

# WAY TO SHILOH

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## **The Danger of Hedonism**

A particular danger in our time, especially to the young, is the love of pleasure. Youth is the time when our passions are the strongest - and like unruly children, cry most loudly for indulgence. Youth is the time when we have generally most health and strength: death seems far away, and to enjoy ourselves in this life seems everything. Youth is the time when most people have few earthly cares or anxieties to take up their attention. And all these things help to make young men think of nothing so much as pleasure. "I serve lusts and pleasures:" that is the true answer many a young man should give, if asked, "Whose servant are you?"

Young man, time would fail me if I were to tell you all the fruits this love of pleasure produces, and all the ways in which it may do you harm. Why should I speak of partying, feasting, drinking, gambling, theatregoing, dancing and the like? Few are to be found who do not know something of these things by bitter experience. And these are only examples. All things that give a feeling of excitement for the moment, - all things that drown thought, and keep the mind in a constant whirl, - all things that please the senses and gratify the flesh; - these are the sort of things that have mighty power at your time of life, and they owe their power to the love of pleasure. Be on your guard. Be not like those of whom Paul speaks, "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4).

Remember what I say: if you would cleave to earthly pleasures, - these are the things which murder souls. There is no surer way to get a seared conscience and a hard impenitent heart, than to give way to the desires of the flesh and mind. It seems to be nothing at first, but its impact is in the long run.

Consider what Peter says: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2: 11). They destroy the souls peace, break down its strength, lead it into hard captivity, and make it a slave.

Consider what Paul says: "Put to death your members which are on the earth" (Col. 3:5). "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its passions and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). "But I discipline my body, and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. 9:27). Once the body was a perfect mansion of the soul; - now it is all corrupt and disordered, and needs constant watching. It is a burden to the soul, - not a helpmeet; a hindrance, - not an assistance. It may become a useful servant but it is always a bad master.

Consider again, the words of Paul: "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts" (Rom. 13: 14). "These," says Leighton, "are the words, the very reading of which so wrought with Augustine, that from a vile and immoral young man he turned and became a faithful servant of Jesus Christ." (Augustine 354-430 A.D. was the famous Bishop of Hippo. See this account of his famous conversion to Christ in the classic Confessions, Book Eight, Chapter XII).

*Young man, I wish this might be the case with you.*

Remember, again, if you will cleave to earthly pleasures, they are all unsatisfying, empty and vain. Like the locusts of the vision in Revelation they seem to have crowns on their heads: but like the same locusts, you will find they have stings, - real stings, -in the tails. All is not gold that glitters. All is not good that tastes sweet. All is not real pleasure that pleases for a time.

Go and take your fill of earthly pleasures if you will, - you will never find your heart satisfied with them. There will always be a voice within, crying, like the horse-leech in Proverbs 30: 15, "Give, give!" There is an empty place there, which nothing but God can fill. You will find, as Solomon did by experience, that earthly pleasures are but a vain show, - vanity and vexation of spirit, - whited sepulchres, fair to look at on the outside, full of ashes and corruption within. Better be wise in time. Better write "poison" on all earthly pleasures. The most lawful of them must be used with moderation. All of them are soul-destroying if you give them your heart.

## Sexual immorality

And here I will not shrink from warning you and all young men and women to remember the seventh commandment; to beware of adultery and fornication, of all impurity of every kind. I fear there is often a lack of plain speaking on this part of God's law. But when I see how prophets and Apostles have dealt with this subject, - when I observe the open way in which the Reformers denounce it, - when I see the number of young men, who walk in the footsteps of those in the Bible who fell into this sin, - I for one cannot, with a good conscience, hold my peace. I doubt whether the world is any better for the excessive silence, which prevails upon this commandment. For my own part, I feel it would be false and unscriptural delicacy, in addressing young people, not to speak of that which is pre-eminently the young person's sin."

