

## APPENDIX A

---

# THE REDEMPTION CELEBRATION

*Permission is granted to the purchaser of this book to photocopy  
this appendix for use in a family or group celebration activity.*

*This material © 2010 Josh McDowell Ministry and Sean McDowell.*

The following provides you with instructions on a mealtime celebration in praise to God for going to such miraculous and gracious lengths to redeem us. The Christmas season is an excellent time to do this. This Judeo-Christian celebration is modeled after the Jewish Passover *Haggadah* (“telling”) that Jewish families have conducted for centuries.

The traditional Jewish Passover celebrates God redeeming his people from the hands of Pharaoh and out of the land of Egypt to lead them into the Promised Land. The Passover is celebrated by Jewish families year after year as a way of passing down to their children the story of the Exodus, the story of the God of Redemption. But it is more than a story or historical event to them. The stories tell who they are, where they have come from, a depiction of a specific way of life, and a way of being in the world. Jewish parents for centuries have shared with their children that God fulfilled his promise to give them a land and make them a nation. That is why they so proudly bear the name of their forefather, Israel.

You probably don’t conduct a Judeo-style celebration that roots you in various meaningful historical events. Yet all of us can claim the historical and biblical roots of

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

being the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. So in this Redemption Celebration we trace your heritage and that of your family back to the very first couple. We show how because of their sin we are all separated from our Creator, and how Jesus came to earth in human form, an event called the incarnation, to redeem you specifically to a relationship with him. We attempt to convey this in a dramatic yet simple story form. And at the end of the celebration we enable you to offer an invitation for family members to commit or recommit their lives to God, for he is “our Redeemer from ages past” (Isaiah 63:16).

If you would like to learn more about the Passover as well as the other biblical feasts of the Lord and understand how they directly relate to your Christian faith, we encourage you to visit [www.ariseinglory.org](http://www.ariseinglory.org). On this Web site, Harvey Diamond, a Jewish believer in Christ as the Messiah, has done a great job of unpacking the biblical festivals and relating them in the form of an interactive devotional, called “Pathways to Glory Relational Devotional.” It provides various ways of relating with God in a manner that makes them especially relevant to the Christian life.

This Redemption Celebration is best done together with two or more families. Children from three years of age and up will enjoy and get something out of this celebration. Meet ahead of time with the adults you are planning this with to go over the details, select an emcee, and to assign certain readings and responsibilities.

The celebration consists of seven elements. Walk through each of these elements with one another to practice and plan for your meal and the different readings.

1. **“The Son of God Entered Our World” (a Scripture reading).** In your planning meeting, identify someone within the group who is willing to read this passage to begin the Redemption Celebration. The reading is found on page 440, and you have permission to photocopy that page and all the pages related to this celebration. You might ask the person to practice reading the passage aloud to the group, using the photocopied page. We encourage you to *read* these readings at the celebration rather than trying to casually relate the content. This gives your evening a sense of clarity and preciseness.
2. **The “Prophet Tree.”** Identify someone in your group willing to present the “Prophet Tree.” This person will need to follow the instructions for creating it. For practice, ask him or her to read the presentation aloud to your planning group now, using a photocopy of pages 441–443 that you provide.
3. **The meal.** Identify someone willing to take the lead to coordinate the location of the Redemption Celebration (preferably someone’s home), determine the time, decide what to eat, and so on. This person is not to do

all the work. He or she is to work with the members of your family group to coordinate the logistical details of the celebration listed on page 444. Photocopy that page and provide it to the meal coordinator.

4. **“The Saddest Story That Could Ever Be Told: The Great Separation.”** Identify someone within the group who is willing to read this personalized fairy-tale-type story at the celebration. Photocopy pages 445–446 of this reading and give them to the person willing to read this story and ask him or her to do the reading now for practice. (*Note:* The reader will need to fill in the blanks depending on gender.)
5. **“The Greatest Story Ever Told: The Great Redemption.”** Identify someone in your group willing to read this story at the celebration. Photocopy this reading, found on pages 447–448. This story, of course, is real and lays the foundation for your children and youth to commit or recommit their lives to Christ. The designated reader can practice by reading a photocopy.
6. **“How to Experience a Relationship with God.”** Identify someone in your group who is willing to make a short and clear presentation of the gospel. This is to offer your children and youth the opportunity to commit or recommit their lives to Christ, the Redeemer. The designated reader can practice reading the photocopied presentation found on pages 449–450.
7. **“Something to Celebrate.”** Identify someone in your group who is willing to conclude the Redemption Celebration by directing five people (preferably young people) to read what Jesus’ coming to earth means and then close in prayer. These five readings explain the meaning of Jesus’ coming to earth—and our lifelong response to our Redeemer. The designated person can practice by reading a photocopy of pages 451–453.

## Conducting the Redemption Celebration

After meeting with the families you plan to have the Redemption Celebration with, you are now ready to emcee your evening event and meal. Feel free to photocopy these pages as a reference guide to your celebration.

- *Introduction.* Invite everyone to be seated at the table and say, “**Tonight we are going to have a Redemption Celebration, which is a celebration of the time when God took on human form and Jesus was born into this world. And \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is going to start us off with a Scripture reading**” (“The Son of God Entered Our World”).
- Immediately following the reading, have the person responsible for the Prophet Tree make his or her presentation (“The Prophet Tree”).
- Announce that it is time to eat; offer a prayer for the meal.
- At the conclusion of the meal, thank all those who helped prepare it. And then say, “**Now we want to celebrate God taking on human form—which is called the incarnation. And we want to understand why he did that—why he came to earth. So to begin, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is going to read something. But to gain the impact of this story, I want each young person here to pretend that \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is your actual \_\_\_\_\_ (mother/father). The story is entitled ‘The Saddest Story That Could Ever Be Told: The Great Separation.’**”
- After the “Great Separation” reading, sensitively gauge each person’s response. Ask, “**If that story were true, how would you feel?**”

Then say to the group, “**I can tell you how I would feel; I would feel \_\_\_\_\_.**” (Describe as honestly and vulnerably as possible how it would affect you.)

Then say, “**The story that \_\_\_\_\_ (name) just read shows how sad our lives would be if we couldn’t feel each other’s love. But, while that’s just a fable, it parallels a real situation, a story that’s absolutely true...for every one of us. Now \_\_\_\_\_ (name) will read ‘The Greatest Story Ever Told: The Great Redemption.’**”

- Following the “Great Redemption” reading the emcee says, “**Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_ (name). That is the reason God came to earth in the form of a human. It was the reason Jesus died: He wants a relationship—a close friendship connection—with you. \_\_\_\_\_ (name) will now explain to us how to experience that connection, a close relationship with God.**”

*Appendix A—The Redemption Celebration*

- Following the prayer of commitment/recommitment say, **“If you prayed that prayer from the heart, a miracle has taken place, and you are now a child of God—all because of Jesus.”** Sensitive probe to see if anyone has prayed that prayer or wants to pray further—and respond accordingly. Then at the appropriate time say: **“Let’s end our time together celebrating our redemption and what we’ve just experienced as we respond to the very God of Redemption.”** Introduce the person that is to conduct the “Something to Celebrate” presentation.
- Close your Redemption Celebration in prayer.

THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

The Son of God Entered Our World  
(A Scripture Reading)

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel told her, "for God has decided to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left (Luke 1:26-38)...

The time came for [Mary's] baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger (Luke 2:6-7).

## The Prophet Tree

### *Instructions for Creating Your “Prophet Tree”*

*Before the celebration:* If no one has provided you with a Prophet Tree, then take any potted houseplant or a small potted pine tree to the celebration. Prior to the celebration write or type the eight prophecies about Jesus that are listed below, including their Scripture references, on eight slips of paper approximately three by four inches. Roll the slips of paper into small four-inch rolls and tie each to a branch of the potted plant with ribbons.

### *Begin the Presentation*

Say, “Yes, Jesus was born in a manger. But how do we know that Jesus was truly the Son of God?” (Pause for possible answers.)

“Well, God gave us a way to know for certain that Jesus was his very own Son. You see, more than 400 years before Christ was born, God had his prophets foretell a lot of very specific things about Jesus. It was like identifying him by giving us his specific address. By looking back to those prophecies we know that if the information is descriptive enough, and Jesus fits the descriptions, then we will have no doubt that Jesus was in fact God’s Son.

“For example, you (name someone in the group) are one person among more than 6 billion people on this planet. If I had the task of identifying you out of the earth’s total population, I could do so by learning the answers to just eight questions. Let me ask you:

1. What continent do you live on? \_\_\_\_\_  
(African continent? European continent? North American continent? and so on)
2. What country do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Canada? Germany? England? United States? and so on)
3. What province or state do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What city, borough, or town do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What street or avenue do you live on? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your house or apartment number? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your last name? \_\_\_\_\_

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

8. What are your first and middle names? \_\_\_\_\_

“The answers to these eight questions will enable me to separate you from the more than 6 billion other people alive today. In the same fashion, God gave us Jesus Christ’s address. He provided us very specific information about who the Christ would be, where he would be born, and what would happen to him. And why? So that we would be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that a Jewish man named Jesus who lived over 2000 years ago was who he claimed to be—the Son of the one true God.”

