

Celebrating Progress An Important Spiritual Practice

Thesis: Celebrating progress is a way to reflect on what the Lord is doing in our lives, to express gratitude to God, and to experience joy in the journey.

Text: Psalm 28:6-7; 50:23

1. **Giving thanks is an important spiritual practice.**
 - a. *“He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:23).*
 - b. When we give thanks to God:
 - i. It honors God.
 - ii. It prepares the way or opens the door for God to do more in our lives.
2. **Celebrating progress is a way to reflect on what the Lord is doing in our lives, to express gratitude to God, and to experience joy in the journey.**
 - a. *Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song (Psalm 28:6-7).*
 - i. To reflect on what the Lord is doing in our lives (Psalm 28:6-7a).
 1. *“Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. 7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.”*
 - ii. To express gratitude to God (Psalm 28:7c).
 1. *... I will give thanks to him in song.*
 - iii. To experience joy in the journey (Psalm 28:7b).
 1. *My heart leaps for joy...*

Celebrating progress is a **spiritual practice** which I have learned. It is a way to express gratitude. I use this practice extensively in coaching others, leading teams, or discipling others. I have learned to celebrate progress for myself and with others.

Here is a problem that we face sometimes: we focus on success, task completion, or goal attainment. We forget to celebrate progress, the small victories, the small wins along the way.

However, we need to learn about and become aware of the importance of acknowledging progress. Celebrating progress helps us to appreciate the journey. It

helps us to take stock of what is really real. It encourages our hearts and strengthens our efforts.

Celebrating progress means that we acknowledge and celebrate progress, big or small, along the journey. There is joy (celebration) in the journey.

Celebrating progress is one way to express gratitude.

Celebrating progress requires taking time to reflect with God and others. We set aside time to appreciate small wins, to celebrate movement toward transformation, or to acknowledge progress toward any goal. Learning to celebrate learning, growth, progress, and change is a skill.

By the way, there are times in our lives when we need a mentor, coach, or someone with whom we can share. Sometimes we fail to see the progress we are making towards our transformation, change, skill development, growth, or goals.

Point: We sometimes need the help of others in seeing progress so that we can celebrate. It is ok to ask for help.

Here are some ways to help others celebrate progress:

1. Point out the places where someone is growing, working diligently, moving forward, or living into who the Lord is calling them to be and/or do.
2. Encourage others by pointing out areas of progress.
3. Decide to be a cheerleader and encourager. Build up rather than tear down.
 - a. Yes, do help people stay in action around what they give their word to do.
 - b. Yes, when people ask, point out areas of growth.
 - c. However, refuse to focus only on the negative or shortcomings; negative criticism alone is discouraging and demotivating.
4. Give positive affirmation and feedback, because those gifts are life-giving.
5. Use reflection to help others see the progress they have made. Ask them to think about where they were a year ago versus where they are now.
6. Refuse to give up on others, even when it seems like they are not making progress.
 - a. You can still serve as an inviting voice in their lives.
 - b. Ask helpful questions to help them get unstuck and to get back into action.
7. Let others choose their pace of progress.
 - a. They are in charge of their lives and are responsible to the Lord.

- b. If you are working harder than the person you are helping, you are overfunctioning.

Let's celebrate progress at Calvary Community Church.

1. **Our vision: intimacy, community, kingdom.**
 - a. Our vision expresses who the Lord has called us to be in this world.
 - b. Other congregations have other assignments.
 - c. We want to stay true to what the Lord is saying to us.
 - d. We are making progress as individuals and as a congregation.
 - i. Establishing people in intimacy with God.
 1. Reflective life where we learn to hear the voice of the Lord and co-create with God.
 2. Core outcome: awareness.
 - ii. Expressing true Christian community.
 1. Authentic community where we are open and honest.
 2. Core outcome: authenticity.
 - iii. Extending the kingdom of God in the earth.
 1. Joining Jesus on his mission in our spheres of influence, together with others.
 2. Core outcomes: alignment with the way of Jesus and action around what God is doing.
 - e. We celebrate the vision which God has given to us.
2. **Our word for the year.**
 - a. We celebrate how we are living into *convergence: reaching others with the love of God* (John 4:1-42).
 - b. God has called us to reach people with the love of God. Reaching others implies that we are available to God and others, that we practice our way to engage others organically (naturally) with the love of God, that we intentionally follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the voice of our Good Shepherd, and that we overflow with love for God and for others to such a degree that we are compelled to join Jesus on his mission of love in our spheres of influence..
 - c. When we shared this word in January 2024, people came up to me after the service and at other times **sharing what they were already doing to reach others with the love of God.**
 - d. So, we celebrate the progress and testimonies of what God is already doing in and through us.
 - e. Which leads me to my next point.
3. **Some snapshots of the impact of Calvary. 4'24'24.**