The breach of the seventh commandment is the sin above all others, that, as Hosea says, "takes away the heart" (Hos. 4: 11). It is the sin that leaves deeper scars upon the soul than any sin that a man can commit. It is a sin that slays its thousands in every age, and has overthrown not a few of the saints of God in time past. Lot, and Samson, and David are fearful proofs. It is the sin that man dares to smile at, and smoothes over under the names of entertainment, weakness and wildness. But it is the sin that the devil peculiarly rejoices over, for he is the "unclean Spirit;" and it is the sin that God peculiarly abhors, and declares He "will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

Young person, I urge you, "flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18) if you value life. "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6). Flee the occasions of it, -the company of those who might draw you into it, -the places where you might be tempted to it. Read what our Lord says about it in Matthew 5:28. Be like holy Job: "Make a covenant with your eyes" (Job 31: 1). Flee talking of it. It is one of the things that ought not so much as to be named. You cannot handle tar and not be defiled. Flee the thoughts of it; resist them, mortify them, pray against them, make any sacrifice rather than give way. Imagination is the hotbed where this sin is too often hatched. Guard your thoughts' and there is little fear about your deeds.

Consider the caution I have been giving. If you forget all else, do not let this be forgotten.

*J C Ryle*

## The snare of pleasure loving

To be engaging in legitimate leisure in moderation is not the subject of my warning, but to engage in wanton lasciviousness is giving yourself up to, and allowing yourself to be controlled by, base desires which are greed driven. "Please yourself" is a term of semi-derision, and it's not hard to see why. This is a selfish pursuit, whipping up sensuality, feelings, emotions, and lusts by the means of all sorts of 'vehicles' used for the purpose. The misuse of things like music, dancing, sexual relations, substances like drugs or even simply food or drink and not forgetting the covetous accumulation of money possessions and power etc. Pleasure seekers are ruled by their feelings, and rely on these 'vehicles' to regulate their mood, and then depending on them, finding themselves unable to do without, held to ransom by what they ran after, locked into the vehicle which will no longer take them where they want to go. These things are poor medicine and will get weaker the more they are over indulged. This amounts to an over emphasis on imagination and the fleshly affections of the heart, giving an unbalanced thought life and leading to a 'see-saw' of feelings and swinging moods from extremes of high and low. By bombarding the senses with worldliness, you are

misusing them and re-setting them. The world will seem dull, as if you had just shone a bright light into your eyes and then the natural colours of things had bleached out for a while. The person who does this is seeking his/her satisfaction and happiness in all the low things of this physical world and it cannot ultimately satisfy the soul. Pleasure seeking is dangerously deceitful. It seems to promise much happiness but it doesn't achieve its aim, only *short term pleasure, long term pain*. Purpose to be a pleasure seeker, and you have opened the door to temptation and sin, and are inflaming the desires that rule you. It is a fire, and hedonism feeds and fans it into a blaze you will find impossible to control.

Proverbs 6.27 'Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?'

2 Timothy 3.1 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.'

## **The Death of True Love:**

Pleasure loving is the seedbed of promiscuity. The sexually promiscuous person jumps from one relationship, 'fling', 'one night stand', or 'encounter', to another, all the time watering down the possibility of any real feeling of lasting love. So, true love slips out the back door of their lives unnoticed because they think they're having so much fun. It is only later they realize this policy may have consequences when they cannot find any deep satisfaction in their relationships or hold them together. For they have saturated their senses with many, leaving them calloused and numbed for the individual. They have spread their 'love' too thinly among their lovers to have any real depth anymore. This is how it is with the death of true love. The promiscuous sought pleasure to the detriment of lasting happiness! No one likes to be fooled about something, but many are duped into this lifestyle in these decadent days.

## **Please yourself:**

To live in a hedonistic way is to be like a baby that responds to its senses and base desires at whim, constantly having to be cared for lest these actions lead to harm. But we are grown and there is now no one to curb the action of the self-serving pleasure seeker and the harm he brings himself to. What comes naturally to a creature whose nature is flawed is not a good course to take.

The heart should be viewed with great care. It has depths like a deep pool and settled at the bottom are base sins, vile affections, lusts and all the dark desires which, if stirred, will muddy the waters and rise upwards. From the overflow of his heart the thoughts, speech and actions of a man come, so stir not these deep waters with worldly amusements, or dull your reason with drink and inflame these passions, that start out as folly and end in wicked madness. Let Christ be a well in you that will spring up into eternal life.

Be wise, the pleasures of sin only last for a season. Over time, its ability to satisfy gets weaker while the grip it has on you gets stronger. As humans we've all been trapped, but we can have freedom if we would only cry out in prayer to God pleading the merits of Christ the Saviour who has power and authority to forgive and make us new creations. The cry must be from the heart; sincere, humble and true or else it will never be heeded by Him who is your only hope.

