

Pleasure

INTRODUCTION:

Do you think Christians should enjoy pleasure?

Are some pleasures good and some evil? If so, what makes the difference?

I. Innocent Pleasures

A. Does God enjoy pleasure?

1. Gen. 1:31 Do you think God took pleasure in what He had created?

2. Eph. 1:5, 9 What does it say God took pleasure in? (That we will be adopted as His sons through Christ.)

B. Does God want us to enjoy pleasure?

1. I Tim. 6:17

2. Psalms 84:11

C. What are innocent pleasures?

1. They are not sinful pleasures.

2. They are things that are good for us to enjoy.

3. They refresh us. (Psm. 103:5)

4. They help us get a fresh perspective on life.

5. Examples:

- seeing an old friend

- enjoying a good meal

- a beautiful sunrise or sunset

- a majestic snow capped mountain

6. What makes these innocent pleasures?

(They point us to the "greatest pleasure" of all - namely God.)

a. James 1:16-17 We need to see these innocent pleasures as coming from God.

James 1:16 warns us not to be deceived. How are we deceived?

to James 1:13-15 tells us we are deceived when we think "pleasures" contrary to God and His ways will bring us real pleasures.

b. Deut. 14:22-26

This passage tells us of God's desire for the Israelites to have a party, to enjoy themselves, in God's presence with the point being that they remember all their blessings are from God. He is to be praised. He is the reason for them to rejoice. Innocent pleasures are intended to always point us to God.

II. Guilty Pleasures

A. Definition

1. These are pleasures that we engage in which leave us feeling empty, guilty, and anxious. They disappoint us. Heb. 11:25 They are short lived.

2. They are pleasures that come with negative consequences. Gal. 6:7-8

3. Prov. 10:23 These are the pleasures of the fool.

4. II Tim. 3:4 Instead of drawing us to God, they drive us away from God.

- B. What difficulties tempt us toward guilty pleasures?
1. Boredom and loneliness - looking for something to do..."idle hands are the devil's workshop".
 2. Stress, frustration, tired - we're looking for something to divert our attention so we don't have to think about our problems.
 3. Hurt, betrayal, being mistreated - We are looking for something to deaden the pain.
- C. How does God want us to handle our difficulties?
1. Ignore them, runaway from them to temporary distractions? As a culture, that is exactly how people tend to live their lives. People don't like their lives and can't wait for the weekend to run to "pleasures" that will deaden their pain and distract them from reality.
 2. God wants us to deal with our difficulties. He wants us to run to Him, not run away from Him.
 3. Worship in the Bible expressed two things to God:
 - a. Our pain - Psalm 61:1-2
The sacrificial system offered sacrifices for our guilt, needs, and suffering. We need cleansing and deliverance.
 - b. Our pleasure - Psalm 89:1
Sacrifices were also offered to express gratitude and praise to God.
- D. You might ask, "why are we talking about pain when we are supposed to be discussing pleasure? (Because the Bible talks about how we can have joy even in the midst of pain and suffering.)
1. I Peter 1:8 "filled with inexpressible and glorious joy in the midst of suffering".
 2. James 1:2-4 - trials are the context of purpose, endurance, and joy
 3. Suffering tests whether our pleasures and hope are firmly attached to the one "greatest pleasure" (God) or if our pleasures are an escape from reality and pull us away from God. Psalm 62:3-6

III. Recognizing the Stained Pleasures

- A. Non-Christians say, "I don't want to become a Christian because I'll have to give up the ten things I most love doing and do the ten things I most hate doing".
1. What would you say to a person who says this?
 2. What do they fail to understand?
(The pleasures on their list are false. They are a lie.)
- B. Examples of Stained Pleasures
1. immorality
 2. anger
 3. self-righteousness
 4. laziness

- C. What about the things that are, in and of themselves, okay? They are good - or at least, not bad. Yet, they can capture your heart and become too important in your life.
1. What are some examples of potentially innocent pleasures that go bad?
 - a. talking on the phone
 - b. checking email or text messages many times in a day
 - c. listening to the radio
 - d. snacks between meals
 - e. video games
 - f. tv shows
 2. There is nothing wrong with these activities in themselves. So how do you know when a good pleasure becomes a sinful pleasure?
 - a. The activity is sinful in and of itself (ex. gossip, lust, anger, violence, gluttony)
 - b. The pleasure captures you. You become preoccupied with it. You obsess about it and can't wait to do it. I Cor. 6:12
 1. Every time you are bored and lonely, you turn on the tv.
 2. Every time you feel hurt or stressed, you eat.
 - c. As yourself three questions:
 1. Am I willing to sin to get this?
 2. Am I willing to sin if think I'm going to lose this?
 3. Do I turn to this as a "refuge" and comfort instead of going to God?
 - d. You hide the pleasure from others. If you are involved in things and don't want anyone to know about it, that should be a red flag that something is not right.
 - e. The pleasure steals you away from the good things you ought to be doing.
 1. You should do your homework, but you want to read a magazine instead.
 2. You know you should spend time with the Lord, but instead you call a friend on the phone.

IV. Action Steps

A. Stop and take time to reflect

1. What experiences have left you feeling truly restful and refreshed?
2. What pleasures leave you feeling restless and anxious?
3. Try to spend time in those pleasures that bring you rest.

B. Take a One-Week Fast

1. What forms of pleasure do you pursue impulsively and compulsively? Take a week break from them.
 - a. If you automatically watch TV, turn it off.
 - b. If you compulsively eat between meals, purpose not to.
2. Instead, look for ways that you can engage in the supreme pleasures of God and people.
 - a. The Great command tells us to love God and love our neighbor. Consider how you might be able to do that in a meaningful way.
 - b. Instead of spending so much time on the computer, or reading a book, or watching tv, why not purpose to spend time in prayer or with God and His

Word. How about sitting down and really talking to your siblings or your parents.

Conclusion: God wants us to enjoy pleasure. But pleasures that pull us away from God are clearly sins and make promises that leave us empty with negative consequences. Psalm 37:4