

RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Recreation and entertainment includes all leisure time activities, sports, hobbies, and related activities. Where we go, what we do and think, who we are with, how we dress and talk are all related to the subject. This outline does not attempt to single out one activity and promote or condemn it. The information is balanced to cover many questions important to all Christians.

A Christian may make choices that govern his life based upon the following principles from the Bible:

1. Our minds should be occupied by things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. (Philippians 4:8-9). We should insure that whatever we do for entertainment fits this description or prompts that type of thoughts. This principle is echoed by the list of Christian graces in which we are to grow: virtue, temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, and love (2 Peter 1:5-11).
2. Our bodies should glorify God and not be harmed by anything we do. (I Cor. 6:20, I Cor. 3:16-17). Our social behavior should be a credit to God, even when we are having fun. Nothing should be done which harms or weakens the physical body or the emotions.
3. Our lives should be marked by moderation or temperance and this should be well known or obvious to all with whom we associate. (Philippians 4:5; I Cor. 9:25-27, Gal. 5:23, 2 Peter 1:6, etc.). Christians, as they love Christ, will live a moderate life. This will characterize their recreation and entertainment and will rule out any activity which is excessive, indulgent or extreme in thought, action, dress, etc. That a moderate or temperate Christian life excludes indulgence is often overlooked, but that which is done to satisfy a personal desire without regard to others is wrong.
4. Christians are to be happy, pleasant people. (Philippians 3:1, Thess. 5:16). This means that we should enjoy ourselves or be able to have fun. With respect to recreation and entertainment, it should make us happy when we are engaged in it and later when we think about it -- regardless of who knows about what we do. You can't be happy and ashamed. A truly happy experience is one we can rejoice over with our Christian friends at the time and later. Entertainment which does not fit this principle is not fit for Christian participation.
5. The lives of Christians are to be outstandingly spiritual. Instructions to be sober, righteous, holy, godly people are frequent in the Bible. (I Peter 1:15, Titus 2:12, I Peter 5:8, etc.) Our recreation should not conflict with a serious life which is morally pure and tuned to the will of God. Some actions might not lead one into drunkenness, fornication, murder, etc., but would destroy the holy, righteous nature of our lives by inducing coldness.

6. We are responsible for what we do, think, say, feel, etc. Gal. 6:7, Heb. 2:2, etc. This is true at school, work, worship and play. Christianity excludes irresponsible, "uninhibited" conduct which many people commit and then disavow. One who rolls in the floor, exhibits him or herself from a table, drinks from a shoe, speaks or moves in a dirty or vulgar manner in the frenzee of a "good party" is, regardless of what he says the next day, responsible for that behavior as well as for being in the atmosphere which provoked it.

7. We are responsible for the effects of our behavior on our brothers and sisters in Christ. (Rom. 14:13, 21; 15:1; 8:9-13; Gal. 6:2). We must not do anything to lead the weak into sin and must bear the burdens or help the weak. This will shape our attitude towards recreation and entertainment. Some borderline cases might be okay for a strong Christian, but their example might lead the weak into sin away from God.

8. We are to judge or prove all things and reject that which is evil. We can recognize good and evil by their fruits. I Thess. 5:21, Matt. 7:16-20. These fruits or signs of good and evil have been given in many passages, for example:

Fruits of the Spiritual life (Gal. 5:22-25)

Love	Goodness
Joy	Faith
Peace	Meekness
Longsuffering (Patience)	Temperance
Gentleness	Our recreation should be

described by these characteristics.

Fruits (or works) of the Flesh (Gal. 5:19-21)

Adultery	Variance
Fornication	Emulations
Uncleanness	Wrath
Lasciviousness	Strife
Idolatry	Seditions
Witchcraft	Heresies
Hatred	Envyings
	Murders
	Drunkenness
	Revellings
	and such like

They which do such will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Definitions of some of these fruits show that they may be related to some present recreation activities.

(a) Fornication (Webster) illicit sexual intercourse on the part of unmarried people. Jesus equates the desire or wish to commit the act to the act itself, Matthew 5:28.

(b) Uncleaness (Webster) The state of being foul, filthy, unchaste, obscene.

(c) Lasciviousness (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon) Wanton acts or manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females.

Wanton - unrestrained in morals, wild, undisciplined, immoral habits.

Unchaste - nor morally pure or virtuous, lewd (impure, indecent, immodest)

Indecent - unfit to be heard or looked on

Filthy - vile, obscene, nasty, impure.

(d) Revellings (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon) Feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry (riotous and noisy festivities).

9. A Christian must not do anything while doubting whether it is wrong or right. Rom. 14:23. If a type of recreation is doubtful or "border-line" in our minds and also to many other mature Christians, it is excluded without further question.

10. A Christian should not do anything which is similar to, associated with or otherwise related to things which are evil. (I Thess. 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil) (Gal. 5:21 and such like)...Thus we should choose our recreation so as not to do things which appear like evil or are similar to mental fornication, uncleanness, revelling, or lasciviousness.

11. We are not to associate with the world or love the world. Frequent contact with sin even though not as a participant weakens the moral fiber of even the strongest person. (I John 2:15, James 4:4, I Peter 2:11). One definition of world is "The customs, practices, and interests of man as social beings--in contrast to spiritual (Webster). Peter said do not allow sensuous desire, longings or eagerness to enjoy being in your life or it will weaken you. We should choose our associates and spend our time so that we will not be longing or desiring to do, say, see, etc. what the "crowd" is doing. "Bad company corrupts good morals" I Cor. 15:33.

12. The habits and manner of life of a true Christian will make him stand out or be unique. Titus 2:14, I Peter 2:9; Matt. 7:13. The inclination to be "in" with the majority of the world is very likely an inclination to be "out" with God.

CONCLUSIONS

Within the Christian life is true, mature happiness. Fellowship, rejoicing, joy, and pleasure play an important role within the context of a spiritual attitude.

The list of principles above is both positive and negative. The list is not complete. Many of these principles exclude outright or call into serious question such present day recreation or entertainment activities as: social drinking; petting; protracted necking; any immodest or unnecessarily revealing dress; dancing; "adult" movies which "entertain" with plots based on lust, nudity, sexual immorality, sadism; magazines and books which "entertain" with plots based on lust, nudity, sexual immorality, sadism, etc.; and "wild parties". The principles also apply to our attitudes toward our own bodies and other peoples; our general behavior, speech, etc.

Based on these principles I conclude that drinking, petting and protracted necking, dancing, immodest dress and speech, movies, books, and magazines exploiting immorality and nudity are not in best interest of the Christian life. Further, I conclude that clubs, organizations, or businesses which maintain, sponsor, or support these activities are undesirable for the membership of any one Christian.

After the language "No" alienates and "not in the best interest" is weak enough to be ignored. The language of many of the scriptures above cannot be ignored; however, many seek to "get by" -- stay right on the "border line" -- be as worldly as possible and just escape condemnation. Those with this attitude should remember that the Bible doesn't urge Christians to just "get by" -- it urges Christians to be perfect. Matt. 5:48; Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:12; Col. 3:14; 2 Tim. 3:17, etc.)

Anyone who wishes to ignore the teaching to grow toward perfection should remember the words of Peter (I Peter 4:18-19) "And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is "right".

(New American Standard Bible)