The world seems to promise much. Our eyes and heart behold impressive things, but when we delve into them they are empty. It is like a great gift in a large box with bright wrapping and ribbon such as you have never seen. The gift tag is from that great enemy of souls himself (Satan), but he uses another name, and the message lies about the greatness of the contents. However do not accept this gift friend, for inside is emptiness leading to a bottomless pit, and you will pay dearly for it.

This world is so unsatisfying for a creature with a soul. To allow it to satisfy you is to fool yourself you have just enjoyed a great meal when you have only eaten mouldy bread! Without God we are starving, this world offers no nutrition for our souls; what we need is the 'bread of life', manna from heaven. He is not far from each one of us. In our modern world, every spare moment when we are not working, the natural desire of man seems either to be entertained or to chase after some leisure pursuit or self seeking exercise or to simply take our ease and rest. It certainly does not come naturally to spend what we consider our spare time on Godly pursuits, or in His service. This begs the question; Is what is natural to us necessarily what is right and good, or are our natures flawed and in need of transformation from a God who desires our obedience to Him?

Trying to find fulfilment in this life without God is like trying to enjoy the pleasures of a swimming pool without the water! We can never have our years again. One shot is all we have at this life. The age we are now will never come back to us. Don't waste it on selfish pursuits that bring misery later, but remember your creator and seek His salvation; for this is to live life to the full and find true satisfaction in this life and the next.

To live in this life without the true knowledge of God and a real relationship with Him is a poor thing. Instead of trusting and relying and being spiritually fed by God, through the prayer of faith, the lost person relies on other things to keep him/herself happy. Entertainment, relationships, money, possessions, attaining high position in this vain world we live in etc, and placing them on the throne of their heart which is rightfully God's. However, these are not good things to keep a soul happy with. After 2, 5, 10yrs of them they'll be as much use to you, and as much to your satisfaction, as a worn out video cassette, or an out of date coin, or a cruel friendship. You'll be most empty and you'll try to find pleasure in what gave pleasure before, but just like eating too much of a favourite desert, in the end you'll feel sick, sick of life. Or just like the transient pleasure of chewing gum which has no use for bodily nourishment but serves only to gratify an appetite that it promises much but delivers nothing.

The stomach waits for the tasty morsel to arrive but it never does and after it has lost its flavour a person must spew it out of his/her mouth: This is like the pleasures of godlessness, they promise satisfaction but soon they loose their flavour and must be spewed out, however a habit may have been formed and the hopeless sinner is snared into it again and again.

The Godless life is a fruitless labour, like a certain man digging a pit. He works and works and works for his own selfish ends but in the end he falls into his own pit and cannot get out; a miserable business.

The audience of worldly entertainments are like children being thrown poisonous sweets. Whereas the congregation of God's house are like children being spoon-fed good medicine.

*In short, the hedonistic life simply doesn't work.*

Maybe a person can find some satisfaction running after and serving the 'small' things of this world. Maybe fun and friends will be enough to fulfil the human need, and a person can block out that nagging voice that keeps saying, "Is this what your life means? Aren't we meant for so much more?" Maybe that empty feeling can be drowned out by turning up the volume on your TV or filling your spare time with movies, parties, night clubs and bars, or numb your senses with alcohol and the like. Maybe it'll go away for a few years. But I fancy it'll be back, and all the more loudly. Maybe it'll speak to you in your disappointments or troubles, maybe it'll shout at you in illness or heartbreak; but one day, for sure, you will have to answer God and if you won't have Him as your King, remember, He'll be your Judge.



## The Pride of Life:

I've heard it said, "If you're tired of London then you're tired of life!" Well my friend, if you are not tired of this present life, and this sin sick world, you will never truly live. If you cling onto foolish optimism in human achievement and the pride of it then you cling onto a sinking ship, calling to your friends who are slaves upon it like you, "Make the best of it, things aren't so bad", while all around you people drown in their sins, and yours have blinded you to the truth that the situation is dire and a rescue is what is needed from a certain disaster. **2 Peter 2.19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity-for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.**

To try and find satisfaction with the vain entertainments of this world is, as I have said, to attempt to live on every different kind of bright coloured sweet. This would make a person sick to death. This is what happens spiritually to the soul. The nutrition for the soul is found through faith in Christ, the Bread of life. The Bible being a store of every choice morsel. The man who finds this will also ration pleasure for pleasures sake, practicing self-control, denial and discipline. Like an athlete bringing the body into subjection in order to be strong, controlling its appetites and passions. This is a wise path, like a man who controls his tongue or his temper.

