

## Is Being Good Boring?

I was listening to one of our seasonal cds this past week. I was singing along to Everclear's 1998 version of "Santa Baby" in which the singer tries to convince Santa that he was good enough to receive some amazing presents. Though I've heard this song hundreds of times, I was struck by a line that hadn't really caught my attention before. "Think of all the fun I missed...next year I could be just as good if you check off my Christmas list."

No wonder so few people today long to be good. Being good is boring. To be good you have to miss all the fun. Why would I want to miss so much fun all year long just to get better presents one day of the year? More importantly, why would I want to miss so much fun all my life just to get heaven in eternity?

No doubt, some will compare the length of life versus eternity. I've often considered the story of Lazarus and the rich man in **Luke 16:19-31**. Lazarus was poor, destitute, sick for his entire life. I have no doubt that was no fun. On the other hand, the rich man was dressed well and fared opulently for his life. I'm sure he had more fun than Lazarus. However, when both men died, the tables were turned. The rich man was subject to torment for eternity, while Lazarus was comforted in Abraham's bosom. So, is it worth it to trade a life of fun in for a few years of boring in order to have an eternity of comfort? Sure. I'd rather be in Lazarus's shoes than the rich man's for sure.

However, Lazarus's life was not awful simply because he obeyed God. It wasn't boring because he wanted to be good. There was more to it than that. Being good does not equal boring. Becoming a Christian does not mean being doomed to a life of misery, bypassing fun, while the world gets to indulge. Billy Joel was simply wrong when he tried to convince Virginia to come out, saying, "They say there's a heaven for those who will wait. Some say it's better but I say it ain't. I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints; the sinners are much more fun...you know that only the good die young." This just isn't true. And I think it is kind of an odd anthem coming from a man who has had three failed marriages, been in and out of rehab centers for substance and alcohol abuse problems, and has even tried to commit suicide at least once.<sup>1</sup> That doesn't sound like a whole lot of fun to me.

Please don't misunderstand. Many pursuits of the flesh provide some fun and pleasure. I have no doubt that some people have had some fleshly pleasure and fun while pursuing drunkenness, immorality, and greed. As Christians, we turn away from this kind of fun. But that doesn't mean that the alternative is boring misery.

The alternative to the momentary fun and pleasure of pursuing the works of the flesh is actually pursuing lasting fulfillment and contentment of the fruit of the Spirit. Consider the contrast between **Galatians 5:19-21** and **Galatians 5:22-23**. Certainly, the works of the flesh may provide some moments of fun with their sexual immorality, impurity, and sensuality. But the fruit of the Spirit is love. Do not confuse the two; they are not the same. A few moments of sexual pleasure may provide some fun for a few minutes, but it is only true love that provides meaningful connection. Certainly, the works of the flesh may provide some temporary fun with their drunkenness and wild parties. But the fruit of the Spirit is peace and joy. A few hours of wasted bliss may provide some fun for a few minutes, but it is only God given joy and peace that provide lasting fulfillment. Certainly, the works of the flesh may provide a momentary payoff with its jealousy, fits of anger, and rivalries. But the fruit of the Spirit is kindness and goodness. A vengeful explosion of anger and jealousy can certainly make you feel good for a few minutes, maybe even hours, but it is only the goodness and kindness that comes from God that brings about enduring contentment.

Spend some time reading the gospels and ask yourself if Jesus led a boring life? Read **Acts**. Did the apostles lead boring lives? Did being good equal being miserable? No. No doubt there was strife and turmoil as folks attacked and persecuted Christians. But look at **Acts 2:46-47**. Do these look like bored, miserable people? Of course not. These are people that learned about lasting fun meted out through relationships in Christ. You don't have to get drunk to have fun. You don't have to pursue immorality to develop deep, meaningful relationships. You don't have to follow the flesh to enjoy life. In fact, just the opposite is true.

As **Galatians 6:7-8** demonstrates, when you sow to the flesh and pursue the fun offered by the flesh, in the long run you will only gain corruption. You will be left empty, wasted. You will be in constant pursuit of that fun hit, hoping it will provide something that lasts. But it never will. Only when you pursue the things of the Spirit will you find what lasts. Only then will you find life what is true life and can be eternally enjoyed.

No, being good isn't boring. Following Christ is not a life of misery. It is the only life truly worth living.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy\\_Joel#Marriages.2C\\_relationships.2C\\_and\\_family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Joel#Marriages.2C_relationships.2C_and_family)

--Edwin L. Crozier