



DORDT COLLEGE

Digital Collections @ Dordt

Faculty Work: Comprehensive List

8-1-2016

Christians Just Wanna Have Fun

Donald Roth

Dordt College, donald.roth@dordt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Roth, Donald, "Christians Just Wanna Have Fun" (2016). *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List*. Paper 536.
http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/536

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Work: Comprehensive List by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Christians Just Wanna Have Fun

Abstract

"When we imagine the New Creation, do we think of it as an eternal work project or as a divine playground?"

Posting about discernment regarding things we enjoy from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/christians-just-wanna-have-fun/>

Keywords

In All Things, fun, God, desire, goal

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

Christians Just Wanna Have Fun

 allthings.org/christians-just-wanna-have-fun/

Donald Roth

August 1,
2016

“Christianity spells monotony. I feel like being a Christian means not enjoying life.” We’ve all heard sentiments like this at some point, perhaps we’ve even shared those thoughts.¹ Of course, *we’re* fun, but *those* Christians (you know who I’m talking about), they’re allergic to the very concept of fun. Whether we reject the accusation wholesale or just as it applies to us, there’s no doubt that something about it nettles us a bit. So how do we go about responding to this sort of sentiment?

Perhaps Christians could embrace these comments as confirmation that we are in fact living out the antithesis in lives that truly cut against the grain of the world. This might feel affirming, but it’s not quite right, is it? Christians often enjoy the same things that many of our neighbors do, be it gardening, reading, cooking, or spending time with loved ones. Sure, we might not smoke, drink, or chew ([or go with girls that do](#)), but we don’t necessarily pursue a totally unique vision of what’s fun.

At the same time, there may be a little truth to the accusation. I wasn’t raised in a rigid, domineering household, but I still feel an urge to be a little suspicious of anything that seems like *too* much fun, and I suspect many of you may hear that voice in your heads as well. Further, there’s a common expectation that we give up things that seem to be *just* about having fun as we grow up. At some point, play becomes screwing around, and all things worthwhile are held up to the measuring stick of whether or not they’re *productive*. The famed Protestant work ethic is the personification of this sentiment in the church, and it holds true whether it’s preached in more traditional terms or in more modern language like “transforming culture” or “furnishing the kingdom of heaven.” In a culture that values busyness, and a faith climate that often emphasizes *doing*, we must be honest that we are often skeptical of fun, and if that is true, we need to wrestle with whether our response is appropriate.

What is Fun? (Baby Don’t Hurt Me)

At its essential level, fun is the effervescence of desire. We have fun doing certain things because they involve pursuing what we genuinely love. It’s far from the only emotion associated with enjoyment, but fun is the momentary high that comes with a dump of endorphins into your system at the crescendo of some enjoyable activity, and perhaps that’s why there’s some suspicion around it. Perhaps we worry that seeking fun too much makes us into fun-junkies, just chasing after our next high.

That’s not all, though, if fun is the smoke rising up from the fire of our desires, then we can track that signal back to its source as a means to auditing our loves. Although it might have sounded like my parents were scolding me for having too much fun playing video games, their real point was that I was investing my heart in something that did not seem spiritually profitable. Regardless of whether they were right in their assessment, we can look to the things that we have the most fun doing and ask *why* they’re fun. If we claim to seek to live our lives *Soli Deo Gloria*, are the desires that we so enjoy pursuing rooted in some aspect of God’s glory?

As with many things, the result of this sort of self-inquiry is not likely to be totally clear cut. Is taking a walk fun for me because I get to marvel at God’s creation and take time to reflect on my day, or is it fun because I just want to escape the chaos and noise of a household with young children and sort of leave my family behind for a bit? If I’m honest, it’s a bit of both. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis talks about even seemingly more straightforward issues like dirty jokes, saying that some people “joke about sex because it gives rise to many incongruities” while others “cultivate incongruities because they afford a pretext for talking about sex.” Without getting into the ethics of humor, Lewis’ point is that what is fun for both people stems from different desires, one which feeds corruption while the other does not. Lewis’ protagonist, the elder demon Screwtape, counsels his nephew, “Find out which group the

patient belongs to-and see that he does not find out.” As Christians, we must not remain blind to such things, and examining what we find fun can be a crucial part of the discernment that marks faithful disciples.

The End

Ultimately, though, fun isn't just a byproduct of what we do, it's actually a goal of the Christian life. The Westminster Catechism (both larger and shorter) start off by asking “What is the chief end of humankind?” and they [answer](#) that we exist to “glorify God and to enjoy God forever.” Of course, careful readers will note that this does not talk about seeking fun in isolation, and while I will argue that fun is indeed part of the *telos*, or goal that we seek, it is, by itself, a poor metric of when we're on the right track. Just because something is fun does not mean it is good, and, similarly, not all good things are fun at the time. Part of the Christian life is about denying ourselves and disciplining our hearts to learn to love the things of God so that we can find delight in what is good. If we're seeking to keep ourselves on a good track, then it's much better to keep asking if we're glorifying God than to ask if we're enjoying it.

That said, we lose something if we don't recognize that having fun is actually one of the reasons we were made. When we imagine the New Creation, do we think of it as an eternal work project or as a divine playground? If we recognize that we are no longer workers in the vineyard, but children and heirs of God, it seems to me that the latter makes more sense, and that means that we should lose a little bit of our reflexive suspicion of fun and our low view of play. If we were made to enjoy God's good gifts then, yes, we should discern whether our fun derives from godly delight, but we should be ready to delight deeply and boldly embrace fun as we hunger for the day when we can play in the streets of the heavenly city with all of God's children.