It is better to suffer than to sin, soon the suffering will cease; but if we choose sin we will suffer in the end. Our lives are like a bubble, as soon as you grasp it, it is gone. Those who love their lives will loose them. Do you think you can find your own lasting happiness in this life independent of God? This is a foolish thought, 'a chasing after the wind'. God is the one who gives happiness and deep joys, satisfaction and contentedness to those who please Him, but not to those who ignore Him, only for those who come to Him in obedience (Ecc 2.26). The worldling steals pleasures from this world, mistrusting God, thinking he/she is cleverly avoiding God's rule and is free, however he/she is bound by the soul's own temptations and desires, a heavy burden to bear. In the end to be self-serving will prove vacuous, as already stated- *the body makes a good servant but a bad master!* These pleasures taste sweet only for a short season, but like sickly sweets in the end will make us ill and poison us. The lack of satisfaction makes a man/woman inclined to do 'the thing' to excess but can never quite reach the goal he/she increasingly desires, a miserable business. Those who seek their happiness other than from the LORD will not find it in the end, for they have gone to the wrong place, for only God hands out these things. Men and women, boys and girls run past the shop of salvation where all is free because the great price is paid already, and instead flock to where the world sets up it's counterfeit stall and there they buy it's dainties, but these people pay dearly for that which is not what it seems.

You cannot serve two masters anymore than chasing two hares and catching none, you cannot serve both God and pleasure. When this world gets you feeling blue, what do you do? Do not love the world or the things in it, and come out from among it.

Just as the man made lights of the towns and cities blind our eyes from seeing the beauty and depth of the stars and bodies in the heavens above us, so it is with the blinding lights of this world and its deceitful entertainments and allurements which distract us from the riches of God.

**The wilful sinner:** I'm afraid this man has determined to take himself all the way down that wide road to see where it would lead him. He has found a few deceitful pleasures along the way and he feels that there might be a crock of gold at the end. He also feels that this is his particular path and (though others may not tread it, and warn him of it) that he must walk it. However dear those besetting sins are, they are but false friends that lead the man to hell. At this point it would take a team of horses to turn the man's will, not even then. For he lives by experience and despises the living Word. But what is impossible with man is possible with God.

*The conscience is sometimes the thing that hurts when all else feels good.*

It is a sad thing sometimes to see people not wanting their children or their younger sisters or brothers to do the same things or go to the same places as they themselves have, thinking that it will corrupt them, while believing that they themselves have been strong enough to be immune from such effects. By the time they realise they're just as corrupt as the next man or woman it is, all too often, too late and they are ensnared by their own appetites and affections, and have largely become blind and desensitised.

The unconverted soul is a slave to sin. This person will do as they are tempted, the flame of desire being fanned into uncontrollable fire. What this person chooses to love consumes their thoughts and imaginations. What this person is tempted to do they'll think about, and what they think about they'll be doing before long. These desires come from the heart, which inclines towards wrongdoing.

Rotten fruit is a picture for us of how our lives will turn out without God's forgiveness. All our natural youthful abilities can shine while we are young, but we can grow proud and our hearts hard. Just as bright and juicy fruit slowly becomes over ripe, and then starts to rot, so we, without God's intervening hand, will decay. We will still look and act similar, and we'll try to find satisfaction in our old sins but we will have become rotten and even our abilities and pleasures will drift out of reach. Just like an aging pop star who becomes nothing more than a parody of his or her former self, of which used to hold so much pride.

Man is like a moth (a very lowly creature, frail and temporary), which is attracted to the light of a candle but stays away from daylight. When it comes too close to the flame it burns up. This is the danger when we are attracted to the bright, man made, lights of this fallen world and not to the true light of the Son.

Being dazzled by the lights of this world (all its distractions, amusements and allurements) away from true spiritual things, and ultimately God, is like a rabbit transfixed and dazzled by a vehicles head lights, soon to be run over and die. Being lured into sin by the tempter and enemy of men and women's souls is as a fly caught in a spider's web. The more the wretched creature struggles the more stuck it becomes. We are such creatures in our sin and our lives are such without the freedom that Christ brings as our Saviour. Our growth in sin makes our bonds ever stronger and there is no way we can free ourselves. Outside help is our only hope, and there is only One who is equal to the task. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ and if you are to be free you will seek His rescue.

