



JOHNSON AVENUE
Church of Christ
WHERE *God's Family* BUILDS ETERNAL HOMES

A Spiritual Encouragement Message

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Reflection on Recreation

by Andrew Lemus

One of the greatest blessings of living in San Diego is our beautiful beaches. From the beautiful large sandy beaches of Coronado to the calm and family friendly beaches of La Jolla, it is such a blessing to be able to disconnect, unplug, chill out, and unwind with the family at the beach. Catching sand crabs, looking for shells, eating a bunch of yummy snacks, breathing in that nice ocean air, enjoying the sounds of the waves, and soaking up those rays from the sun sure is medicine for the soul. With the busy, hardworking, sacrificial, errand filled schedules we fill our days with it is appropriate for us to take a moment, catch our breath, and rest up to do it all over again.



The idea of taking some time off to unplug, rest, and get refreshed isn't foreign to the scriptures. You can see it introduced in the very beginning of the Bible as God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Genesis 2:2). You also see it in the New Testament with Jesus and the Apostles. Tired, hungry, and exhausted after going house to house to proclaim repentance to the people and performing many awesome miracles, they jumped in a boat to get away for some much needed recreation time (Mark 6:7-13; 31-32). The picture I have in my mind is Jesus and His Apostles pulling into a quiet cove, relaxing in the sunshine, enjoying the water, fishing for their dinner, and enjoying a meal together around a fire. Can you imagine rest and recuperation with Jesus? What a blessing that must have been for all of them.

Not all recreation is equal though. What I mean is that there are many ways we can unplug, unwind, and disconnect from the plow we continually push. There are some recreational activities that are beneficial to our lives and there are others that are not. Fortunately for us, we have a standard and a mirror that we can compare them to in an effort to see if they are good or bad, godly or evil. So as we set out to unplug by going to a place, picking up a device, turning on a show, or doing something else

to unwind, let us reflect on the recreation we participate in to see if it is spiritually beneficial or not. Here are a few questions to consider.

Does it lure and entice your desires to do evil? Watching a movie or show on some streaming service, cable device, or at the theater is a way many of us like to unplug and unwind. Engaging in the “willing suspension of disbelief” as we get caught up in a great plot and story line is a great way to rest. The reality is that some of these shows have content in them that lures and entices our flesh and, like a carrot in front of a donkey, leads us to think or even act on impure, ungodly, and wicked things. It isn't just what we watch either, its places we go, people we see, and other devices we use to unplug that have the potential to lure us to do evil. There isn't much relaxing when you are having to do the work of resisting and fighting temptation! So as you reflect on your recreation, ask yourself, does it lure and entice your desires to do evil? If so, find a new way to rest (Philippians 4:8).

Is it a work of the flesh? While this might be a little more obvious, we still need to take a moment to make sure our rest and recreation time are not worldly, fleshly, and ungodly. As I write this article many students are unplugging from their studies by heading to various cities to fill up in debauchery. It's not just youngsters either, there are people of all ages that choose sin as their method of detachment and rest. We should be asking ourselves as we look to unwind, is this a work of the flesh? Am I doing something that the Lord plainly states that I shouldn't or am I neglecting to do something God has told me to do? So many in their “rest” stop praying and worshipping their Lord, this is a work of the flesh family. We should never take time off from being God's children, nor should we ever use that time off to be of the devil.

Does it weaken my influence as a Christian? Paul the Apostle is a remarkable example of a Christian that worked diligently to not put obstacles and hindrances in the path of his brothers and sisters in Christ. He was focused on becoming all things to all men, even sacrificing his own desires and wants in an effort to serve the body and keep it unified (1Corinthians 9:12-22). There are recreational activities that some of us can participate in but others cannot because to them it is sin (Romans 14:23). Isn't it better to keep your church family and a good name than to enjoy rest that might bring harm to both (Proverbs 22:1)? Unfortunately, social media makes this task even more difficult as we post activities we are involved in that our brethren can see and be discouraged by. This is a hard one, but before you jump into some form of recreation, take some time to consider your brethren and those in the world by asking if the activity will weaken your influence as a Christian.

Is Jesus ok with this? As Christians we live in the presence of our almighty king, Jesus Christ. He told us that “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Paul made the point to those in Athens that “He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:27-28). Keeping these humbling truths at the forefront of our minds as we live our lives and as we

enjoy our times of recreation can motivate us to choose what is good. Is Jesus, as He stands right beside me, ok with what I am looking at on my smart phone? Is He ok with the movie I am watching? Is He ok with how I am spending my money? Is He ok with me being in this place? Let us not be like the world, like those that willfully forget who their God is so that they can, with seared consciences, participate in the unfruitful deeds of evil. Let us be those in God's household, that look to our Father and Lord to make sure our behavior is in harmony with His will (1Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 5:1-21).

I really want to be on that beach with Jesus! Resting, eating food, and enjoying the best company this world has ever seen. Unfortunately, we are going to have to cross the Jordan or have Him return for us to enjoy that eternal rest (Hebrews 4:7-11). We all need to be cautious though, that what we are using our time of recreation and rest here on earth to do will not cause us to lose that eternal rest we all long for. Let us make sure we are reflecting on our recreational activities, so that we can all enjoy that rest together.