

CELEBRATE

How to host a party (with a purpose)

Why throw parties?

Celebration is biblical. Heaven is described using the analogy of a wedding feast (the biggest party known to Jewish culture). Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of being a partier (Matt. 11:9, Luke 7:34). As Christians, we have the very *best* reason to celebrate. A social gathering is a great place for Gospel conversations to happen.

What's the purpose of my party? There are actually two different options!

- 1) **Fellowship**--We need the camaraderie of other Christians to help us on this discipleship journey. Fellowship is when Christians come together to reflect on the goodness of God and provide mutual encouragement to one another for the road ahead.
- 2) **Hospitality**--The people we encounter in the places we live, work, and play might not be willing to walk through the door of a church. But they may be willing to walk through the door of your home. By offering hospitality, we extend the warmth and generosity of Christ to our neighbor, expecting nothing in return. We like to call these environments *Gospel frontlines*--places where disconnected people see the love of Jesus lived out in what we say and do.

What do I say? What do we talk about?

- Think through conversation topics beforehand. Remember that interesting people are interested in others! Here are a few ideas:
 - Ask people to share their story.
 - Ask what they do for fun (not just what they do for a job).
- Bring Jesus into the conversation. Being a Christian isn't the same thing as being a spy... we don't have to keep the reason for our celebration a secret! Three non-threatening, non-awkward ways to do this--choose the one(s) best for your party:
 - Make a toast! Use it as an opportunity to express your gratitude for the people in the room and for God's abundant blessings through Jesus.
 - Say a prayer before the meal.
 - Begin or end with family worship (read, pray, sing).

Practical tips for throwing a party:

- Once you have an idea, see if it passes the invite test: "I'd invite someone to that!"
- Low volume, easy listening music serves as a conversation piece and helps fill silence for conversation lulls. (It doesn't have to be "Christian" music but it should be family-friendly.)
- Create a welcoming environment. Have the earliest arrivers help by greeting people at the door, helping set the table, etc. Psychologically, asking people for favors leads to a closer relationship.
- Create spaces for extroverts to mingle (e.g. snacks at the bar) and introverts to sit with friends.
- Show next steps. For some people a follow up dinner will be the best next step. For others an invitation to worship or local group will be best.