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; we spend more on possessions, but have less substance; we buy more, but enjoy it less; are more entertained but less fulfilled. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more experts, but more problems; more medicine but less wholeness. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We have learned how to make a living but not a life; we added years to life, but not life to our years. We have been all the way to the moon and back but have trouble getting off the couch to church. We know more about the creation and less about the Creator. We have cleaned up the air but polluted the soul; we have split the atom, but not our love of sinning. We have higher incomes, but lower morals; we have become long on quantity, but short on quality. These are the times of tall men and short character; steep profits and shallow relationships.



These are the times of free love but expensive mistakes; more leisure, less joy; bigger supermarkets but less nutrition, we feed our appetites but not our souls. These are the days of two incomes, and more divorce; liberation from everything including self control but not peer pressure; we see less wrongs taught in the classroom but more evils in society; more sex less responsibility; we permit everything except preaching; we call attempts to avoid families, family planning; relationships are the things you do more but get less good at. A time when technology can bring you this message and also open the devil's eye to view ten thousand evils from men's hearts. A time when we've never needed to run to God more, but get on treadmills down the gym instead of walking to the house of prayer. A society of beauty parlours & treatments and ugly behaviour. A time when we pretend to be saved by heroes on the big screen but ignore the one in the Good Book.

## **The Answer Is Christ**

Say someone buys a gift and gives it to you freely and that he earned the money used for the purchase. That someone, must have then had to pay for it, and paid much if it is a costly and precious gift. Christ earned with His perfect life and paid by Calvary's cross, to secure new life for those He would save. This is the free gift of God, and, unlike the free gifts of this world, it is not cheap but very costly and it will not remain unclaimed by God's intended.

In an old country, on a hot day, a man stood in a field of corn. He foolishly lit a small fire that burned out of control. He ran from the flames. As they grew, they started to catch him up. The man remembered that he had been told that a Great Martyr had been burnt at the stake in that very field, and so he ran for that spot, knowing that there the ground was already burnt. He reached the spot just in time, and even though the flames raged around him, he was untouched because of the Martyr's death. Friend, this is what it is to know Christ's saving work for yourself and His salvation.

Our souls are like old sailing ships on the sea of life. The ship faces storms and battles, becalming, strong currents or dangerous rocks. We face these in life as our soul travels through, assaulted by its cares, troubles, hardships, temptations and battles with many enemies. The Bible teaches that we each have rebelled against our true Captain and, as it were, mutinied, taking the ship for ourselves. The question is; who captains your ship now? You? But, as men we can't plot a true course because by nature we are corrupt. We don't even know what will happen tomorrow, we can't even see over the horizon, and the consciences' rudder is damaged and in disrepair. The crew don't keep watch from the crow's nest and are often asleep or drunk with the pleasures of this vain world. That great serpent, the enemy of souls, attacks the ship and boards it, often leading us into danger. What we need is to let the true Captain, Christ Jesus, on board to cast that vicious viper out and then be pronounced Commander of our vessel in order to steer us through to safety and spare us from hitting Him, as the Great Rock which causes men to stumble, and sending us down into the deep. Then the centre of our ship will be that great mast, the cross of Calvary, always in view with the eyes of faith. And our trust in Him will be, as a child, whose father is the Captain and allows us to hold the wheel from below as He steers it from above.

If a fly gets into some ointment how can the ointment be cleaned? Or if the creature falls into some soup can the soup be made edible once more? Of course these are simple examples from life and the answer is equally as simple, the contamination is such that the substance must be completely changed in order to be clean again. So it is with our souls, to try and clean them with good works or religious ceremony or moral reform is as futile as trying to clean contaminated ointment, the corruption of original sin is such. A complete change must be sought and this is not of ourselves but comes from Jesus Christ changing us, washing us clean. The punishment was dealt out spiritually at Calvary for those who seek this change from Him, cry out for it, and He will not be slow in the action.