### *Bring Out the Prophet Tree*

Now bring out the Prophet Tree and continue by saying:

“This is called a ‘Prophet Tree.’ On it we have eight prophecies about Jesus that were written down and preserved hundreds of years before he was ever born.” Select up to eight in the group—preferably young people—to untie the slips of paper from the tree and read what is inside. One person, of course, can read more than one prophecy. They will read:

1. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
2. He would be born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).
3. A forerunner would announce his arrival, a “voice in the wilderness” (Isaiah 40:3).
4. He would ride victoriously into Jerusalem on a young donkey (Zechariah 9:9).
5. He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12).
6. He would be crucified (his hands and feet would be pierced), but his bones would be left unbroken (Psalm 22:16; 34:20).
7. He would die (be “cut off”) 483 years after the declaration to rebuild the temple in 444 BC (Daniel 9:24).
8. He would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10).<sup>1</sup>

### *Could It All Be a Coincidence?*

Continue by reading:

“Every one of these prophecies was fulfilled during Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. But couldn’t that all be a coincidence? Perhaps those prophecies have been fulfilled by any number of people. Right?”



“This is where the science of statistics and probabilities comes in. Professor Peter W. Stoner, in an analysis that was carefully reviewed and pronounced to be sound by the American Scientific Affiliation, states that the probability of just *eight* of those prophecies being fulfilled in one person is 1 in 10 to the seventeenth power—that’s 1 in 100 quintillion.<sup>2</sup>

“Look at it this way: If you spread 100 quintillion silver dollars across the state of Texas, they would not only cover the entire state, they would form a pile of coins two feet deep! Now, take one more silver dollar, mark it with a big red X, toss it into that pile, and stir the whole pile thoroughly.

“Then blindfold yourself, and starting at El Paso on the western border, walk the length and breadth of that enormous state, stopping just once along the way to pick up a single silver dollar out of that two-foot-deep pile. . . Then take off your blindfold and look at the silver dollar in your hand. What are the chances that you would have picked the marked coin out of a pile of silver dollars the size of the Lone Star State? *The same chance that one person could have fulfilled those eight prophecies in one lifetime.*

“And that’s just the beginning! More than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in *one person*, Jesus Christ—and all of them were made more than 400 years prior to his birth. In other words, it is completely unreasonable to imagine that the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus could have come true in one man—unless, of course, he *is*, as he himself claimed, ‘the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God’ (Mark 14:61-62), the One who was and is and is to come.”<sup>3</sup>

(The emcee thanks the presenter of the Prophet Tree, announces that it is now time to eat the meal together, and says the blessing.)

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

### Preparing for the Redemption Celebration Meal

- **Select where to conduct your Redemption Celebration.** A person's home is preferable, depending on the size of your group and their families. Conducting the celebration at multiple sites is an option if you have a large group.
- **Select date and time of your celebration.**
- **Decide on the meal.** Consider a potluck meal in which each family brings a dish. Decide who in your group will bring what. If you plan to conduct the celebration as an annual event you might want to identify a dish or two as a special item to always have as a traditional Redemption Celebration item.

## The Saddest Story That Could Ever Be Told: The Great Separation

The emcee makes an introduction: “Now we want to celebrate the time when God took on human form—which is called the *incarnation*. And we want to understand the reason he did that—in other words, why he came to earth. To begin, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) will read us something. But to gain the impact of this story, each young person here must pretend that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of person reading the story) is your actual mother or father. This story is entitled ‘The Saddest Story That Could Ever Be Told: The Great Separation.’

The person chosen to read stands up and begins:

“I want you to imagine with me that once upon a time, in a land far away, I was the happiest \_\_\_\_\_ (king/queen) in all the world...the happiest \_\_\_\_\_ (king/queen), in fact, in all the history of all the \_\_\_\_\_ (kings/queens) in all the world.

“This happiness was not just because I was great. It was not because I had a grand castle. It was not because I ruled a glorious kingdom. It was because on one special day, I became something even better than a great \_\_\_\_\_ (king/queen), because on that day each of you were born and I became your \_\_\_\_\_ (father/mother).

“For months, I waited for your arrival. When you finally came into the world, you were truly a unique, one-of-a-kind person who had never been seen before. Never in the history of mortal time would there be another you—so distinct, so individual, yet so connected to me.

“From the first time I scooped you up in my arms and held you close, I wanted nothing more in all the world than to love you, be close to you, and watch you grow to experience all the joys of being you. You were my child, after all, and I wanted nothing to ever come between us.

“But then...a horrible thing happened. The wicked prince of an unhappy kingdom tried to overpower me and take control of my kingdom. But he failed because I was too strong. So in anger and hatred, he chose to strike where he knew it would hurt me most. He cast an evil spell over you—a great, terrible spell.

“The evil prince’s spell caused a dreadful glass wall to surround you wherever you went and whatever you did. I could still see you and hear you—for I was still the great \_\_\_\_\_ (king/queen)—but it trapped you without your knowledge. It kept you from seeing me, hearing me, touching me, or even sensing that I was there.

THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

“Thus, unless the spell could be broken, I would never again experience the pleasure, the joy, the closeness of being with you, my very own child.

“Oh, what anguish it was for me, for I could see you, but you could not see me. I saw your first steps...but you could not hear me cheering you on. I heard your first words...but they weren't spoken to me. I watched everything you did and followed you everywhere you went...but the dreadful glass wall kept you from feeling my ever-present love for you. I wanted to share everything with you—your thrill of learning to ride a bike, your relief at passing a test in school, your excitement of winning a game—but the evil spell took all that away from me.

“I was there, too, when you were hurt. When you cried, I reached out to wipe your tears away, but you never felt the touch of my hand. When you skinned your knee, I wanted to kiss it and make it better, but you didn't even know I was there. And on those nights when you would cry yourself to sleep, I heard you. I heard you cry, ‘Where is my \_\_\_\_\_ (daddy/mommy)? I want my \_\_\_\_\_ (daddy/mommy).’ But you couldn't hear my sobs for you.

“Oh, what a wicked spell! I would have given my kingdom—my life!—if it would break the spell and restore you to me. But it could not be, for no one on earth could break this spell. I could only watch with a broken heart, weep for you, and wait for the Spellbreaker who could reunite you with me...and bring to an end the Saddest Story That Could Ever Be Told.”<sup>4</sup>

Emcee transition to next reading:

After the reading, sensitively gauge each person's response. Ask, “How would it make you feel if that story were true?”

Then offer, “I can tell you how I would feel; I would feel \_\_\_\_\_.”  
(Describe as honestly and vulnerably as possible how it would affect you.)

Then say, “The story that \_\_\_\_\_ (name) just read shows how sad our lives would be if we couldn't feel each other's love. Yet while that's just a fable, it parallels a real situation, a story that's absolutely true...for each one of us. And \_\_\_\_\_ (name) now will read ‘The Greatest Story Ever Told: The Great Redemption.’”

## The Greatest Story Ever Told: The Great Redemption

“In a Middle Eastern land many years ago, where a beautiful river branched out to form four other rivers, was a pristine garden. Lush tropical trees and plants produced delicious fruits of every taste and texture. A paradise of grasses and flowers under a canopy of clouds and sky painted a breathtaking canvas. Singing birds and sparkling waterfalls created a soundtrack of sheer delight. It was perfection itself, the Garden of Eden, where the first man and the first woman lived in perfect harmony with each other and with their Creator, the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

“From the first moments of their existence, this first couple—Adam and Eve—enjoyed a close relationship with their Creator. They talked to him just as they talked to each other. They walked with him in the garden. They laughed together, sharing the delights of paradise—reveling in the gazelle’s grace, the eagle’s soaring strength, the sparrow’s playfulness.

“They communed with God as a dear friend and loving Father, for they were a family. And through this relationship they had everything they needed. They had love, because their love came from God. They had joy, because their joy came from God. They had peace, because their peace came from God. They had no hunger, greed, fear, or pain because God’s holy presence permeated the wonderful garden. They were a perfect family.

“But then something terrible happened. A rebellious angel named Lucifer plotted in hatred to ruin the perfect family and world God had created. Lucifer, who had been cast out of heaven because he wanted to rule his own kingdom without God, persuaded the first human couple that they, too, should rule their own world without God. So he deceived them into believing that they knew better than God did. He convinced them to selfishly and sinfully choose their own ways rather than trusting in God’s ways.

“Adam and Eve’s sinful choice to reject God and his ways formed a dreadful wall—a wall of death—that separated them from their loving Creator and Father God. *Gone* were their shared moments of intimacy and happiness. *Gone* were the moments of laughter they enjoyed together. *Gone* was their close relationship.

“From that point on, God watched in grief and sadness as children—his children—came into the world he created without knowing him and feeling his love. He watched them every moment of the day, but they could not feel his interest. He saw them follow the sinful path of Adam and Eve, which kept every child, teenager, and adult from knowing and feeling his love.

“The perfect and holy Creator, who knew no sin, watched his sinful children—who

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

were separated from his presence. They were now disconnected from the only source that could sustain life, love, joy, and peace. He watched as his children had to suffer the agony of war and hunger, disease and heartache, pain and suffering. Sin separated God from the cherished family he had created, and it broke his heart. But as his heart ached for his children, he already knew how he would respond.