- a. We celebrate our culture of extending the kingdom locally and globally through missions, ministries, mission trips, and relationships.
- b. At a recent [Crosswalk Center](#) fundraising dinner, I was asked if our church planted churches.
 - i. I shared that our model is to equip everyone to join with Jesus on his mission in their spheres of influence (Ephesians 4:11-13).
 - ii. Kathy Vosburg Miller is *Exhibit A* for this model.
 - iii. We have several Calvary members who serve at Crosswalk Center.
 - 1. Men and women who have been imprisoned face tremendous challenges as they try to reintegrate back into society.
 - 2. Returning citizens need advocates, guides, and encouraging re-entry coaches to walk alongside them upon release from prison and as they re-enter, transitioning to live out their faith in freedom.
 - 3. Crosswalk Center bridges critical social services and ministry between prison life and freedom - ***Seamless Re-entry Discipleship from the Inside Out.***
 - 4. Crosswalk Center offers hope and a future apart from broken prison life to whole-hearted intentional living as the unique individuals God originally created and intended them to be.
- c. **Church plants:**
 - i. Members of Calvary have planted churches in Montrose, Hockley, and other places. We didn't set out to plant churches. **Rather, we bless what the Lord is doing through people, helping to affirm, bless, and release them to what God has called them to do.**
 - ii. Other churches used our building until they could get their own facilities.
- d. **Community service:** members of Calvary serve in their neighborhoods, communities, and third places including HOAs, Water Boards, etc.
- e. **CFISD and other school districts:** members of Calvary serve on the school board and as teachers, administrators, paras, substitute teachers, mentors, volunteers, etc.
- f. **Hairgrove Elementary Partnership with Copperfield Church and Calvary:** mentoring, volunteering, and showing up to help and bless an at-risk school, students, faculties, and families.
- g. **Small Group leaders and co-leaders:** pastoring, serving, and helping us live into meaningful, authentic relationships. This is our first line of pastoral care.

- h. **Mission trips** for youth and adults around the world.
- i. **Student Ministries Council:** missional community and team reaching, discipling, and pastoring youth.
- j. **Children's Ministry Team:** missional community and team reaching, discipling, and pastoring children.
- k. **Ladies Ministry.**
- l. **Men's Ministry.**
- m. **Foster care and adoption:** several families at Calvary have fostered and/or adopted children. And, we now have a partnership with [The Riverside Project](#) to grow in our capacity help promote and serve in foster care, adoption, and caring for these children and families.
- n. **Local missions:** prison ministry, benevolence, [CareNet Pregnancy Center](#), [Cypress Assistance Ministries](#), [Cy-Fair Helping Hands](#), [Eyes On Me, Inc.](#), etc.
 - i. [Eyes On Me, Inc.](#) connects with individuals and families living in areas that are typically low income, high crime, and under-served. They do this with outreach events such as their weekly Hip Hop Hope, In-school assemblies, and In-school mentoring. This helps to "break the ice" and gives them an opportunity to introduce themselves to the community.
 - ii. And, this ministry has a community transformation process that is touching and reaching some of the most unreached people and underserved communities in Greater Houston.
- o. **National missions:** [FamilyLife](#), intercessory missionaries, etc.
- p. **International missions:** Middle East (Chase and Megan), Europe (Ana), Asia (Erick and Wendy), South America (Michael Newman), and various nations and ministries around the world.
- q. **India Gospel Outreach:** powerful testimony of [100 years of ministry](#).
- r. **Somebody Cares America:** Doug and Lisa Stringer.
 - i. Somebody Cares mobilizes the body of Christ to transform communities through prayer initiatives, compassion outreach, disaster relief, and leadership development.
 - ii. We believe in crossing racial, generational, and denominational lines to find unity in our diversity.
 - iii. With the light of Jesus shining in and through us, we can become a tangible expression of His love and the Gospel of Good News.
- s. **Union Baptist Association:** UBA is a collaborative network of churches focused on the strategic advance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - i. **Sending Pathways:** helping churches mobilize and equip for reaching others locally and globally.