## **MUSIC and MOVEMENT**

### **'Worldly' Music**

Music is a good thing. But the question is, can good things be corrupted, or used in a bad way? I believe that the modern music industry is about far more than mere music. This industry is primarily about money and worshiping human 'idols' to a greater or lesser extent. The naive, wide-eyed artist snapped up by the music executive and marketed to an image which conforms to a style or trend of the time, either for abject failure or short lived fame and hollow excess. This is often more important than the music and usually sits happily with the various 'tribe' mentalities of modern youth culture in whatever genre. When we buy the music, we buy into the whole package not just the music. If this is not the case why does music so often also affect how we dress, speak and act? If advertising is proven to affect our actions, how much more another industry designed to pander to men and women's desires for more than a 30 second commercial.. It has to be said that this world is in direct conflict with the Bible's teachings. The 'sex, drugs, and rock & roll' mind set pervades the whole industry, but the Bible tells the wise to come away from it and be separate, to not love the world or the things in it. The music cannot be separated from the industry or the lifestyle and is therefore guilty by association. The group or artist may not share the immorality but lives in that world. If a person attends a party where drunkenness and drugs are present but does not indulge him/herself, is that person not still giving approval to such things by being present?

Alongside this is what the artist or group is actually doing by promoting and gigging etc. This is a money making exercise filling the pockets of the covetous industry bosses, and a way to encourage the young to gather and sing and cheer the praises, not of God, but of the human object. This is why I link it to idol worship.

When it comes to pleasure seeking we have already seen that music is used for such to excess. Music is primarily a way to stimulate our emotional senses and feelings. We listen to music because the words linked with the music make us feel a certain way. Like anything which panders to our affections it can be used and misused.

### **Night clubbing and suggestive & provocative dance.**

*"Dancing is a perpendicular expression of a horizontal desire"* George Bernard Shaw

This quote is an amusing observation, but illustrates quite a serious point. Why is it that certain forms of dancing have been frowned upon by Christians? Well it is for this very reason, that at it's worst it can inflame our bodily passions even with strangers, let alone those acquaintances we know

who are not our husbands and wives. A subtle form of fornication is still fornication, and there certainly are degrees of sin. The blatant abuse and extreme of this can be found in the night clubs, which are designed to be nothing less than a complete bombardment of the senses, with drink, drugs, music and dance designed to inflame lust, and draws the unsuspecting victim down the road of hedonism.. The whole experience is designed to parade a man or woman to the extremes of vanity, with clothing that turns a human into a clothes horse, a sexual object not a person, no more than an animal, reducing the whole event into a sense dulling meat market, which usually attracts the worse sorts of character and behaviour, not the best. It is obvious to all, that places such as this, are often celebrated as a hot bed of sin. It is sin which is the Christians enemy and wherever he sees that foe he is on his guard. That is why wise Christians are wary of something which the world is blind to, or if they see it, do not see the danger, because the concept of sin is not a serious one in the unconverted mind. So it will carry them away. Anyone who is serious about discovering the deeper things in life should run a mile from these places. Godliness and 'worldliness' are like oil and water.



*Old comic representation of the Devil with a fiddle*

Some Secular news articles testifying to the danger.

**Evening Standard Fri, 15 Feb 2002**

## **THE COST OF BEING A GOOD-TIME GIRL**

AS PRINCESS Margaret is cremated quietly at Slough, far too many commentators have said that her death had little effect on the nation. That she was a minor Royal, didn't command much interest any more, only the elderly monarchists really cared. I disagree: I think women of my own generation might carry a great deal away from the lesson of Margaret's life and death.

From what I have read about her in the newspapers, it seems that Princess Margaret was somewhat scandalous in the 1960s. Heady affairs, long cigarette holders, parties on yachts and tropical islands ... While Princess Elizabeth was the nice girl: elegant, quiet, serious. Well, nobody wants to be a Lillibet any more; we all want to be a Margo.

Princess Margaret's is the life we are supposed to have, we young women of the 21st century: parties, indulgence and zipping about; sexual adventure, frantic socialising and plenty of holidays. That's the lesson of Bridget Jones, Sex and the City, Geri and Kylie. "Carpe diem" is the motto: tearing into life and accruing experience. And all very self-indulgent experience.

When glossy magazines list "The Things You Should Have Done Before You're Thirty", it's always "Some sexual experimentation", "Tried coke", and "Driven a convertible through Rome". They never suggest you should have "Given blood", "Helped someone across a road" or "Planted a tree". That's not cool. Imagine the derisive snort if you suggested that kind of list: you'd be pious, priggish, dull and out of kilter with the zeitgeist.

It's all about the quick fix and the new high. Fast food, vodka shots and this week's fashion. The lesson seems to be that we should rush through life or we'll miss it-rather than that we should stop and look around once in a while. Think things through, make informed decisions and plan ahead. No, says the prevailing culture: you mustn't stop running.