“And this—though it is miraculous—is no fairy tale. It is absolutely true.

“God wanted to reconnect to his children and restore a relationship with them—with *you*—but God, being holy, could not relate to sin. So he devised a plan. He sent his Son into our world to become one of us—a child himself, a human baby—for you. God’s own Son came to earth—in a virgin’s womb, as the prophets foretold, as the shepherds learned—to cancel the curse so you could know, so you could *feel* his love for you.

“The sin of the first couple and your sin caused death, and the prince of darkness, Satan himself, held the power of death over you. Only one thing could cancel the curse of sin: A sinless human had to be willing to sacrifice himself for you. So God’s Son, perfect and sinless in every way, became human. As the Bible records, ‘Only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death’ (Hebrews 2:14).

“He did it all for you. Though you sinned against him, he loved and accepted you. This is the meaning of redemption—to purchase you back with his blood. It shows you how much he wants a relationship with you.

“And that kind of relationship is available to anyone who responds to his offer of a never-ending, always-with-you love relationship by believing and trusting in Christ as the Son of God, your Savior, Redeemer, and friend.

“*Not* the end—but the *beginning* if you trust in Jesus the Redeemer.”<sup>5</sup>

Emcee:

“Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_ (name). That is the reason God came to earth in the form of a human. It was the reason Jesus died—he wants to redeem you so he can have a relationship with you. \_\_\_\_\_ (name) will explain to us how to experience that relationship with God.”

## How to Experience a Relationship with God

(*Presenter*: Feel free to read these five points or simply use the following as a guide):

### Trusting in the Redeemer—Jesus Christ—involves four things:

**1. We must recognize we have a problem with God.** “No one has real understanding,” the Bible says, “no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong” (Romans 3:11-12).

Recognizing our problem with God means we acknowledge that we have turned away from God and don’t have enough understanding in life to decide for ourselves what is right. The Bible says it like it is: You “were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions” (Colossians 1:21).

**2. We must realize that Jesus Christ is our only solution.** “When people sin,” the Bible says, “they earn what sin pays—death” (Romans 6:23 *NCV*). Our problem with God has earned us death—separation from God. And we are totally incapable of solving that problem.

We can’t just try harder to be good. You see, Jesus didn’t come to earth to make bad people good; he came to earth to make dead people live. Romans 8:11 says, “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.” So Christ is our only solution.

**3. We need to respond to Christ’s offer to redeem us.** We need to be given new life. And Christ will give us new life when we agree with Jesus, who said:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

You will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am who I say I am, you will die in your sins (John 8:24).

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this? (John 11:25-26).

Do you really believe this? Are you convinced that Jesus Christ is who he said he is: the resurrection and the life, the only way to salvation, the only solution to your situation? Will you commit your life to him? He is ready to raise you from death to life,

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

from separation from him to a new relationship with him. It says in John 1:12-13, “To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God.”

**4. You can rely on God to live in and through you.** You may be dead to God because of your sins, but he is ready, as it says in Colossians 2:14, to “[cancel] the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ’s cross.”

If this prayer truly expresses the desire of your heart to begin a new life in Christ, you can pray these words silently to God:

- God, I recognize I have a problem with you. I have sinned against you and have gone my own way in life.
- I realize now that you are my only solution. I ask you to forgive me of all my sins. Right now I am turning away from my old life and turning to Jesus Christ as my only hope of finding a relationship with you.
- I respond right now to Jesus Christ’s offer to rescue me from death. Right now I place my trust in you as my Savior and Redeemer. Right now I believe you will transform me into your child and give me an eternal relationship with you.
- I rely upon you to transfer me from death to life. You said in John 11:25 that I will be given eternal life by believing in you and that I will never perish. I believe and rely on you to transform me into your child right now.
- Thank you for doing what you said you would do. Thank you for making me your forgiven child and bringing me into a relationship with you, the one true God. Please live your life in and through me every day. I pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The emcee makes a transition to the last reading by saying:

**“If you prayed that prayer from the heart, a miracle has taken place, and you are now a child of God—all because of Jesus.”** (Sensitively probe to see if anyone has prayed that prayer or wants to pray further and respond accordingly. Then at the appropriate time say:) **“Let’s end our time together by celebrating our new life and what we’ve just experienced as we respond to the very God of Redemption.”** (Introduce the person who is to conduct the closing presentation, “Something to Celebrate.”)



## Something to Celebrate

*Instructions:* The person chosen to direct this portion should photocopy and cut out the five readings on these pages, distribute them to individuals at your celebration before it starts, and ask them to take turns reading when you call on them. Preferably, have young people at your meal read them. Follow the order from 1 to 5, and at the end of each reading the person will say, “That is worth celebrating.” Prompt the entire group to then say, “He is worthy.”<sup>6</sup>

*1. Because of Jesus,  
God Accepts Me Unconditionally*

Like every other human being, I suffered the curse of death. I was born in sin, disconnected from God, and that broke his heart. And even though I sinned against him, he accepted me without condition. He wanted so much to have a love relationship with me that he was willing to set aside his glory, humble himself, and even go through a torturous death on a cross to redeem me, even though I didn’t deserve it. Jesus coming to earth shows how passionate God is about enjoying a relationship . . . with me.

That is worth celebrating!  
[The group responds: “He is worthy.”]

*2. Because of Jesus,  
God Loves Me Sacrificially*

Even though I was born with a sinful nature—and added to my guilt many times by sinning myself—God solved the problem of my sin in a way that satisfied his mercy *and* his justice. “He sent his own Son in a human body . . . [and] destroyed sin’s control over [me] by giving his Son as a sacrifice for [my] sins” (Romans 8:3). In spite of my sin, God loved me enough to sacrifice himself, and he proved it by laying down his life for me!

That is worth celebrating!  
[The group responds: “He is worthy.”]

THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

*3. I Must Respond by  
Living a Life of Devoted Worship of God*

Christ sacrificed his life for me; I can do no different for him. Romans 12:1 says, “Give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?” In Exodus 34:14 it says, “You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.”

That is worth celebrating!  
[The group responds: “He is worthy.”]

*4. I Must Respond by  
Living a Life of Continual Prayer to God*

In Hebrews 4:15-16 Jesus is called our High Priest when it says, “This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There...we will find grace to help us when we need it.” Prayer allows us to share our hearts and needs with God, and he is always there for us.

That is worth celebrating!  
[The group responds: “He is worthy.”]

*5. I Must Respond by  
Living a Life of Confident Faith in God*

In Hebrews 12:1-2 it tells us to “run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.” We trusted in Christ to redeem us, and he did. We trust in him now to see us through the trials and difficulties of life—and he will.

That is worth celebrating!  
[The group responds: “He is worthy.”]

Emcee then thanks the person in charge and the five readers and closes the Redemption Celebration in a song of worship and a prayer of thanksgiving to God for sending his Son and redeeming us.

## APPENDIX B

---

# THE REVELATION CELEBRATION

*Permission is granted to the purchaser of this book to photocopy  
this appendix for use in a family or group celebration activity.*

*This material ©2010 Josh McDowell Ministry and Sean McDowell.*

The Revelation Celebration is designed as a Judeo-Christian family event that includes a meal. You will engage your children and teenagers in a fun and rewarding time illustrating that Scripture and the Holy Spirit are God's provisions to keep our relationships with him alive and fresh. The focus is on the ongoing process of coming to know God through his Word and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

This celebration is based on the Jewish holiday called the Festival of Harvest. In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, it is called *Shavuot*. In the Greek language of the New Testament it is called *Pentecost*.

For centuries the Jewish people have gathered together in their homes to observe Shavuot by celebrating the revelation of God's written Word given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Scripture is God's revelation to us so we might know him and his ways. This is something to celebrate.

But there is something more to celebrate. After Jesus died, rose again, and ascended into heaven, 120 of his disciples and followers were gathered in an upper room. They were observing Shavuot—Pentecost—when Jesus' promised Holy Spirit filled each

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

one of them. Jesus said it is his “Holy Spirit who leads into all truth” (John 14:17). Paul the apostle said that “God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world’s spirit) so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us” (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Holy Spirit is God’s revelation of himself. He infills us so that we might know God intimately and be like him.

The Revelation Celebration is a time to celebrate God’s revealed Word and the Holy Spirit, whom God sent as a means to know him on a deep relational level, because he is the “God who is passionate about his relationship with you” (Exodus 34:14).

If you would like to learn more about the Festival of Harvest as well as the other biblical feasts of the Lord and understand how they directly relate to your Christian faith, we encourage you to visit [www.ariseinglory.org](http://www.ariseinglory.org), the Web site of Harvey Diamond, a Jewish believer in Christ as the Messiah. He has done a great job of unpacking the biblical festivals and relating them in the form of an interactive devotional, called “Pathways to Glory Relational Devotional.” It provides various ways of relating with God in a manner that makes them especially relevant to the Christian life.

The Revelation Celebration is best done together with two or more families. Children from three years of age and up will enjoy and get something out of this mealtime event. Meet ahead of time with the adults you are planning this with to go over the details and assign responsibilities.

