

Are You Overdoing It on Special Occasions?

Why do special occasions seem to provide people, even Christians, with a supposed license to sin? We see it in movies, popularizing wedding “hangovers” and among “bridesmaids” and “wedding singers.” Or closer to home, the uncle who drinks too much at family gatherings.

It feels like holidays, when boiled down to reality, become nothing more than occasions to indulge for so many.

I’m not a prude, and I realize Jesus turned water into wine for wedding guests. But I don’t think He was condoning overdoing it as a form of celebration. Think about it with me. Here is a quick list of occasions that our culture has glamorized with not-so-special behaviors, giving us a mysterious hall pass from morality:

- Big-game beer fests and tailgating
- Bachelor and bachelorette parties featuring strip joints, excessive drinking and, in some cases, prostitution
- Valentine’s Day, which virtually promotes sexual activity before marriage
- St. Patrick’s Day, a saint’s celebration turned into a reason to drink too much Irish whiskey, green beer and other green libations
- Thanksgiving gluttony
- Cinco de Mayo fiestas with tequila
- Fourth of July, celebrating freedom with the freedom to party hearty
- Graduations and promotion celebrations—moving up and letting your hair down
- Halloween hijinx, giving people an excuse to eat too much candy and act out of character by pretending to be

- one, from sexy costumes to evil icons
- Birthdays parties designed to forget your age
- Reunions that bring back the “good ol’ days”
- Celebrating big-game wins and accomplishments with the attitude that you work hard, play hard
- Spring and summer breaks that become breaks from morality

Have another one to add? Please use the comment section below.

We often justify these occasions by giving ourselves an extra measure of grace, which can turn into overindulgence, gluttony and debauchery.

The Bible clearly calls out these behaviors. God wants us to have a sound, sober mind to help protect us from the enemy, as written in 1 Peter 5:8. Our bodies are considered temples of God according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, and we should offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, according to Romans 12:1.

God wants us to celebrate and enjoy the blessings He’s giving us, but in a way that honors Him and each other with self-control. Remember, all good things come from God—good food, good wine, good friends, good progress, good character.

When you go into these celebrations, don’t leave Jesus behind. Go into special occasions as a lighthouse, being a properly calibrated ambassador among people who do not share your faith.

10 Ways to Make Special Occasions Special

1. Reminisce past experiences (Phil. 4:8).
2. Make the meal the hero. Savor the flavors and experience of a unique restaurant.
3. Take in the ambience and the moment of a unique venue.

4. Enjoy live music and dance joyfully.
5. Capture the moments with photography.
6. Catch up with people, finding out what's really going on in their lives.
7. Recognize people for their efforts in fun ways and with unique awards. Propose a toast with the purpose of giving a blessing instead of a healthy pour.
8. Participate in respectful roasting with humor served up in grace and love. Use storytelling to recap significant moments.
9. Think of what you can give or bring, rather than what you can get out of the occasion.
10. Celebrate with a new tradition. Think of activities that get the guys (or gals) moving, such as hiking, ski trips, pick-up basketball games or beach bonfires.

5 Practical Tips for a Sober Celebration

- 1. BYOB.** Bring your own beverage (alcohol-free) or healthy dishes.
- 2. Don't arrive in a state of HALT.** Recognize your vulnerability when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.
- 3. Flee temptation, and that may mean skipping the event.** But you can substitute the event by organizing your own with a healthy crowd and healthy environment that allows for a less hazy and more memorable experience.
- 4. Think about how you want to feel the next day.** Would your behavior make you or Jesus proud? Would it be what you want to be doing if He returned unannounced?
- 5. Ask God to show you how to have fun.** We're used to allowing the world to tell us how to have fun. But what if we asked Him? He created laughter, and He told us he would give us

abundant life, so why not ask Him?

Remember, God is not a killjoy, and following Him is not a drag. Sometimes we need to say no to say yes. Perhaps the hardest times to follow Him are during the celebrations of life when the world is saying, "Treat yourself; have more." But remember Jesus said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (NIV).

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