Instead of feeling that rewards are worth more if you've earned them, we're shown that hard work is a waste of time- the clever people are snatching up the treats without any effort. Scratch this card and win a million! Ring Max Clifford and make your fortune! And what about Pop Idol?

Forget "Fame costs, and right here's where you start paying", Nah, now you're supposed to win a freak audition and be a star by Saturday.

Restlessness and gusto are valued over patience and forbearance. If your marriage is boring, walk out. If your job is taxing, quit it. Seek always stimulus and novelty. We must be excited and exciting at all times. Be a hare not a tortoise- and we all conveniently forget what happened at the finish line.

This is not just about lifestyle, but about personality. The successful young woman must be Margaret, not an Elizabeth: vivacious rather than gentle, glamorous rather than sweet, immediately noticeable rather than gradually appreciated. The four girls in Sex And The City are meant to represent every kind of modern woman. But which one is supposed to be studious, charitable, dutiful, or self-denying? None, because these are old and forgotten values and nobody would watch it.

You must sparkle at the centre of the room, not listen quietly on the edges. Surface dazzle is rated higher than hidden depths. Nobody has time to get to know each other: you walk into a party and get five minutes to impress with your flair, Manolos and risqué chat.

I'll put my hands up and admit these are my own values. I never shut up and listen. I'm frightened to settle down, stay quiet or stop moving in case I miss out. I give up on things quickly if they don't yield immediate satisfaction. I go out every night, drink and smoke as if I were immortal, and find all men briefly fascinating but ultimately imperfect.

The manner of her last years, and the tone of her death, can't help but offer a nasty warning. Is that how it ends, this fast life? Finally giving up the drink and fags when you're forced to by a series of strokes? Living your last years alone, because no man was ever good enough? It's heartbreaking to look at the sixties pictures of her: so energetic, lively and thrill seeking, just like we all try to be in the 21st century. And then to look at the last pictures of her, lonely and half-blind, and think "I don't want that to be me in 40 years - or 10."

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It's vital to see snares & traps for what they are, the Bible calls them deceitful pleasures. We must be wiser than many lest we fall for it too. After all if the great King David can fall into them & Solomon, then who are we to think we're so strong? Samson found a lion much easier to overcome than lust, so we should never underestimate the subtle degrees of temptation from that ancient serpent the 'Enemy of souls'

### **Newspaper article By Patrick Sawyer**

### **'Clubs, pubs are best route to escapism for youngsters'**

Young people are looking for a good time and like nothing better than a night out clubbing... But however the young choose to spend their time, there is a common motivation in this quest for hedonism- the desire to escape.

A survey found many went out drinking as a "release from the stress of their complicated and busy lives, financial pressures and responsibilities, insecurities and doubts", said the compilers chairman.

As one of those surveyed put it: "When everyone's drunk, it doesn't matter who's got more money or a better job or whatever".....Paradoxically, the me generation, brought up to believe that anything is possible, suffers from fear of failure. With a weakening of traditional support networks, whether community groups or family, young people are forced to be more self-reliant. While their demand for more from the world & life- in the way of possessions and pleasures-has grown, so have their stress levels.

As one put it: "If I don't succeed in life, I let myself down, because anyone can make it if they really want to."

The chairman of a poll showing the increase in this lifestyle said: "This is a generation whose interests and concerns centre solely on themselves. There is, it seems no greater cause to champion other than that of their own."

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The shallow things people choose to live for now is so obvious that I see more and more of these articles, it's a sad reflection on society. 'Work hard, play harder', and 'If it feels good then do it', is some of the poorest advice banded around today, but many swallow it whole. It's vital to remember the little truths people used to be taught at Sunday school as five year olds like: "*Remember children, the middle letter of SIN is I, put God first, then others second, then yourself last!*". Were these lessons really so simplistic and unsophisticated, or have we become so clever these days we are in danger of graduating into fools for rejection of such deep wisdom?

## **BIBLE TEXTS**

Exodus 32:5-7 (King James Version)

<sup>5</sup>And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

<sup>7</sup>And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:



Exodus 32:17-19 (King James Version)

<sup>17</sup>And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

<sup>18</sup>And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

<sup>19</sup>And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

Isaiah 22:12-14 (King James Version)

<sup>12</sup>And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

<sup>13</sup>And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die.