This celebration consists of six elements. Walk through each of these elements to practice and plan for your meal and the different readings. If your group is too large to fit into one home, plan to split up and conduct more than one celebration.

The six elements of the meal celebration do not include music, so your group may want to insert the singing of hymns or worship music at various times throughout the event.

1. **“Celebrating Two Revelations of God.”** Identify someone in your group who is willing to read this presentation, which explains what the Revelation Celebration is all about. The reading is found on page 460, and you have permission to photocopy those pages and all the pages related to this celebration. You might ask the person to read the material aloud to the group for practice, using the photocopied pages. We encourage you to *read* these readings at the celebration meal rather than casually relating the content. The exception is “The Verbal Relay Process” illustration.
2. **“Why We Celebrate.”** Identify someone within your group who is willing to be in charge of this presentation, found on pages 461–463. Ask him or her to read it aloud now to familiarize everyone with the material.
3. **The meal.** Identify someone in your group who is willing to take the

*Appendix B—The Revelation Celebration*

lead to coordinate the location of the Revelation Celebration (preferably someone's home), identify the time, obtain the prescribed menu items, determine what else is served, and so on.

This person is not to do all the work. He or she is to work with group members to coordinate the logistical details of the celebration, listed on page 464. Photocopy that page and provide it to the meal coordinator.

4. **“The Verbal Relay Process.”** Identify someone in your group who is willing to conduct this illustration, found on pages 465–466. Make a photocopy of those pages and ask him or her to read them aloud to familiarize everyone with the illustration.
5. **“God’s Accurate Letters of Love.”** Identify someone who is willing to read this information, found on pages 467–469. Ask him or her to read these pages aloud now to familiarize the group with this material.
6. **“From God’s Heart to Yours.”** Identify someone within your group who is willing to read this presentation, found on pages 470–471. Ask him or her to read it aloud now to familiarize everyone with its content.

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

### Conducting the Revelation Celebration

After meeting with the families you plan to have the Revelation Celebration with, you are now ready to emcee your evening event and meal. Photocopy these pages as a reference guide to your celebration.

- *Introduction:* Invite everyone to be seated at the table and say, “**Tonight we are going to have a celebration and \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is going to start us off**” (“Celebrating Two Revelations of God”).
- Immediately following that presentation have the person responsible for the “Why We Celebrate” make his or her presentation.
- Announcement of the meal and the prayer for the meal will be given by the person presenting “Why We Celebrate.”
- At the conclusion of the meal, thank all those who helped prepare it. Then say, “**Now \_\_\_\_\_ (name) has something to share with us**” (“The Verbal Relay Process”).
- After the verbal relay presentation say, “**Now, to see how accurate the life-saving message of the Bible is, let’s have \_\_\_\_\_ (name) read something very fascinating, entitled ‘God’s Accurate Letters of Love.’**”
- Following that presentation, after a moment of silence, share from your own heart how you desire to know God more through his Spirit and his Word. Encourage others to share their desires to know God more. After a time of sharing close in prayer.

#### *Consider Reading This Prayer at the End of the Celebration*

“Tonight, O Lord, we have celebrated the revelation of your Holy Word and the revelation of your Holy Spirit. You have given us your Spirit and your Word that we might know you and love you intimately. And in doing so you have enabled us to love our wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, grandparents, grandchildren, and friends as you meant for us to love them—with Christ-like, unselfish love.

“Help us to go away from this celebration more lovingly committed to you and to one another. And let this prayer from your apostle Paul in Ephesians 3 be our concluding prayer:

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love. And may you

*Appendix B—The Revelation Celebration*

have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen (verses 16-21).

“And everyone said...Amen!”



## Celebrating Two Revelations of God

Tonight we are going to participate in what we are calling the “Revelation Celebration.” It is based on a Jewish holiday. The Jewish holiday is called the Festival of Harvest. In the Greek language of the New Testament it is called *Pentecost*.

For centuries the Jewish people gathered together in their homes and observed the Festival of Harvest by celebrating the revelation of God’s written Word given to Moses on Mount Sinai. God appeared to Moses and said, “I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love. . . You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you” (Exodus 34:6-7,14).

God gave the children of Israel and each of us his Word as his love letters on how to come to know him personally. Because humans have sinned against God, they are separated from him. The Scriptures—his written Word—are instructions on how to regain a personal love relationship with God.

Tonight we will celebrate God’s revealing himself to us through his Holy Word so we can know him for who he is.

Hundreds of years after Moses, it was written in Scripture that “the Word became human and lived here on earth among us” (John 1:14). His name was Jesus. He told his followers that to redeem them he must die for their sins, but that he would arise from the dead. He also said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth” (John 14:16). And the Bible says that “God has actually given us his Spirit. . . so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

During the Jewish Passover celebration, Jesus was, in fact, crucified. But just as he had said, he rose again and went back to his Father God in heaven. And 50 days from the Passover, when the Festival of Harvest, or Pentecost, was observed by the Jewish people, something extraordinary happened—just as Jesus had promised. It is recorded in the second chapter of Acts.

On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus’ resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on them. And every one present was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

Tonight, we too will celebrate God’s revealing himself to us by giving us his Holy Spirit.

So tonight we celebrate God’s revelation of his Word. Tonight we celebrate God’s revelation of his Holy Spirit.

## Why We Celebrate

*Instructions:* At the end of this reading there are three group readings to photocopy, cut out, and distribute to three young people who will be attending your Revelation Celebration. Pull them aside and ask them to help you out with your reading. They are simply to read aloud what is written, on your cue.

Also ask the youngest child who can speak and will be attending the celebration to assist you. Ask the child to simply say, “Because,” when you nod at him or her. This child will need to be able to be attentive to your reading and cues.

You will need a cluster of grapes as an object lesson and enough small clusters to give to each person at the Revelation Celebration meal. Be sure the cluster you use has a main vine clearly visible from which numerous grapes extend.

### *Read Aloud:*

**“Why do we celebrate tonight? We celebrate because God has revealed himself through the written Word and through his Holy Spirit. But what does that really mean to us?”**

**“God’s revelation through his written Word and through his Holy Spirit means everything to you and me, because the Spirit and the Word teach and empower us to accomplish the one thing we were meant to accomplish—and that is to enjoy relationships. We were created to revel in a love relationship with God and with one another because, as Exodus 34:14 says, ‘He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.’**

**“I have asked \_\_\_\_\_ (name of youngest child) to assist me. Each time (he or she) says, ‘Because,’ I would like all of you to quote that scripture aloud in unison: ‘He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.’ Okay?”**

**“Why did God give you his written Word?”**

(Nod to youngest child to say, “Because.”)

**(Group says in unison, “He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.” [Repeat this again if the group is unclear what they were to do.]**

**“Why did God give you his Holy Spirit?”**

(Nod to youngest child to say, “Because.”)

**(Group says in unison, “He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.”)**

**“Why did God create you to love him and one another?”**

(Nod to youngest child to say, “Because.”)

**(Group says in unison, “He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.”)**

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

Now nod to the teenager/young person to whom you gave Reading #1 to indicate that he or she is to read it aloud. *Note:* Before your meal event make a photocopy of all three of these readings and cut them out so you can give one to each person doing the reading.

### *Reading #1*

We celebrate the revelation of your Holy Word, O God, for it allows us to know you for who you are. You said to Moses as recorded in Exodus 33, “I know you by name, and I’m pleased with you.” And Moses replied, “If you’re really pleased with me, show me your ways so I can know you.” Your Holy Word reveals yourself and your ways to us. We celebrate the giving of your Holy Word tonight.

Nod to the teenager/young person with Reading #2 to indicate that he or she is to read it aloud.

### *Reading #2*

We celebrate the revealing of your Holy Spirit, O God, on the day of Pentecost, for you have come to fill us not only with your Word, but with your presence also. You desire for us to join you in the circle of your perfect relationship. You said, “My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us” (John 17:21). Your Holy Spirit has come to indwell us and make us one with you. We celebrate the giving of your Holy Spirit tonight.

Nod to the teenager/young person with Reading #3 to indicate that he or she is to read it aloud.

*Reading #3*

Tonight we celebrate the revelation of your Spirit and your Word. And in doing so we celebrate how your love toward us and in us has enabled us to love one another as you have loved us. You said to your followers as recorded in John 14, “Love each other in the same way that I have loved you. Everyone will know that you are my disciples because of your love for each other.” Your Spirit and your Word enable us to truly love as you love. We celebrate our love for one another tonight.

Pick up the cluster of grapes. Ask each person to take a small bunch from those that you have provided on a tray, and say the following.

“Jesus said, ‘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’ (John 15:5).

“Christ is the vine. We are the branches. This grape represents the fruit of his love. When we yield to God’s Holy Word and the Holy Spirit living in us, we produce the fruit of Christlike loving. Each of you now take the fruit of the vine and eat it.” (You pick a grape from the cluster and eat it as well.)

“Tonight we celebrate his love and our love for one another. Right now let someone know that you love him or her.” (To set an example, you go over and embrace someone and say, “I love you.” Once everyone has expressed a gesture of love to another, say the following.)

