

Pleasure & Human Undulation

I. Where does pleasure come from?

Discussion:

1. Is the idea of “pleasure” usually associated with God and Christianity or with the flesh, the devil, and the world? Why?

2. What difference would it make if people associated pleasure more with the devil or more with God?

The Source of Pleasure

A. Pleasure is from _____, not Satan.

“Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal form, we are in a sense, on the Enemy’s ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula.” (p.44)

Though most people in the world, and in this class, tend to associate pleasure with the flesh and the devil more than with God, the truth is that all pleasure comes from God. What a coup de tat for the devil to lead millions to think that fun, pleasure, and enjoyment is more of the devil than of God!

Psalm 37:4 - "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart."
 Psalm 34:8a - "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!..."

B. All sin is a pleasure _____ or _____.

Think of any sin, and that sin is at its root a privation from a good, and it is a pleasure perverted by some way, time, or degree. In your groups list the “Big 5” sins that beset college students and then discuss what of God’s good, pleasurable ideas is this a perversion of.

“Big 5” Sinful Pleasures of College Students	Which Good is this a Perversion Of?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Consider two more quotations from C.S. Lewis on how God gave us our desires, and how our desires are probably not too strong, but perhaps too weak and too easily satisfied.

Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity)

"... if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea, We are far too easily pleased." (C.S. Lewis, Weight of Glory)

Human Undulation is a Reality of This Life

This relates to our next topic of undulation, or the "up and down" cycle of spiritual life. Many Christians try unsuccessfully to battle inappropriate desires by just telling themselves to "not desire that object!" But that has little lasting power because it does not *change* the person nor *transform* the heart.

Discussion:

1. When someone first becomes a Christian, is it more common that she thinks the spiritual fervor will last forever or that it will fade?
2. If you became a Christian later in life, what was your expectation about your spiritual fervor lasting or fading?
3. Why is it common that when we are spiritually at a high point, we think it wishful to want it to last forever, but when we are at spiritual low points, we dread with expectation it will never end? What is your experience?

Imagine a spiritual mentor sharing with a brand new Christian, "It's great that you feel so close to God, that His love feels so real. Don't worry, that feeling won't last!" We might laugh at the idea. But think of the damage that comes to a new or younger Christian who does not realize that we are all prone to wander.

"Do not let him suspect the law of undulation. Let him assume that the first ardors of his conversion might have been expected to last, and out to have lasted, forever, and that his present dryness is an equally permanent condition.

"You have only got to keep him out of the way of experienced Christians (an easy task now-adays), to direct his attention to the appropriate passages in scripture, and then to set him to work on the desperate design of recovering his old feelings by sheer will-power, and the game is ours."

- A. Spiritual Life tends to move in ups and downs.**
- B. The key is to**
- a. Not be _____ when we lose a spiritual height and**
 - b. believe the spiritual low points will _____**
 - c. and _____ the undulation.**

Consider this insight by Thomas Chalmers, an preacher of a previous generation on how the heart must always have an object of desire.

It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction... But what cannot be thus destroyed, may be dispossessed-- and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind...So the youth stops loving pleasure, because he replaces it with a love for wealth. And later on the desire for wealth is replaced by a desire for power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable... (From the sermon *Expulsive Power of a New Affection.*)

The way to battle inappropriate desire and to lessen spiritual undulation is the same: allow the beauty and love of God to be that ultimate object of desire.