

Have Fun!

Joe Slater

“This is so much fun it must be sinful!” Have you said that, or heard someone else say it? Truly, sin can be pleasant (temporarily, at least – Hebrews 11:25); but that doesn’t mean all pleasure is sinful!

Let us avoid the mistaken notion that serving God means we must always be gloomy, depressed, and miserable. Our Lord is not a tyrant who takes morbid delight in denying us everything enjoyable. Rather, it is He “*who gives us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Timothy 6:17).

By nature, humans are especially inclined to have fun when we are young. This is as it should be! “*Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes*” (Ecclesiastes 11:9a). Solomon would have liked our adage: “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” Healthy development of body, mind, and spirit requires a generous portion of fun!

As with virtually all good things, fun can be abused and taken to extremes. Hear Solomon again in the latter part of the above-quoted verse: “*But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment*” (Ecclesiastes 11:9b). Yes, have fun; but realize that you are accountable to God!

Plenty of fun activities are perfectly compatible with being a faithful Christian. Others, however, are not – and it is entirely too easy to cross the line into sinful behavior, especially when it is fun. “*Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh*” (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

Even good, clean fun can become a god if we are not careful. Therefore Solomon continues exhorting in

the next verse: “*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth*” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Don’t let fun replace God!

Life contains more than enough dark, difficult episodes. Thank God for fun! May each of us receive the maximum enjoyment from a life that is in harmony with the will of God!

x x x x x x x

Saved by Grace; Saved to Serve

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ Matthew 25:38-40. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. James 1:27

Salvation is by grace through faith. It is impossible for us to save ourselves. We must be saved by God's grace, not by our own works. Of ourselves, we are spiritually dead and cannot possibly save ourselves (Eph 2:1-9).

But why are we saved? For what purpose are we saved?

We are saved that we might praise God's glorious grace (Eph 1:3-14; Eph 2:10; 1 Peter 4:10-11). We cause God to be praised by means of good deeds (Matt 5:16). We are not saved by our deeds; but if we fail to do such things as Jesus would do, we show that we have not really been born again. If our actions are not in line with those of Jesus, we are failing to show the family resemblance, and one cannot help but question the reality of our conversion.

We may disagree at times about the best way to serve, the best way to evangelize, or the best way to care for widows and orphans. But I hope that we will never question that these things must be done. Such loving actions are fundamental to Christ-like living. Without them we have missed the point of being in Christ; we have missed the purpose for which we were saved.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

The Significance of the Insignificant

Army Ranger Corporal Josh Hargis was injured in Afghanistan by a suicide bomber. As he lay apparently unconscious in his hospital room, an award ceremony was held awarding him the Purple Heart. At the conclusion of the ceremony Corporal Hargis raised his bandaged right arm in a salute. He was not unconscious after all!

When he entered the Army he was just another face in a crowd. But it became obvious that he was, and is, a very significant man.

The lives of the unlikely heroes (particularly in the Bible) impact us with this profound truth: God delights to work through weak, imperfect, little known, ordinary persons in order to showcase His power, wisdom and love.

I am sure that you can research the Bible and find some seemingly insignificant people who were actually very significant: Dorcas, Rahab, Micah, Rufus and his mother, and Timothy's mother and grandmother, to mention just a few.

How about where you worship? Can you think of some who were proved to be significant? It has been suggested that only about 10% of any congregation has the gift of evangelism, but 90% have the gift of service. When servants get involved doing even small, “insignificant” things with great love, lives will be changed.

Regardless of how insignificant you may perceive yourself to be, you are significant to God when you seek to trust & obey him faithfully. We can be confident that God will use even the most common parts of the body of Christ mightily for His glory & to grow his church.

--Dennis Russell (Santa Maria, CA)