“Now, because of God’s revelation of his Spirit and his Word, we celebrate him and our love for one another. And how do we do that? For one, by feasting!” If you decide to sing, say: “By singing and feasting.” (Then lead in a song. Now offer the following prayer.)

“O God, we celebrate your Spirit and the Word tonight. We celebrate our love for one another. And as we partake of this food, bless it so that it strengthens us to honor you by loving one another as you have loved us. Amen.”

Serve the meal.

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

### The Meal Surrounding Our Celebration

- **Select where to conduct your Revelation Celebration.** A person's home is preferable, depending on the size of your group and their families. Conducting the celebration simultaneously at multiple sites is an option if you have a large group.
- **Select the date and time of your celebration.**
- **Decide on the meal.** Consider a potluck meal in which each family brings a dish. This time together is a time of feasting. Decide who in your group will bring what. As an object lesson you will need to have a large cluster of grapes at your celebration meal. Be sure that at least part of the cluster you use has a main vine clearly visible, from which numerous small bunches extend.

## The Verbal Relay Process

*Instructions:* Prior to your celebration event write or type five labels to be placed on five small paper cups. The five labels should read, “Hyprochloric Acid,” “Hygrochloric Acid,” “Hylochchloric Acid,” “Hyfrochloric Acid,” and “Hydrochloric Acid.” Then put one candy mint in each cup. Also write or type the words “A Hyfrochloric Acid Pill” on a small slip of paper and fold it once to hide the wording. Then place the five cups on a tray and put the slip of paper in your pocket.

*Presentation* (familiarize yourself with this illustration so you don’t need to read from the presentation):

Say: “I need \_\_\_\_\_ (name—choose a young person ten or older in your group) and \_\_\_\_\_ (name—an adult) to help me. \_\_\_\_\_ (name of young person), you are a medical doctor with, among other things, this medication (provide the tray with the five cups of mints).

“\_\_\_\_\_ (name of adult), you have a fatal and rare disease called ‘*melodrama fatalis*’ that can be cured by only one of these pills. I know the name of that pill and will pass it on to our fine doctor here through a verbal relay process.” (Ask your young doctor to come to where you are standing). “But I will relay the name of that all-important pill to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the person seated closest to you) only once and ask him or her to whisper it to the person beside him or her only once. Then he or she must whisper it to the next and the next, each person saying it only once, until it is finally whispered to our fine doctor here. Now time is of the essence, so let’s get this verbal relay going as quickly as possible. Remember, you can whisper what you hear only once. And of course, you cannot ask the previous person to repeat what was whispered—and we must move fast because our patient is dying.”

(Whisper “Hyfrochloric Acid Pill” to the person next to you and get the relay going. Once the information has traveled around the table to the last person near you and your doctor, ask the person to whisper the pill’s name to the doctor. Then facing your young doctor say:)

“Now what is the word that was whispered in your ear?” (After he or she has replied by repeating the word whispered to him or her, show your doctor friend the five labeled paper cups and have him or her again repeat the name he or she heard whispered. The name heard will undoubtedly be jumbled and unlike any of the specific labeled names. Say:) “None of these pills match the name you said, so you must take a chance.” (Let the doctor choose the cup bearing the name closest to what he or she heard. Then say:) “Since this is your best guess as to the right pill, go ahead and take the chance; give this pill to our dying friend.” (Ask the adult to eat the pill.

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

Then hand the folded slip of paper to the doctor from your pocket and ask him or her to read it. Then say:)

**“Does it match the pill \_\_\_\_\_ (name of adult) took?”** (It most likely won't. Even if it does, point out it was simply a shot in the dark and that it was an unlikely miracle the patient was saved. However, in all likelihood the right pill was not chosen. Say to the adult:)  
**“You are out of luck. You took the wrong pill, and so you must now ‘pass away.’”** (The more the adult hams this up, the better. Then say:)

**“Let me ask all of you: What went wrong with this verbal relay process of getting the name of the cure to our expert doctor?”** (Let the group respond. All will agree the message got garbled in the process of transmission.)

**“Right. Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ (name of young volunteer) had no way to be sure he or she was giving poor \_\_\_\_\_ (name of adult) the correct remedy because the vital information he needed was distorted along the way. Without accurate, undistorted instructions, our dying patient couldn't experience the life-saving power of that information.**

**“Now, what does this illustration tell us about those who copied the Bible by hand generation after generation?”** (Wait for a response. Lead the group to the conclusion that the words of Scripture had to be passed down accurately. Then say:)

**“That's right. If we are to read the exact lifesaving words God gave to those who first wrote them down, then those copying Scripture had to be careful to copy accurately, letter for letter, word for word.”<sup>1</sup>**

The emcee thanks the person for conducting the illustration and says: **“Now, to see how accurate the lifesaving message of the Bible is, let's have \_\_\_\_\_ (name of adult) read something very fascinating entitled ‘God's Accurate Letters of Love.’”**

## God's Accurate Letters of Love

*(Make copies for everyone to read along.)*

God spoke to men thousands of years ago and had them write down very important messages he wanted us to know. Because he loved us and wanted a relationship with us, he wanted us to know how we could get to know him. All of us as humans had sinned and were separated from him, so his Word was to become our instructions, or set of love letters from God, on how to come to know him personally.

Do we have an accurate set of love letters? Were the copies made of the original writings done accurately? Let's find out.

### *The Case of the Meticulous Scribes*

Hand-copying of the Old Testament was the responsibility of a group of men who were trained as skilled scribes and gave their lives to writing. For many years before and after the time of Jesus it was their responsibility to copy Scripture. These particular scribes devoted themselves to making sure that the Holy Scriptures were copied letter for letter, word for word. Their rules for copying Scripture were so strict that when a copy was made it was considered to be an exact duplicate, just as if you had made it from a copy machine. When a copy was finished it was called a manuscript.

A scribe would begin his day of transcribing a manuscript by ceremonially washing his entire body. He would then robe himself in full Jewish dress before sitting down at his desk. As he wrote, if he came to the Hebrew name of God, he could not begin writing the name with a pen newly dipped in ink for fear it would smear the page. Once he began writing the name of God, he could not stop or allow himself to be distracted... even if a king were to enter the room. The scribe was obligated to continue without interruption until he finished penning the holy name of the one true God.

The Masoretic guidelines for copying manuscripts also required that

- the scroll be written on the skin of a clean animal.
- each skin contain a specified number of columns, equal throughout the entire book.
- the length of each column extend no less than 48 lines and no more than 60.
- the column breadth consist of exactly 30 letters.
- the space of a thread appear between every consonant.
- the breadth of nine consonants be inserted between each section.
- a space of three lines appear between each book.
- the fifth book of Moses (Deuteronomy) conclude exactly with a full line.



## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

- nothing—not even the shortest word—be copied from memory, but rather be copied letter by letter.
- the scribe count the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book and compare it to the original.
- if a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake, it be discarded.<sup>2</sup>

God instilled in the Masoretes such a painstaking reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures in order to ensure the amazingly accurate transmission of the Bible, so you and I would have an accurate revelation of him.

### *The Case of the Accurate New Testament*

The Hebrew scribes did not copy the manuscripts of the New Testament. So God did a new thing to ensure that the words of Jesus and his followers would be preserved accurately for us.

To tell if ancient manuscripts are reliable we 1) measure the time between the original writing and the first manuscript copy; and 2) determine how many manuscript copies are still in existence. The shorter the time between the original writing and the first copy and the more manuscripts there are, the more accurate the manuscripts are considered.

For example, virtually everything we know today about Julius Caesar’s campaigns in Gaul comes from ten manuscript copies of *The Gallic Wars*, the earliest of which dates to just within 1000 years of the time it was originally written. The most reliable writing in secular history is Homer’s *Iliad*, with 643 manuscripts, the earliest of which dates to within 400 years of the original writing.

Let’s look at this chart of classical literature.<sup>3</sup>

Author	Book	Date written	Earliest copies	Time gap	Number of copies
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 BC	c. 400 BC	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480–425 BC	c. AD 900	c. 1350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460–400 BC	c. AD 900	c. 1300 yrs.	8
Plato		400 BC	c. AD 900	c. 1300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes		300 BC	c. AD 1100	c. 1400 yrs.	200
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100–44 BC	c. AD 900	c. 1000 yrs.	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 BC–AD 17	fourth century (partial); mostly tenth century	c. 400 years c. 1000 years	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	AD 100	c. AD 1100	c. 1000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus	<i>Natural History</i>	AD 61–113	c. AD 850	c. 750 yrs.	7

*The New Testament Has No Equal*

Using this accepted standard for evaluating the reliability of ancient writings, the New Testament stands alone. It has no equal. No other book of the ancient world can even compare to the reliability of the New Testament. Take a look at this chart:<sup>4</sup>

Author	Book	Date written	Earliest copies	Time gap	Number of copies
John	New Testament	AD 50–100	c. AD 130	50-plus years	Fragments
The rest of the New Testament authors			c. AD 200 (books)	100 years	
			c. AD 250 (most of New Testament)	150 years	
			c. AD 325 (complete New Testament)	225 years	5600-plus Greek manuscripts
			c. AD 366–384 (Latin Vulgate translation)	284 years	
			c. AD 400–500 (other translations)	400 years	19,000-plus translated manuscripts
			<b>TOTALS</b>	50–400 years	24,600-plus manuscripts

There are nearly 25,000 manuscripts or fragments of manuscripts, with some dating back to within 50 years of the original writings. And none are more than 400 years newer than the originals. Incredible!

