distraction.

This verse reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus so that we, too, can remain focused on Him and align with His will and purpose for our lives.

## Listen to this!

*"Looking unto Jesus means life, light, guidance, encouragement, joy: never cease to look on him whoever looks on you." -Charles Spurgeon.*

To grow, we must be ready to turn down the invitation to distraction. What does that look like? How can we limit the number of disruptive distractions to our growth? Let's look at God's Word.

*"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2).*

## Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

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- *How do you define the "patterns of the world"?*
- *Why is "transformation of the mind" so important when discussing distractions?*
- *How do these two verses challenge your relationship with Christ?*

Ephesians 4:23 talks about being made new in the attitude of your mind, which echoes the thoughts in Romans 12:2.

- *What is God's Word urging us to focus on?*
- *How can this be done?*

Turning down distractions is not a decision made based on feelings. God does not call us to live based on how we feel. He calls us to live based upon His Word.

*"Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy." (Ephesians 4:21-24).*

## Note to Self:

Conformity to the world hinders godly growth and progress.

The only way we can truly live according to His Word is when we experience the power of His transformation, which leads to the renewal of our minds. When our minds are renewed, our actions, behavior, responses, and priorities change.

However, when our mind is idle, it has time to be distracted.

*"Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]." (Colossians 3:2 AMP).*

### Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

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- *What does the apostle Paul urge us to do?*
- *What is occupying your mind?*

In Colossians 3:2, Paul urges us to set and keep our minds focused "habitually." Paul urges us to set and keep our minds focused "habitually." Habitually means that something must be done repetitively and consistently until it becomes second nature.

Think about some of your current spiritual and mental habits.

### Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

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- *What are you repetitively doing or making room for in your mind and your heart?*
- *How are those habits impacting your relationship with God's Word?*

Some distractions can appear in the form of something good or harmless.

- *How can we identify when we are making room for distractions that pull us away from growth and, ultimately, from our relationship with God?*

*"As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.' But the Lord said to her, 'My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.'" (Luke 10:38-42).*



## Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

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- *What does this passage teach us about Martha's choice and her distraction?*
- *What was the ultimate result or outcome of Martha's distraction? (hint: look closely at how she speaks to Jesus) Look closely at how Martha justifies her distraction.*
- *How is that relatable to your life today?*

Pay attention to Jesus's response.

- *What does He indicate is a priority in His response to Martha's frustration?*

## Note to self:

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Be especially observant of the distractions that seem harmless but interfere with our availability to God. Those distractions will ultimately lead to frustrations and distance.

*"I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise." (Psalm 119:148)*

Our gaze determines our pursuit. The psalmist awoke before the distractions of the day came his way to spend time being refreshed by God's presence. How we start the day determines the focus and strength we will have throughout the day to turn down the invitation to distractions. When we start our day fresh with God, we permit Him to set our hearts and minds on what will be productive and life-giving for our day.

## Dig Deeper:

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- *What relationships cause me to shift my gaze away from Christ?*
- *What thoughts occupy my mind and capture my gaze?*



# PARTY part 2

*Feasting on What Is Healthy for Growth*

# Nutrition

A newborn baby relies upon the mother's milk for sustenance and growth. This is important because a mother's milk has the nutrients a baby needs for growth, strength, and development. These nutrients are not found in a slice of pizza or a bag of chips. None of these foods can be digested by a baby, let alone give them the necessary nutrients for their development. There is a specific diet that is required: milk.

Think also of nutritionists or doctors who often recommend specific diets that target health needs. Sometimes, they will even resort to strict diet plans as a treatment method to help lower risks for certain diseases, optimize the body's function, or reverse health issues caused by poor diet.

A recent article on the Center for Science In The Public Interest website indicated that approximately 678,000 deaths each year in the USA are caused by diseases directly linked to poor dietary habits (<https://cspinet.org/eating-healthy/why-good-nutrition-important>). That's more than half a million deaths each year caused by simply what people choose to eat.

In the same sense, consider the spiritual repercussions of not being intentional about what we feast on daily. Consider the endless supply of things we can give our time to that will only suffocate or significantly hinder our growth.