<sup>14</sup>And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Ecclesiastes 2 (King James Version)

<sup>1</sup>I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

<sup>2</sup>I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

<sup>3</sup>I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

<sup>4</sup>I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

<sup>5</sup>I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

<sup>6</sup>I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

<sup>7</sup>I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

<sup>8</sup>I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

<sup>9</sup>So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

<sup>10</sup>And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

<sup>11</sup>Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

<sup>12</sup>And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

<sup>13</sup>Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

<sup>14</sup>The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

<sup>15</sup>Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

<sup>16</sup>For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

<sup>19</sup>And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

<sup>21</sup>For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

<sup>22</sup>For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

<sup>23</sup>For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

<sup>24</sup>There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

<sup>25</sup>For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?

<sup>26</sup>For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

#### Amos 6 (King James Version)

<sup>1</sup>Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

<sup>2</sup>Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

<sup>3</sup>Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

<sup>4</sup>That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; Ecclesiastes 7:6

<sup>5</sup>That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;

<sup>6</sup>That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

#### James 4:9

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

#### Proverbs 14:13

Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 7:3

Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

Isaiah 58:12-14 (King James Version)

<sup>13</sup>If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

<sup>14</sup>Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

2 Thessalonians 2 (King James Version)

<sup>7</sup>For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

<sup>8</sup>And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

<sup>9</sup>Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

<sup>10</sup>And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

<sup>11</sup>And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

<sup>12</sup>That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

James 5 (King James Version)

<sup>1</sup>Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

<sup>2</sup>Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

<sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

<sup>4</sup>Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

<sup>5</sup>Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

1 Timothy 5:5-7 (King James Version)

<sup>5</sup>Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

<sup>6</sup>But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

Proverbs 21:17

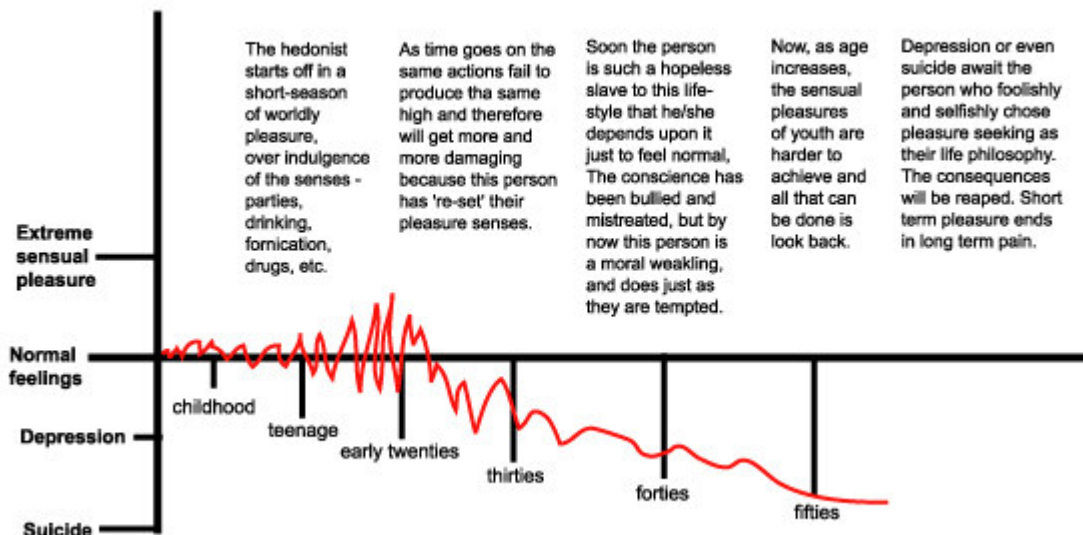
He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.

Proverbs 23.

<sup>31</sup>Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly!

<sup>32</sup>In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper

### THE GRAPH OF HEDONISM





A child played on a slide he had been warned was dangerous, but he continued to do it because he found it so much fun and had grown to love doing it.



When the child grew he also grew to regret his foolish action!

Just because a person finds great pleasure in a life away from God, it doesn't vindicate their policy and prove it correct. The truth is sometimes found later in bitter experience.

So if you love your life, but know it to be against God and his ways, think twice dear reader and look deeper for joys without measure but far from the policy of seeking pleasure upon pleasure.

## 2 Timothy 3 (King James Version)

<sup>1</sup>This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

<sup>2</sup>For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

<sup>3</sup>Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

<sup>4</sup>Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

<sup>5</sup>Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

## Heb 11.25 (Moses)

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

## Romans 13 (King James Version)

<sup>12</sup>The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

<sup>13</sup>Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

<sup>14</sup>But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.