When you hold a Bible in your hand you can be sure it is the most accurate and reliable writing in all of history! God wanted you to be sure that the Bible you read is the accurate love letters he had written just for you.

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

### From God's Heart to Yours

*Instructions:* Practice reading this presentation until you can read it with passion and feeling. It is designed to help those at your celebration capture God's heart for personal relationship.

Say:

**"I am going to read something as though God is personally sharing his heart with us tonight."**

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One.

I am the infinite God who knows no boundaries or limitations. My power and knowledge and greatness are beyond your comprehension. My love and holiness and beauty are so intense that for you to see me in all my glory would overwhelm you—for as a mortal you could not see me and live. And yet...I created you to know me intimately, for I am passionate about my relationship with you.

But a relationship isn't complete unless the love cycle—each one of us knowing and being known—is completed. I want you to know that I know you, and I want you to know me.

I know everything there is to know about you. I know your favorite color, your favorite food, what music you like, the dreams you have, and the future you long for. I know your struggles and weaknesses. I am glad with you when you make right choices. I am saddened when you make wrong choices. I know you better than you know yourself, and...I love you.

But I want to ask you a question—not for my information, but for yours. Do you love me? I mean *really* love me? Be slow to answer; be sure before you speak. And before you do, let me tell you the secret to really loving me. To love me, you must come to know me. For to know me is to love me!

Learn of my mercy and my faithfulness, and you will love me. Come to know my goodness and holiness, and you will love me. Learn of my justice tempered with patience, and you will love me. Know what I love and what I hate, and you will love me. Know what saddens my heart and what gives me pleasure, and you will love me.

This is the way to have eternal life: to know me, the only true God. And the more you know me, the more you will become like me. The more you know me, the more you will praise and thank me and honor my name. And the more you know me, the more you will love others as I love them.

There are two ways to know me. The first is through my Holy Spirit. I

Appendix B—The Revelation Celebration

have sent you my Spirit to live within you. Allow me to fill you with my Spirit. Make me at home in your heart. Speak to me often in your prayers. Confide your fears, your hopes, your dreams to me. Let me live my life through you. I am with you always, and I will never leave you.

The second way to know me is through the written revelation of me—my Holy Word, the collection of my love letters to you. Read my words, hide them in your heart, and know me for who I am—the one true God, your Savior, and your friend.

I long for you to communicate with me by opening your heart in prayer. As you hear the words of the following prayer, I urge you to make the prayer your own, and let the words come from your heart. Pray silently to me:

*O God, you are great, but I know so little of your greatness. I know you are merciful and faithful and holy and just, but I really know so little of you.*

*I want to thank you for your Holy Spirit. I welcome you to be more and more at home in my heart. And I thank you for your Holy Word and for giving to me right now, this very moment, a longing to know you and a hunger to read your love letters to me.*

*I ask you to help me. Help me by giving me a desire to read your Word more often. As I read, help me to see you and know you in every page, so I can be like you. O God, let me honor you with my life. I sense you smiling at me right now. Thank you. Thank you for loving me. I love you too. Amen.<sup>5</sup>*



*Emcee:* After a moment of silence, share from your own heart how you desire to know God more through his Spirit and his Word. Encourage others to share their desires to know God more. After a time of sharing, close in prayer.

*Consider reading the prayer found at the close of your guidelines, on pages 458–459.*

## APPENDIX C

---

# THE RESTORATION CELEBRATION

*Permission is granted to the purchaser of this book to photocopy  
this appendix for use in a family or group celebration activity.*

*This material ©2010 Josh McDowell Ministry and Sean McDowell.*

The Restoration Celebration is designed as a Judeo-Christian family event that includes a meal. You will engage your children and teenagers in a fun and rewarding time that celebrates the richness of our relationship with God through Christ here on earth, as well as illustrating that, while living here on earth is temporal, there is coming a day when a new and perfect heaven and earth will be our home for all eternity. The focus is on Jesus returning to give us our inheritance of newly restored bodies that last forever and a perfect world to live in.

This celebration is based on the Jewish holiday called the Feast of Tabernacles or Shelters (Booths). God commanded the children of Israel to live in makeshift shelters for seven days every year. “This will remind each new generation of Israelites that their ancestors had to live in shelters when I rescued them out of the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God” (Leviticus 23:43).

For centuries, during the fall of the year, Jewish families have celebrated *Sukkot* (Hebrew, meaning “booth” or “hut”). For seven days they are to eat in their huts and “rejoice before the Lord your God” (Leviticus 23:40). As the seventh festival, it marks

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

the completion of both the harvest season and the festival cycle. It therefore serves as a special time of celebrating the fullness of God's creative and redemptive work and, furthermore, the *rest* of God. It is to be a time to remember and reflect upon all God has done for us and give him glory. Yet the key significance of this festival is that it serves as a rehearsal and celebration of the future glory of God.

God gave the prophet Zechariah a vision of the coming Messiah, the restoration of Israel, and the restoration of all things. The prophet saw a time when "the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one Lord—his name alone will be worshipped" (Zechariah 14:9). The apostle Paul spoke of a time in human history "that at the name of Jesus [the Messiah] every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

It is in this restoration context that Zechariah declares that "the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16 NIV). God had told his people "be joyful at your Feast. . . for the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete" (Deuteronomy 16:14-15 NIV). But what Zechariah was no doubt pointing to was the ultimate joy made complete when all things would be restored to God's original design and "the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them" (Revelation 21:2 NASB).

At the final restoration of all things there will be no more struggling with this sin-cursed world or living in shabby huts. The prophet Isaiah declared this restoration promise of the Lord:

I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages (Isaiah 49 NKJV).

"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure" (Isaiah 66:22 NIV).

In that day he [God] will remove the gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign LORD will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mocking against his land and people (Isaiah 25:7-8).

Your Restoration Celebration is a time to thank God not only for what he has done, but also for what he is going to do in the future: give you and your families new bodies that will never wear out and a perfect world to enjoy with him for all eternity. And, of

course, Christ conquering sin and death on our behalf could not have happened without him both dying for us *and* rising from the dead. So your Restoration Celebration will include praising God for the bodily resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

If you would like to learn more about the Feast of Tabernacles as well as other biblical feasts of the Lord and understand how they directly relate to your Christian faith, we encourage you to visit [www.ariseinglory.org](http://www.ariseinglory.org), the Web site of Harvey Diamond, a Jewish believer in Christ the Messiah. He has done a great job of unpacking the biblical festivals and relating them in the form of an interactive devotional, called “Pathways to Glory Relational Devotional.” It provides various ways of relating with God in a manner that makes them especially relevant to the Christian life.

The Restoration Celebration is best done together with two or more families. Children from three years of age and up will enjoy and get something out of this mealtime event. Meet with the adults you are planning this with ahead of time to go over the details and assign responsibilities.

This celebration consists of five elements. Walk through each of these elements to practice and plan for your meal and the different readings. If your group is too large to fit into one home, plan to split up and conduct more than one celebration.

The five elements of your meal celebration do not include music. Your group may want to insert the singing of hymns or worship music at various times throughout the Celebration event.

1. **“Celebrating the God of Restoration.”** Identify someone in your group who is willing to read this presentation, which explains what the Restoration Celebration is all about. The reading is found on pages 478–479, and you have permission to photocopy those pages and all the pages related to this celebration. You might ask the person to read the material aloud to the planning group for practice, using the photocopied pages. We encourage you to *read* these readings at the celebration meal, rather than casually relating the content. And in your planning you will want to discuss how elaborate you want your *sukkah* (temporary shelter) to be.
2. **“Death Had to Be Conquered.”** Identify someone in your group willing to read this presentation and conduct the illustration (for which they will need to make preparations). Ask him or her to read the presentation aloud to your adults group now for practice, using a photocopy of pages 480–482 that you provide.
3. **The meal.** Identify someone willing to take the lead to coordinate the location of the Restoration Celebration (preferably someone’s home), determine the time, decide what to eat, and so on. This person is not to do all the work. He or she is to work with the members of your family

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

group to coordinate the logistical details of the celebration, listed on page 483. Photocopy that page and provide it to the meal coordinator.

4. **“What We Treasure.”** Identify someone within the group who is willing to read the presentation and facilitate discussion with your mealtime group. Photocopy pages 484–485 of this reading and provide them to the person willing to do this and ask him or her to do the reading now before your planning group for practice.
5. **“Why Say Hallelujah?”** Identify someone in your group who is willing to conclude the Restoration Celebration by facilitating discussion and directing those they will choose (preferably young people) to read what eternity will be like and then closing in prayer. The designated person can practice by reading the photocopies of pages 486–489.



## Conducting the Restoration Celebration

After meeting with the families you plan to have the Restoration Celebration with, you are now ready to emcee your evening event and meal. Photocopy these pages as a reference guide to your celebration.

