

The Party Life

Disputes over exactly which “fun” activities we can or cannot participate in ignore a deeper principle that ought to guide our decision making.

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:1-3).



One of the questions that new Christians struggle with in our hedonistic culture is deciding which social activities we can safely participate in without jeopardizing our faith. Some older Christians answer the challenge by compiling a long list of activities that we absolutely must avoid as sinful (on pain of discipline), while others argue that our freedom in Christ gives us liberty to participate in almost anything. How can we resolve this conflict?

As with most questions of this nature, a Biblical answer requires an understanding of a deeper spiritual truth, one that Peter addresses in this text.

Notice that Peter contrasts two motivations: “the lusts of men” versus “the will of God.” The former is characterized by two types

of behavior: *sexual profligacy* (“lewdness, lusts”) and *alcohol* (“drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties”). The final item in the list (“abominable idolatries”) refers to the cultic worship of the pagans that often combined both elements in a display of wild debauchery. The exact details are not as important as the impulse that drives them—fleshly appetites. When animal passions are the dominant influence in our decision-making, we become creatures of lust, not God.

In contrast to that lifestyle, Peter advocates living “for the will of God,” and offers Jesus Christ as the ultimate example. Jesus devoted His life to honoring His Father’s will in everything. His was a life of service and sacrifice, even to the point of suffering a gruesome death in behalf of others. Jesus was not an ascetic—consider His role in a wedding feast (Jn. 2:1-10) and in various banquets (Lk. 5:29-30; 14:1-24; etc.)—but He was careful to maintain a lifestyle of sobriety and self-restraint. There was nothing in His behavior that risked Him being labelled a party animal. His lifestyle was pointed in an entirely different direction from that of the “fun” crowd, and everyone who observed Him knew it.

So, when Peter urges us to “arm yourselves also with the same mind,” he is calling us to a life that is dominated by an other-worldly frame of reference. Our lives should reflect the same kind of sobriety and self-restraint that Jesus displayed, not because we’re being careful to follow a checklist of approved behaviors, but because we have a different purpose in life. The impulses of our fleshly appetites are in submission to a mind that is pursuing a greater prize, a more lofty goal.

The party life that defines so many in our generation may be fun for a while, but in the end, it will leave us empty and depressed. No amount of titillating thrills can satisfy the longing for purpose for which God created us. Once we understand this fundamental truth and align our thinking with it, the choice of which behaviors are appropriate in our lives will become much easier to make.

The lusts of men or the mind of Christ. Really now, is it all that difficult to decide?

— David King