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What To Do With Our Time

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My grandmother once told me that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” and my grandmother was most always right. If you were among those who listen to me preach on a regular basis you would find that I say a lot about my grandmother. She was a veritable storehouse of illustrations and information. She was a woman who loved God and godly people. Though there was always a place for hard work (she couldn’t abide with laziness) she knew how important it was for a young boy to learn how to laugh and enjoy life. Solomon would have understood my grandmother. He said, “A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken” (Prov. 15:13) and again, “A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones” (Prov. 17:22). It is always to be understood that such merriment is to be kept in proper perspective with regard to the expenditure of both time and money.

Solomon taught, “He who loves pleasure will become a poor man” (Prov. 21:17). Excess in most anything is not good. Recreation is an important part of our lives but it must be governed by certain principles. Here a few questions that I found from some long-forgotten source that can help you as you determine how you spend your leisure time.

1. Is it right?
2. Do godly people generally do it?
3. Will it interfere with my family, school, or work?
4. Will it produce good or bad habits?
5. Will it lead into the places that are questionable?
6. Will my example and influence be injurious to others?
7. Will I associate with questionable people to be amused?
8. Can I afford the cost of time and money?
9. Do I have other obligations that should be paid first?
10. Is this amusement building or destroying my family?
11. Do I spend more time being amused than worshiping?
12. Would the Lord be amused by what I am amused?
13. Would my actions and deeds during this amusement please Jesus?
14. Would I be able to be taken to be with the Lord if he came while I was being amused?

Don't Quit

Bubba Garner

The first time I tried to march and play drums at the same time, I was terrible. When I concentrated on playing a steady beat, I marched out of step; when I focused on marching in line, I played off beat. After the first week, I went to the band director and told him that marching band was not for me. I’ll never forget what he said to me: “Bubba, I didn’t think you were a quitter.”

Quitting is easy because it involves no effort or commitment. We try hobbies and crafts for a while, and if we don’t enjoy them as much as we thought we would, we toss them aside and move on to something else. Even when we make a substantial investment in this interest—equipment, lessons, accessories—we will often give up at the first sign of failure.

If we're not careful, we will allow this attitude to carry over into our spiritual lives. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus described a person who "hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matt. 13:20-21). It is not so difficult to become a Christian; the difficulty is in being a Christian. There will be trying times and challenging circumstances that will test your faith. It is not an easy road. It is not for quitters.

What is needed on this journey is an attitude of perseverance. I offer these simple suggestions the next time you encounter the temptation to quit the Lord.

Trust in Him who will not leave you. Faith is not just believing in the existence of God; it involves putting your complete confidence and trust in Him. He has promised, "I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). Even in the valley of the shadow of death, He is with you. Instead of abandoning Him at the first sign of trouble, have confidence that He will lead you through the difficulties and give you the strength to endure them. Trust Him.

Stay committed to your mission. Jesus did. He came to the earth with a divine purpose and never lost sight of His goal. He came to do His Father's will. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. When the devil tempted Him to forsake His mission, He said, "Begone, Satan" (Matt. 4:10)! When Peter tried to stand in His way, He said, "Get behind Me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23)! As far as His mission was concerned, Jesus had a one-track mind.

When Paul wrote his second epistle to the young preacher, he encouraged him to "be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). Timothy was to expect trials and setbacks, frustrations and anxieties in his work. But he was to endure them with patience and persistence and not give up. At the end of the letter, the apostle also wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Your race will have a last mile, too. Make sure you're around to finish the mission you started.

Focus on the finish. Heaven is for those who have endured, not for those who have given up. After describing the city with foundations prepared for His people, the Lord said, "He who overcomes will inherit these things" (Rev. 21:7). The road of the First Century Christian was not an easy one. They were mistreated, tortured, and some were killed. But they didn't quit. They stayed focused on the reward that awaited them.

Don't forget where you're going. The devil makes his living by distracting and discouraging the people of God to the point that they begin to value this life more than the next. Never forget: heaven will surely be worth it all.

"Don't quit when the tide is the lowest, for it's just about to turn;
don't quit over doubts and questions, for there's something you may learn.
Don't quit when the night is darkest, for it's just a while 'til dawn;
don't quit when you've run the farthest, for the race is almost won.
Don't quit when the hill is steepest; for your goal is almost nigh;
don't quit, for you're not a failure until you fail to try" (Jill Wolf).

Fight the good fight, finish the course, keep the faith, and whatever you do, don't quit.
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