- ii. **Renewal Pathways:** to work through replanting and revitalization consultations and church partnerships to rekindle flames in churches across Houston or help relight the lamp in places where it might have gone out completely.
- iii. **Collaborative Pathways:** bringing churches, their staff, and their members into deeper, more meaningful, Kingdom-expanding relationships that strengthen the whole Body of Christ.
- t. **Faithwalking:** Calvary members serve as facilitators, coaches, and board members in this transformation movement.
 - i. Faithwalking is a spiritual formation process where people are equipped with tools to gain freedom from wounds of their past, grow in emotional maturity, and live lives of purpose on mission with God, so they can increasingly follow the way of Jesus by serving the poor, the marginalized, and those in need, working for the common good, and restoring individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's intended design.
 - ii. Our mission is to make wholeness possible for individuals, communities, and the world.
- u. **NLAI** and **NLCH** in Villa Nueva, Guatemala.
 - i. New Life Children's Home (NLCH) in Villa Nueva, Guatemala, is a refuge and safe haven for orphaned, abandoned, and abused children.
- v. **Ministers Prayer Network International.** Rev. Mosy Madugba is a lifelong friend and international coordinator of MPN, which is an apostolic and prophetic network impacting the nations through prayer, equipping, evangelism, and missions.
- w. See our [Calvary Missions Supporter Response Card](#) and [our website](#) for more information about local, national, and international missions collaboration.
- x. **Other ways in which Calvary members are reaching others with the love of God:**
 - i. Marlene DeJesus, JoJo Perkins, and others go to the nursing home.
 - ii. Some of our ladies go treasure hunting in different area malls.
 - iii. Carolyn Vosburg, Nancy Burke, Marlene DeJesus, and others teach at one of Crosswalk Center's homes for women.
 - iv. Tom Petry goes to the bus stop each morning, while walking the dog, to talk with the kids and their moms. He is starting with a whole new set of kids. This will make the 4th or 5th group of kids over the years.
 - v. Louis and Diann'a Posthauer are helping us learn how to connect with dropout believers.

- vi. Many of our church members respond during emergencies with disaster relief care and efforts with neighbors.
- vii. These are just a few of the ways members of Calvary are reaching other with the love of God.

4. **Our desire to be a learning organization.**

- a. **The learning process involves information, practice, reflection, and repetition.**
- b. We get information or learning of some kind, or the Lord speaks to us, or we want to grow or improve in an area.
- c. With that new information and learning, we get in action around a practice (some solution, effort, experiment, or attempt).
- d. We then debrief or reflect on that practice.
 - i. What worked?
 - ii. What went well?
 - iii. What needs improvement?
 - iv. What needs to change?
 - v. What do we need to do differently?
- e. Then, we have new information, and the process of learning starts over: information, practice, reflection, repeat.
- f. We celebrate that we are a learning organization.

5. **Our process of assimilation and [helping people get involved](#).**

- a. [Discover Calvary](#), Discover Vision, Discover Mission.
- b. The Lord showed us a place where we needed to grow and change as a congregation: our process of helping people get connected and involved.
 - i. How do you get everyone on the same page when they join at different times and seasons?
 - ii. How do you catch people up with God's past work, current work, and desired future work in our faith community.
- c. We started this new assimilation process a few years ago for new members, and it got off to a great start.
- d. Now, we want to expand it to the whole congregation.
 - i. The truth is: we leak vision. It is important to get equipped and relearn.
 - ii. Some of you attended a new member class that was 3 hours on a Sunday morning.
 - iii. That process was not producing the results which we believe the Lord wanted us to see.
 - iv. Even if you have been through our Discovery Day New Member class years ago, I want to invite you to participate in *Discover Calvary*, *Discover Vision*, and *Discover Mission*. These three new

courses are our new format for helping get us all on the same page and building on the same foundation.

- e. We celebrate our new process to help people connect deeply with the vision, calling, and family of Calvary.
- 6. Culture of equipping the saints to do their works of service.**
- a. Ministry Team Training.
 - b. Adult Bible Study.
 - c. Prophetic Life Workshops / Freshwater International with Pastor Steve Meeks.
 - d. GriefShare.
- 7. Other areas which we celebrate:**
- a. Culture of honor.
 - b. Culture of generosity / giving / serving one another.
 - c. Culture of hospitality.
 - d. Culture of authenticity.
 - e. Culture of long-term commitment and relationships.
 - f. Prayer and intercession.
 - g. Prophetic.
 - h. Worship.
 - i. Small Groups.
 - j. Children's Ministry.
 - k. Thrive Student Ministry and Student Ministries Council.
 - l. Calvary's A/V team and how we support building use by different ministries, groups, and churches, live-streaming, etc.
 - m. Community.
 - i. Teams: Elders, Deacons, Staff.
 - ii. Journey Guides and Co-leaders.
 - iii. Journey Groups.

Application:

Celebrating progress is a way to reflect on what the Lord is doing in our lives, to express gratitude to God, and to experience joy in the journey.

- 1. Question: What progress are you celebrating?
- 2. Action:
 - a. Take time this week to reflect on what the Lord is doing in your life.
 - b. Take time to express gratitude to God.
 - c. Take time to experience joy (celebrate).

Lord's Supper and Ministry Time.