

What Do You Enjoy?

Joe Slater

“This is so much fun it must be sinful!” Why do we even say things like that? I know, we’re usually not totally serious when we say it; but somewhere along the line we’ve been led to believe that we ought to avoid enjoying anything.

Humans tend to be extremists. On one extreme, hedonists say pleasure is the ultimate good. That ancient philosophy was resurrected in the 1960s and remains popular today: “If it feels good, do it!” Paul warned Timothy of perilous times ahead in which people would be *“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”* (2 Timothy 3:4). The Hebrews writer lauded the example of Moses, who *chose “to suffer affliction with the people of God”* rather than *“enjoy the passing pleasures of sin”* (11:25).

Yes, sin may be enjoyable – but that doesn’t mean everything enjoyable is sin! Snow is white, but not everything white is snow. Pleasure must never become our god; but treating all enjoyment as sin is just as extreme as hedonism! Paul told Timothy that God *“gives us all things richly to enjoy”* (1 Timothy 6:17). Does that sound like He is offended when we eat good-tasting food or wear warm clothing in the winter? Countless marriages have been devastated by the false notion that marital intimacy is, at best, a “necessary evil” to be tolerated but never enjoyed.

Some think spirituality comes from eating tiny portions of tasteless food, wearing rags, sleeping on hard ground, going without bathing, etc. Paul wrote, *“These things have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh”* (Colossians 2:23).

Don’t be an extremist! Enjoy life, but don’t let pleasure become your god.

Early Is Better

“Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1 ASV).

One verse in an old, often sung hymn that most of us know and love, says, “Early let us seek Thy favor; early let us do Thy will.” Some of us were fortunate to have been taught, from an early age, about the faith that God desires us to have. Paul told Timothy, *“And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (II Tim 3:15). Yes, blessed are we who have been taught from our youthful days.

Others, who come to learn of the faith later in life, are also blessed. *“Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near”* (Isa. 55:6). Paul told the Athenians that, *“They should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us”* (Acts 17:27).

We are told that early childhood, and the period up to 8 years of age, “is critical for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.” No doubt this is why God places so much emphasis on learning about things spiritual from an early age. But additionally, and significantly, is the fact that the earlier we learn about God the longer we have to serve and glorify Him.

The Bible places emphasis on the importance of our learning at an early age, but it also stresses the urgency, and responsibility that we have of instructing our children, beginning at an early age. *“And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up”* (Deut. 6:7). Specifically, this was issued to Israel, but I would suggest that it, relative to God’s will for Christians, has application for us today.

Thus, whether we have learned the faith from an early age or whether we came to a knowledge of the truth later in life, we have the God given responsibility to teach our children from an early age. As someone has said, “If we don’t teach our children to follow Christ, the world will teach them not to.” Shall we take that chance?

Early is not only better, it is imperative.

--Roy Allen Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)

Pure Love

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10, NIV).

In 1974 Ronnie Milsap’s song “Pure Love” became a hit. I liked it, and I laugh now as I listen to it and hear the things the song says make for pure love. As in many songs, the writer’s viewpoint of what love is comes from his self-centered nature.

Real love comes from the giving of self and what we hold dearest. In the words of the apostle Paul, *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres”* (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

True pure love does not always make the giver feel wonderful and special. Job endured much suffering without cursing God because of his love for God. Abraham was ready to offer his son Isaac because of his love for God. Hannah promised her son Samuel to God because of her love. None of those things was fun.

The greatest example of pure love is the love for mankind that Jesus showed as He hung on the cross and died for our sins. We can only imagine what leaving heaven and its glory to come here and seek and save the lost meant for Him. Christ left His godly form and became man. He suffered poverty, fatigue, loneliness, unwarranted rebukes, shame, mocking, beatings, betrayal, and death on a cruel cross for our sakes. That is pure love, a love that will never again be seen in this world.

How can we demonstrate that kind of love for our fellow man and for God? All we can do is walk side by side with Christ as He guides us and holds our hand in pure love.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)