*Note:* Make sure that arrangements have been made to have the sukkah “built” and ready at the location of the celebration meal.

- *Prior to beginning the introduction:* Your group has brought “finger food” appetizers to the event. Prior to formally gathering around the table, invite people to sit under the sukkah and eat their finger food together. If your sukkah is small perhaps only two people at a time can eat under it together. While this is largely symbolic, you will make reference to it later in the evening.
- *Beginning the introduction:* Invite everyone to be seated at the table and say, “**Tonight we are going to have a celebration and \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is going to start us off**” (“Celebrating the God of Restoration”).
- Immediately following that presentation ask the person responsible for “Death Had to Be Conquered” to make his or her presentation. *Note:* Announcement of the meal and prayer will be made by the person conducting this presentation.
- At the conclusion of the meal, thank all those who helped to prepare it. Then say, “**Now \_\_\_\_\_ (name) has something to share with us**” (presentation of “What We Treasure”).
- After the “What We Treasure” presentation say: “**The imperfect things and everything that pleases neither God nor us are going to be destroyed. In their place will be a new and perfect world where all our dreams and hopes come true. And to end our evening just right, let’s have \_\_\_\_\_ (name) lead us in an exercise**” (“Why Say Hallelujah?” presentation).
- After the “What We Treasure” presenter offers a prayer, consider closing your time in a praise song.

## Celebrating the God of Restoration

*Preparations/instructions:* One of the key points of your celebration is to illustrate that life in this present world is temporal. This celebration is drawn from the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, which is a reminder to the Jewish people that their ancestors lived in temporary shelters when God led them out of the desert and into the Promised Land (see Leviticus 23:43). The Restoration Celebration is a time to look forward to the new bodies and new home God is preparing for us. And in so doing, just like in the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, a *sukkah* (temporary shelter) needs to be built.

Your sukkah doesn't have to be elaborate. It can be as simple as spreading a sheet over dining room chairs to create a makeshift tent. Or you can construct a little more substantial structure with cardboard boxes. Get your children involved and make it a fun experience. If you are conducting your celebration in warm weather consider using a tent or building a lean-to outside. Some of you could even sleep in your sukkah and make it a family time of fun.

The sukkah is important because it serves as a standing object lesson for your celebration. It reminds us that our lives and this present world and all we have are like a "mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14 NIV). So when you do create your sukkah make sure it comes across as "temporary." If you are using cardboard, make holes in the top and sides that demonstrate it is in need of repair. If you build a lean-to outside leave holes in the roof so you can see the stars at night. Be sure that whatever you make, it is large enough that at least two people at a time can sit under it, because during your meal the emcee is going to ask at least two people at a time to eat in or under the sukkah.

*Presentation:* Read the following aloud.

Tonight we are participating in a Restoration Celebration. We are gathering together like the children of Israel have gathered for centuries in celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. They would live under a sukkah, or hut, for seven days to remind them that God led them from their temporary homes in the wilderness and into the Promised Land of Israel.

We have our own version of a sukkah. If you haven't joined someone under the sukkah to share an appetizer, do it just prior to our meal. The sukkah is to remind us that all that we own and have on this earth is temporary—even our lives are temporary. But one day Jesus will return and make earth his home with all God's children—those who have been forgiven of their sins and have a relationship with God.

But this world, our earth, and the stars and sky above us will be made new. Tonight we celebrate that while life here is temporary, Jesus will one day lead us out of this old world and give us a new one—a home

*Appendix C—The Restoration Celebration*

that will never grow old and decay. John, a disciple of Jesus, saw a vision of that time in our future. He saw God's home, heaven, coming down to our new earth. The Bible says:

Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever (Revelation 21:3-4).

We will have new homes that won't grow old and deteriorate. We will have new bodies too, ones that will never die. Our friends and family who have died and have trusted in Jesus will be raised to life and will live with us. Our new bodies won't suffer pain or get old or wear out. The Bible says:

Our bodies now disappoint us, but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power. They are natural bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies...Every human being has an earthly body just like Adam's, but our heavenly bodies will be just like Christ's (1 Corinthians 15:43-44,48).

Our God is the God of Restoration. He will one day restore this earth back to the paradise it once was. He will restore our bodies to what he originally designed.

So tonight we will celebrate what God has said will come to pass. Tonight we will contrast the imperfect now (point to the sukkah) with the perfect to come. We will look at what is and be reminded of what will be. Tonight is our Restoration Celebration.

## Death Had to Be Conquered

*Preparations/instructions:* To prepare for this illustration you will need duct tape and a makeshift “tomb.” You will be illustrating how a body was prepared for burial in a tomb. The duct tape will be used to wrap around a volunteer’s legs. You can use your sukkah as a “tomb” if it is small and you’re not eating under it outside. Otherwise, use six chairs. Place one across at the top and two on each side to form a rectangular space on the floor for your volunteer to lie down in, as if in a tomb. The sixth chair is the “stone door” at the entrance.

Once you have your “tomb” assembled, choose a volunteer—preferably a young person at least seven years old. *Note:* Feel free to read the following presentation or make the words your own.

*Presentation:* Begin your illustration by saying something like:

**“Jesus said he would return to give us new bodies and a new world. But something very important had to happen before he could fulfill his promise. In fact, our entire salvation depended upon it. He had to rise from the dead.**

**“Jesus was crucified and buried in a tomb. And unless he was truly the Son of God and rose from the dead, he couldn’t fulfill his promise to give us eternal life in a perfect world.**

**“Some people say Jesus didn’t rise from the dead. They don’t believe he was the Son of God, and they don’t believe a person can have eternal life. What they say is that Jesus really didn’t die on the cross, but passed out and then revived once he was buried in the tomb. They say that, just like any other mortal, he grew to old age and died. But never rose from the grave.**

**“Well, tonight in our Restoration Celebration we want to increase our confidence that Jesus did in fact die and then, as God’s Son, overcame death, rose again, and is returning to earth to restore all things to perfection.**

**“I’ve asked \_\_\_\_\_ (name of volunteer) to help me with something.”**  
(Ask the young person to come up and sit on the chair that will act as the “stone door” in front of the “tomb.”)

**“The Bible tells us that just before Jesus was taken out and crucified on a cross, he was beaten very badly. He lost a lot of blood. He then had a crown of thorns pressed down into his head. He was made to carry the heavy cross to the place of crucifixion. He was so weak he couldn’t even carry the cross all the way. Then he was nailed to the cross by his hands and feet. When he cried out and died, a soldier speared him in the side to make sure he was dead. So when his disciples took Jesus down from the cross to bury him, he was really dead.**

**“In those days people would carefully prepare a body before placing it in a tomb. What they would do is put about 75 pounds of embalming ointment and spices on**

the body, then wrap it tight with linen cloth to form a mummy. This is all explained in John 19:39-40.

“Now what I’m going to do is wrap \_\_\_\_\_ (name) with this duct tape only on the legs.” (Have volunteer sit down and begin at his or her ankles; with his or her feet together, wrap around and around up to mid-calf. Make it tight, but not so tight as to cut off circulation.) “Now imagine if \_\_\_\_\_ (name) were wrapped tight like this all the way to (his or her) neck. After Jesus’ disciples wrapped him with the 75 pounds of ointment, it hardened like cement. So Jesus was wrapped solidly, with his legs and arms encased in the wrappings.

“Now, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) I’d like you to scoot between the chairs (or in the sukkah) and we are going to imagine this is the tomb Jesus was placed in.” (Take hold of the chair just used by your volunteer.) “Now this chair represents the tomb door. I’m going to place it in front of the ‘tomb.’ The stone in front of Jesus’ tomb probably weighed one to two tons. It had to be rolled up a slotted incline by several men, and then it fell into a groove. It could only be opened from the outside.” (Place chair in front of the sukkah or other chairs.)

“So there Jesus was, encased in 75 pounds of hardened spices, wrapped like a mummy, and sealed in a tomb by a stone that weighed at least one ton. Now here’s what some say who think Jesus was just a normal man who never really rose from the dead. They say Jesus swooned—fainted—on the cross and just passed out. And then three days in the cold, damp tomb revived him.

“Now remember, Jesus was beaten half to death and didn’t have enough strength to even carry his own cross. He was nailed to the cross, and once he died, a soldier speared his side and as the Bible says, ‘blood and water flowed out’ (John 19:34). So now the cold, damp tomb revived him and he just wiggled his way out of his tight wrapping?

“\_\_\_\_\_ (name of volunteer), why don’t you try to wiggle the wrappings off your feet. You can’t use your hands, because if you were in the same situation as Jesus your hands would be strapped to your side. You can’t sit up either, because you would be encased in a solid mummy suit. Just try and shake your wrappings off your feet.” (It will be impossible for your volunteer to do it. So continue.)

“But for argument’s sake, let’s assume you did revive and were able to stand up in your mummy suit.” (Help your volunteer to his or her feet, but keep him or her within the chairs or sukkah. Then sit on the chair that is acting as your “tomb door.”)

