

THE PROBLEM OF PLEASURE

“Pleasure is God's invention. All the research of hell has not produced one.” C.S.Lewis

The problem of pain has concerned thousands of individuals down through history. But great thinkers such as G. K. Chesterton have been equally fascinated by its opposite – the *problem of pleasure*. Just as believers often face the challenge of explaining pain and suffering, should not atheists and skeptics feel obliged to explain the origin of pleasure?

Shallow materialism cannot account for the wonder and delight of basic human behaviors such as sex, sensory pleasures and artistic creations. Think of how colorless, and one-dimensional this world would be if God had not created us male and female. Some animals simply split in half in order to reproduce – why not humans? The same God who created the human body designed it for pleasure; every gland, organ, muscle, cell and limb so testify.

When God created the hand's marvelous versatility, a voice box for laughter and singing plus a beautifully shaped human body, He pronounced them “very good”(Genesis 1:31). God wants us to enjoy them all -light, color, sex, laughter, music, love, fun with family and friends– that's His nature.

In his book Screwtape Letters, CS Lewis tells how Satan reluctantly admits that, “Pleasure is God's invention. All the research of hell has not produced one.” Best-selling author, Philip Yancey, clarifies this truth: “Evils greatest triumph may be its success in portraying Christianity as an enemy of pleasure when, in fact, Christianity accounts for pleasure's source. To credit Satan with good gifts is not only false but it borders on blasphemy.”

We all have certain God given desires such as hunger, sleep and sex. These normal functions help maintain life. Not evil in themselves, difficulty arises when they are misused and controlled by the self-centered nature of humanity. Hunger is normal, but gluttony is unhealthy! Sleep is natural, but laziness is shameful! Sex is a precious gift from God but misused it can lead to heart ache and disillusionment.

Let us understand clearly that pleasure, in itself, is not sinful. What we call sinful are often good things perverted, or being used in the wrong way. Long- faced religion does not reflect New Testament Christianity. God's laws such as the 10 Commandments are not there to punish us but to protect us; because so many of our problems are self-inflicted. When rightly understood, there is nothing dull or colorless about the Christ-centered life. The enemies of Christ who rejected his teaching never accused him of being a bore. Instead, they thought him too dynamic to be safe; so they crucified him between two thieves.

Jesus took the 10 Commandments and added them up into two positive directives: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart....Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:29-31).