If we desire to experience health and stability in our lives, we must learn to feast on what is conducive to growth. We do not grow by simply feasting on anything; we grow by intentionally feasting on what is rich in nutrients to fuel our spirit. We grow by feasting on the Word of God. In 1 Peter, we are urged to crave spiritual milk like babies. Peter tells us:

*"Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment" (1 Peter 2:2).*

When we crave to feast on what is healthy for growth, we experience three main benefits in our lives. First, we grow in greater knowledge of who God is and of His heart for us. Secondly, we experience maturity in our lives because of the transformational power found in His Word. Lastly, we bear fruit in our lives that indicates God's work.

## Listen to this!

*"The soul can do without everything except the word of God, without which none of its wants are provided for." - Martin Luther, On Christian Liberty.*

Let's look deeper at God's Word to understand this.

*"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." (Colossians 2:6-7).*

## Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:

There are three crucial action words in this passage.

- *What are they?*
- *And why are these words significant? (hint: They are all in verse 7)*
- *Why is being "rooted" or having a root system in your life necessary?*
- *What challenges may you face while attempting to be rooted in God's Word, and how can you combat those challenges? (Consider the difficulties that emerge in the home, your social circles, your work environment, etc.)*

*"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned." (John 15:4-6)*

Rooting ourselves in God's Word is emphasized to us throughout Scripture. What does that look like? How do we build a strong root system? Let's break that down according to Scripture.

## Note to Self:

Feeding on what is healthy for growth means being rooted in Him and continuing to grow through knowledge of His Word.

*"Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do." (Psalm 1:1-3).*

Psalm 1 begins with an important word: "Blessed." In Matthew 5:3-11, Jesus also began His Sermon on the Mount with the word "Blessed." Take a moment to think about what kind of life describes the word "blessed." (Hint: Read Psalm 23 and Ephesians 1:2-3.)

Psalm 1 addresses the first step towards a blessed life. That first step is a sense of separation: "Blessed is the one who does not . . ." What does this passage instruct us to separate ourselves from? Why is that separation necessary to be 'blessed'?

When we identify the attitudes and behaviors we need to separate ourselves from, we make room to focus on the next key discipline, which Psalm 1:2 mentions regarding our approach to feasting on and rooting ourselves in God's Word: meditation. Scripture exhorts us to meditate on God's Word numerous times and for many good reasons.

When we meditate on His Word, we root ourselves in His Word. This means that:

- *We are strengthening our spirit against sin and temptation.*
- *We are walking more confidently toward His plans and purposes for our future.*
- *We are living in freedom from the enemy's lies and deceit.*
- *We are experiencing breakthroughs and victories in different areas of our lives.*
- *We are witnessing God's power manifested in our lives.*

In Eastern religion, the end goal of meditation is to empty our minds of all other thoughts, concerns, feelings, and so forth. While it sounds relaxing, this poses an invitation to deceptive influence. However, when we talk about Christian meditation, the end goal is not to empty out. The goal is to fill your mind with the Word of God.

*"Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you." (2 Corinthians 6:17)*

*"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24)*

*"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)*

**Write your response to this verse in a journal or notebook:**

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- *What themes are being repeated?*
- *What is God emphasizing to us through His Word?*

### Note to Self:

Meditation is a key discipline in effectively feasting on God's Word.

Effective meditation means:

- **REPETITION:** *Repeat what you have read over and over again until the truth that your mind knows can be received in your heart. This will enable you to engage the Word of God with your mind and heart.*

- *MEMORIZATION: Committing God's Word to memory means making a spiritual deposit. When tests, trials, and challenges arise, the Word we have committed to memory will sustain us.*
- *APPLICATION: In James 1:22, we are urged to be not just hearers of God's Word but doers. Effective meditation should lead to application. That's where the real transformation of what we have been feasting on is tangibly seen.*

When meditating on God's Word, here are some questions to consider as you closely examine the text:

- *According to this verse, what are some action words you see that can help you commit God's Word to memory? (Hint: Consider what God instructs them beginning in verse 7).*
- *What part of my life does this passage challenge?*
- *What changes is it encouraging me to make?*
- *How can I apply this?*
- *What personal prayers is the Lord highlighting to me through this passage?*

*"As you read, pause frequently to meditate on the meaning of what you are reading. Absorb the Word into your system by dwelling on it, pondering it, going over it again and again in your mind, considering it from many different angles, until it becomes part of you." -Nancy Leigh DeMoss.<sup>10</sup>*

Feasting on God's Word can be done effectively by developing the discipline of meditation and application. As we pause to reflect, meditate, and apply God's Word, we yield ourselves to being rooted in Him.