“Now, \_\_\_\_\_ (name), keep your hands to your sides, hop over here, and try to move this ‘one-ton tomb door’ out of the way.” (Again, your volunteer will be unable to move the chair by simply bumping it with his or her body.)

“Well, it’s clear here that it stretches the imagination to think that Jesus could

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

even survive his crucifixion, let alone break out of his grave clothes and somehow move a one-ton stone door from inside the tomb. The reality is, Jesus was the Son of God who died for us and rose again from the grave because he was and is God. And he is returning again to give us perfect bodies that will live forever in a perfect world.

“So tonight we are going to have a Restoration Celebration. Jesus died for us, rose again, and is coming back to give us new bodies and a new world. And how do we celebrate? For one, by feasting!” (If you decide to sing, say:) “by singing and feasting.” (Then lead in a song and offer the following prayer:)

O God, we celebrate your resurrection and your return to earth. And as we partake of this food, bless it so that it might strengthen us to praise and honor you as we look toward your return. Amen.

*Note:* If anyone has not yet eaten under the sukkah, invite them to have their appetizer there.

Serve the meal.

## Preparing for Your Celebration Meal

- **Select where to conduct your Restoration Celebration.** A person's home is preferable, depending on the size of your group and their families. Conducting the celebration simultaneously at multiple sites is an option if you have a very large group.
- **Select the date and time of your celebration.**
- **Decide on the meal.** Consider a potluck meal in which each family brings a dish. This time together is a time of feasting. Decide who in your group will bring what food. Be sure to bring some “finger food” that can be used to eat under your sukkah—food that cannot be spilled or soil the floor.

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

### What We Treasure

*Preparation/instructions:* In advance, ask an adult to be your “scribe” and write down the various dislikes that your group identifies. Also, you will need a frying pan, some lighter fluid, and matches. At the end of your presentation you will place the paper that your “scribe” writes on in the pan, douse it with lighter fluid, and set it aflame.

*Presentation:* Explain to the group that you want to read a short reading aloud and then brainstorm with them what they dislike about this imperfect world and what they are going to like about the perfect world God has promised us.

*Read this aloud:*

**“Jesus said, ‘Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where they can be eaten by moths and get rusty and where thieves break in and steal’ (Matthew 6:19).**

**“Our sukkah represents everything that gets old and rusty. While we can eat under it, it won’t last, and neither will anything in this present world. That is why Jesus went on to say: ‘Store your treasures in heaven, where they will never become moth-eaten or rusty and where they will be safe from thieves’ (Matthew 6:20).**

**“We store up treasures in heaven when we love God with all our hearts and our strength and our minds and love those around us like we love ourselves.”**

(Ask:) **“What does loving God and others like ourselves look like?”** (Get a response from group—for example, praying to God, reading his Word, various expressions of care and love for others, and so on.)

(Continue:) **“We store up treasures in heaven when we specifically obey God’s Word and make choices that please him.”**

(Ask:) **“What does obeying God’s Word look like?”** (Get a response from group—for example, not lying, cheating, stealing, when we obey parents, do not swear, do not get drunk, when we stay away from bad influences, and so on.)

(Continue:) **“We store up treasures in heaven when we refuse to follow our selfish wants and desires and instead do good to others.”**

(Ask:) **“What does denying our selfish desires and doing good to others look like?”** (Get response from group—for example, doing homework instead of \_\_\_\_\_, cleaning our rooms instead of \_\_\_\_\_, doing good for a father, mother, sister, brother, friend, even an enemy, instead of \_\_\_\_\_, and so on.)

(Then say something like:) **“Our Restoration Celebration is a reminder to store up treasures in heaven that will last, rather than in this world, which will not last. So let’s do this. Let’s make a list of the things you really don’t like—things you don’t want to last. And we’ll write them down. But let’s also name the good things we want**



to last—things you want to be around you and with you in heaven.” (You can ask for one category at a time or alternate between what we don’t like and what we do like.)

(But be sure to have your “scribe” write the things down that your group doesn’t like. Things might be mentioned like: “I don’t like homework, doing dishes, getting tired, crying, pain, breakups, accidents, crime, war, earthquakes, storms, growing old, forgetting, dying, and so on. Then ask:)

“**What do we like?**” (You need not write these down. But these things might include beautiful sunsets, ice cream, laughter, singing/music, various types of food, pretty clothes, to feel loved, to always have energy and strength—to never get tired, to be with loved ones who have passed away, and so on.)

*Once you have completed the exercise:* Take the list of what the group has said they didn’t like and place it in the pan. Set the pan on the table. Sprinkle some lighter fluid on it and say:

“I’m going to ask \_\_\_\_\_ (name of adult or older young person) to light the paper that represents all the things of this world we don’t like. And as (he or she) lights it I want to read you these verses from the disciple Peter.

Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living! You should look forward to that day and hurry it along—the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God. And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life. And be at peace with God (2 Peter 3:11-14).”

The emcee comments on this illustration and introduces the “Why Say Hallelujah?” presentation.

## THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

### Why Say Hallelujah?

*Preparations/instructions:* At the end of this short reading there are five readings to be done by volunteers you select. Photocopy these pages, cut the readings out, and distribute them to some in your group prior to your meal. Involve as many young people in this exercise as possible.

These readings are cause for celebration, so you will ask the group to energetically shout “Hallelujah” at the end of each reading. Have the readings done in numeric order, 1 through 5.

*Read aloud:*

“We want to close out our Restoration Celebration in praise. And there is a biblical word that means praise and thanksgiving. John the apostle heard it used repeatedly in heaven. It is the word ‘Hallelujah.’

“John said:

I heard the sound of a vast crowd in heaven shouting, “Hallelujah! Salvation is from our God. Glory and power belongs to him alone...” And from the throne came a voice that said, “Praise our God, all his servants, from the least to the greatest, all who fear him.” Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a huge crowd, or the roar of the mighty ocean waves, or the crash of loud thunder: “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and honor him” (Revelation 19:1-2,5-7).

“So to wrap up our celebration I have asked a number of people to read something. And after they finish I will say ‘And all the people said...’ and all of us will shout out the praise word *Hallelujah!* Let’s practice. ‘And all the people said...’ (Prompt the group, if needed, to shout “Hallelujah!”)

Nod to the person you gave Reading #1 to indicate that he or she is to read it aloud.

*Reading #1*

We have cried. We have suffered. We have been disappointed with others and in ourselves. Some of our loved ones have even died. *But there is coming a day when all will be restored*—a day when, as Revelation 21 says, “the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them and they will be his people...He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever.” [No need to read aloud the full Bible reference of Revelation 21:3-4.]

Say: “**And all the people said...**” Group shouts “Hallelujah!”  
Then nod to the person who is to read Reading #2.

*Reading #2*

We work. We sweat. We get tired. We run and get out of breath. We grow old and wear out. *But there is coming a day when all will be restored*—a day when Isaiah 40 will be perfectly fulfilled. For it says: “Those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” [No need to read aloud the full Bible reference of Isaiah 40:31 NASB.]

Say: “**And all the people said...**” Group shouts “Hallelujah!”  
Then nod to the person who is to read Reading #3.

THE UNSHAKABLE TRUTH

*Reading #3*

We fear we won't be accepted. We fear we won't get a good enough job. We fear things in our future. We may even fear the dark. *But there is coming a day when all will be restored*—a day when all our fears are gone. As 1 John 4 points out, “we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face [the Lord] with confidence. . . . Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear.” [No need to read aloud the full Bible reference of 1 John 4:17-18.]

Say: “**And all the people said. . .**” Group shouts “Hallelujah!”  
Then nod to the person who is to read Reading #4.

*Reading #4*

There are wars and rumors of wars. People fight for power. People fight for wealth. People fight for houses and land. Our world of sin has known no peace. *But there is coming a day when all will be restored*—a day when King Jesus will bring everlasting peace. As Isaiah 9 says, he is called the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end.” [No need to read aloud the full Bible reference of Isaiah 9:6-7.]

Say: “**And all the people said. . .**” Group shouts “Hallelujah!”  
Then nod to the person who is to read Reading #5.

*Reading #5*

We have had dreams. We have had desires. We have had hope. Many have not been fulfilled. We have had to live with disappointments small and large. *But there is coming a day when all will be restored*—a day when every dream and hope and desire will be fulfilled. As King David said in Psalm 37, “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.” [No need to read aloud the full Bible reference of Psalm 37:4.]

Say: “**And all the people said...**” Group shouts “Hallelujah!”

(Then say:) “**Let’s close with this prayer.**”

“**O God, you are the God of Restoration. Everything you created was good. Yet sin has brought ruin to your human creation and to the perfect world you personally crafted. And tonight we celebrate your miraculous and merciful plan to restore all things to your original design.**

“**What we now see and hear and taste and touch is temporal; it will not last. You have told us in your Word to ‘let heaven fill [our] thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth.’ Help us to always remember that. Life is like a mist that vanishes quickly. But when you return you will make our life eternal in a perfect world. As 1 Corinthians says, ‘Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that [we] know now is partial and incomplete, but then [we] will know everything completely, just as God knows [us] now.’ Thank you, King Jesus. We welcome your return. Hallelujah and amen.**”

*Note:* Consider closing your time in a praise song.