

## THE CHRISTIAN AND RECREATION

By William S. Deal  
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Recreation of some kind is essential to the physical and mental well-being of everyone. Some older people fail to recognize this, thinking recreation is for youth alone, and as a consequence suffer many ills which proper recreation would go far toward helping to relieve. Recently Dr. Paul Dudley White, the heart specialist who attended President Eisenhower during his illness, pointed out that a "five mile walk will do more good to an unhappy but healthy adult than all the medicine and psychology in the world." Proper exercise puts a person in far better shape for the stresses of life and beyond doubt lengthens life itself.

Ministers, clerical and office people, and other white-collar workers often fail to get the proper recreation needed. From this lack many times stem the nervous tensions and emotional difficulties which beset many of them. The minister who spends too much time in his study and about the home and gets too little exercise is likely to suffer from depressive moods which may in turn even effect his ministry to his people. He may be inclined to see the dark side of everything, become melancholy, and sometimes even denunciatory in his preaching. Many school teachers and office people would be much more cheerful and easier to get along with if they had more of the proper kind of recreation. Don't mistake the writer; recreation will never do what sanctification does in the human personality. But proper recreation will in many instances help the human infirmities, brighten the outlook on life, and make the Christian a more cheerful person.

The Apostle Paul advised Timothy that "bodily exercise profiteth little" (I Tim. 4:8) or "for a little time" (Alford). "Exercise for the body is not useless" (Weymouth). While the apostle is contrasting the matter of exercise unto godliness as against the small profit to be gained in physical recreation he does not condemn the latter.

The whole field of amusements may well be brought under the head of recreation. To attempt to ignore this as no part of the Christian life is to refuse to face the facts. God certainly intended that men should have proper physical and mental exercise as evidenced by the fact that Adam was to dress the Garden of Eden and keep it clean, even in his unfallen state. Clarke remarks of un-fallen man on this verse: "God gave him work to do ... for the structure of his body, as well as of his mind, plainly proves that he was never intended for a merely contemplative life."

The mind never works more quickly and productively than when relaxed by rest or proper recreation. For example, oxygen is an absolute essential to the brain. Most of us are shallow breathers, hence the brain is robbed of much of its needed oxygen and thinking is therefore dulled. If one can do nothing more than take ten deep breaths of fresh air occasionally it is surprising what this will do to tone one up mentally and emotionally.

Christians face the problem of what kind of recreation and amusement they may engage in. There are extremes in this as well as every other field of activity. Some educational leaders complain that modern sports have become a hindrance rather than a help to our youth, in that only a small percentage are active in participation while millions just look on and receive no benefit.

As Christians we refrain from attendance at many places of amusements and restrict our children from such places. This is all proper and good. But we owe it to our children to provide for them some kind of proper

recreation. Many frustrated young people owe part of their condition to the fact that they have had no proper outlet for emotional and physical energies. These pentup energies have either been dissipated by wrong means, bringing emotional disturbances in their wake, or allowed to degenerate into a rebellious attitude in the individual. Sometimes the young people take the attitude that the Christian way is too strict and rebel completely against it, going all-out for the world and its attractions. Not always could this condition have been prevented by more thoughtful parents and ministers, but in many cases it could well have been.

There are emotionally immature persons among us who have never grown out of their teens because they were too cramped while in that period. They manifest it by many means. For example, when a woman of fifty still insists on dressing like a teen-ager she is only expressing a desire which was never fully lived out in youth. Men of forty and fifty who put all kinds of showy gadgets on their cars are only expressing teen-ager repressions. And when church board members and other officials take a whining self-defensive attitude and act the part of a youngster when under pressure, it is the same principle of emotional immaturity. Granted, in some instances it is "pure, unadulterated carnality", but in many cases things done are not from an impure heart but from immature emotions and lack of a properly balanced outlook on life and of an understanding of mature reactions to circumstances.

The youth camps with their emphasis upon Bible training, evangelism, and a properly guarded recreational program may serve a most useful purpose for young Christians. Many young married couples find these camps very enjoyable and often the older leaders and instructors get equally as much out of them. The matter of proper recreation must ever be guarded and we must never allow the shift to go from spiritual to recreational emphasis. To do so would be to destroy their usefulness and defeat their very purpose.

We as Christians must not hide our heads in the sand and refuse to recognize our modern day problems with youth. Ours is an age of much more leisure than many older people had in youth and we must reach and save our youth. It is true that spiritual-minded young people still get all they need to keep them going spiritually out of a good prayer meeting and a Sunday service on fire for the Lord. But this does not take care of the needs of the "outward man" and some wholesome forms of recreation will not only do much to help them physically, but will also add considerably to their usefulness in the Kingdom of God. Let me say to youth in closing this section, to drink moderately at the fountain of recreation. Anything pushed always to its extremes destroys its greatest values.

### STOP A MINUTE

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may seem the next thing that needs to be done, STOP A MINUTE! Take a minute to think about your Church and your duty to the Church. Ask yourself what kind of a Church your Church would be if every Church Member were just like you. Take a minute to ask yourself whether something could be done about it. For instance, how about a decision, right now, to be a REGULAR attendant at Church?

Has each Lord's Day morning found you worshipping in the House of God? START ATTENDING CHURCH REGULARLY NEXT SUNDAY!

— Wesleyan Methodist

The King's Highway