

Is God Against Fun?

radiate

Settling In: *About 10-20 minutes*

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.
or
- 4) Lead into a time of worship by singing or reflecting on the hymn: "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee." Words and music at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/j/o/joyful.htm>

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Opener: *About 10 minutes*

- 1) How many words for "fun" can you think of?
 - a) A few to start with: pleasure, joy, entertained...
 - b) What are some of the connotations (feelings and ideas in addition to the definition) of these words?
- 2) What's so good about fun?
 - a) This is assuming, of course, that your idea of fun is good for yourself and others and doesn't include things like harming small animals or frightening pensioners.
 - b) Ask for volunteers to share what they like to do for fun. Ask them to explain why it is fun.

You may not have time to ask every question in the study. Also, some of the discussion questions may not be appropriate depending on who is at the home group on a particular night. That's okay! We've intentionally given you more material than you can usually use.

Mini-teach: *About 10 minutes* **Is fun okay?**

- 1) "Fun" is not usually the first word that springs to most people's minds when speaking of Christians.
 - a) Many people hear "church folk" and think of dour expressions and dowdy clothes worn by serious and sober people.
 - b) Worse yet, Christians are thought of as people who disapprove of others having any fun.
- 2) However, fun and pleasure are creations of God.
 - a) Even apart from the human emotion, we see fun and pleasure throughout creation.
 - b) Can you think of examples of fun and playfulness in creation?
- 3) We also recognize there is a "dark" side to pleasure and fun.
 - a) When pleasure is divorced from goodness things start going wrong.
 - b) When pleasure is divorced from responsibility we become prone to what the Bible calls "sin".
 - c) Sin occurs when we pursue our pleasure in spite of God's disapproval of our actions. The actions that God disapproves of are most often things that harm others and ourselves.

These comments are mainly directed toward folks outside the church...addressing common stereotypes of Christians.

Hopefully, those of us who are believers know that godly people are often the most "alive" and "fun" people we know!

I was thinking of my own Westie puppy!

If you like, you can lead into a discussion by asking: "How would you define 'sin'?"

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Discussion 1: *About 15 minutes*

Pleasure is a gift from God.

"You make the path of life known to me. Complete joy is in your presence. Pleasures are by your side forever." (Psa. 16:11, GWORD)

- 1) According to this verse, what is the source of pleasure?
- 2) Describe all the characteristics of pleasure mentioned in this verse.
- 3) What is the difference between pleasure and joy?
- 4) What might be some characteristics of fun that you think God would approve of?
- 5) What are some things that make fun "go wrong"? What are some characteristics of some kinds of fun that would displease God?
- 6) Have you ever been with a group when the fun started to "go wrong"? What did you do? Can you think of any ways to deal with these situations without offending God and unnecessarily offending your friends?
- 7) A recent survey of young people in the UK indicated that the most common goal in life was to "be happy"? What do you think about this? What do you think this says about most people?

Blessedness is another word related to joy. However, a person can be in fact "blessed" but not experience it (see Mt 5:3-11). When we do experience blessedness we often call it joy: the sense of well-being that comes from the experience of God's favour.

Discussion 2: *About 15 minutes*

The ability to enjoy pleasure is a gift from God.

- 1) "There is nothing better for people to do than to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in their work. I saw that even this comes from the hand of God. Who can eat or enjoy themselves without God?" (Eccl. 2:24-25, GWORD)
 - a) How is God involved in our pleasure and fun?
 - b) Someone has said, "Saints are never bored." Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?
- 2) "There is a tragedy that I have seen under the sun. It is a terrible one for mortals. God gives one person riches, wealth, and honor so that he doesn't lack anything he wants. Yet, God doesn't give him the power to enjoy any of them. Instead, a stranger enjoys them. This is pointless and is a painful tragedy." (Eccl. 6:1-2, GWORD)
 - a) Have you ever known anyone who seemed to have all they needed to be happy and yet seemed to lack the ability to enjoy it all?
 - b) What do you think went wrong? What's missing?
 - c) What does this teach us about pursuing pleasure apart from God?

It would seem, then, that people with a right relationship with God would have the greatest ability to enjoy life.

While this may be a bit of an over-statement, it tends to be true that people with a right relationship with God do not experience much boredom.

The ability to enjoy a thing is not inherent in merely possessing it. On the other hand, it doesn't seem to be necessary to possess something in order to enjoy it (think of the sea, parks, etc.).

Closer:

- Make a plan to have some fun together as a home group. Consider doing it in place of meeting for the next home group time.