## Dig Deeper:

- *What personal commitments do I need to make to more completely feast on God's Word?*
- *What changes do I need to make in my daily habits to keep these commitments?*

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<sup>10</sup> Nancy Leigh DeMoss. *A Place of Quiet Rest*. Moody, 2000, p. 166.



# PARTY part 3

*Communnity and Fellowship*



# How Does God Define Community?

A popular saying goes, "Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are." Similarly, Scripture clarifies that community is integral to who we are and continue to become. It shapes, represents, and builds us in more ways than one.

Scripture makes it clear that from the beginning of time, God created us to exist in community. In Romans 12:4-5 God gives us an important reminder that we are better together than alone. He reminds us that we have not been created to live in isolation. Instead, we have been created to function, thrive, and grow in authentic community.

When we turn to God's Word and look at what community looks like through the lens of Christ, we will understand the benefit and lifelong impact God has designed for it to have.

Let's start by understanding how God's Word defines community and healthy fellowship.

*"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper[a]), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47).*

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Hebrews (10:24-26).

## Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

- *What did the community in Acts 2:42-47 do that the writer in Hebrews 10:24-26 also encourages us to do?*
- *How do these passages challenge your views of community and fellowship?*
- *What set the culture of the community you read about in these passages?*
- *How does the culture of community you read about in Acts 2 compare to the culture of community and fellowship you are currently engaged in?*

## Note to self:

The first-century church experienced exponential growth in their community because they understood the importance of devoting themselves to biblical teaching, prayer, generosity, and fellowship. They knew that each played a significant role in building a healthy community.

A healthy community is not just about having a good time, going to parties, and having fun. While all those things should be experienced, community and healthy fellowship's main purpose and function goes much deeper than that.

Let's look at the following passage to understand the purpose of community and fellowship.

*"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church." (Ephesians 4:15)*

*"As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend." (Proverbs 27:17).*

## Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

- *Why is "speaking truth in love" important?*
- *What does "as iron sharpens iron" look like practically applied in a community?*
- *What is the purpose or result of intentionally sharpening one another?*

## Note to Self:

*God has a specific purpose for my life through a healthy community.*

*"May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. 6 Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory." (Romans 15:5-7)*

How can we begin building healthy fellowship? Let's look at what Scripture says. Confession requires vulnerability and trust. When trust is established and a safe space is created to be vulnerable, it leads to a great opportunity for healing in community (as mentioned in James 5:16).

*"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." (James 5:16).*

## Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

- *What would be a fundamental way to begin building a safe space for trust and vulnerability to be experienced in your community?*
- *Think of your own experiences in community. What do you hope to see more of when building community and fellowship?*
- *What is the next important command in the same verse James gives besides the command to confess? (Hint: It plays a vital role in every part of our lives.)*

*"Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2).*

## Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

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- *What does it mean to practically bear each other's burdens in community and healthy fellowship in a self-centered culture that conditions us to be selfish?*
- *And why is this necessary?*
- *How does this reflect the heart of Christ?*

When we build healthy community and fellowship, we reap the benefits of a fruitful life and become the vessels God uses to draw many to His heart. People today, especially in the present climate we live in, are desperately looking for a fresh demonstration of His heart and character. They are looking for that demonstration of how we engage, build, and do life with one another.

Additionally, community and godly fellowship are major vehicles God uses to bring personal development into our lives. In the same way bad company destroys our character (1 Corinthians 15:33), good company builds us up and propels us to maturity. Furthermore, when we begin building fellowship as indicated in God's Word, we experience:

- *Godly Counsel (Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 12:15)*
- *Correction (Proverbs 12:1; Galatians 6:1)*
- *Accountability (Proverbs 27:17)*
- *Encouragement (Romans 15:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)*
- *Wisdom (Proverbs 13:20)*
- *Healing (James 5:16)*

## Dig Deeper:

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- *How has God challenged my perspective on community and fellowship?"*
- *How have some of my preconceived notions been challenged?*
- *How will I allow these things to shape the way I pursue fellowship and community?*

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