



3 HOBBIES

ACCORDING to my dictionary in Apple's pages, a hobby is defined as *an activity done regularly in one's leisure time for pleasure*. Let's break that definition down for a minute. A hobby is done *regularly*, therefore, it takes up a significant amount of time. Maybe not as much as work or other daily tasks, but hobbies are typically regular things.

The definition also says that they are done in our *leisure time*. Hmmm, leisure time? What is meant by this phrase? Well, we know leisure time is synonymous with free time. However, how much of our time is actually free? We've established that time is synonymous with life and value, so how can we now say that time is free?

The last part of the definition says that a hobby is done for *pleasure*. Christians know there is no such thing as true joy and pleasure outside of God. Therefore, the





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deeper we strive to find pleasure in God, the deeper the pleasure we receive. So why is it that our hobbies are often in competition with God? I've noticed that what people call hobbies seemingly have very little to do with God. In fact, they often hinder their Christian walk with Him. This does not mean our hobbies can't feed a deeper relationship with God or that some of us have hobbies that are deeply connected to knowing God more. I would say however, that many of us have hobbies that seem to be disconnected from God. Survey your own hobbies, how connected are they to the Eternal One?

Before I get ahead of myself, let's look back at the beginning of that definition, *an activity done regularly* ...

Regularity

Our definition of a hobby starts with regularity. And, as I mentioned, some have hobbies that seem to draw them away from God while others have hobbies that can deepen their relationship with God. For example, maybe following a certain sports team is a hobby of yours. For the unbeliever, they only enjoy what is before them. For the Christian, they see another layer to sports. They know the amazing athleticism that they appreciate has been granted by the hand of God. Therefore, they can actually worship God through their hobby. This is why our theology is so important.





Everyone has a theology. As R.C. Sproul says, 'Everyone's a theologian.'¹ That is, everyone on the face of this earth possesses thoughts and beliefs about God. Some believe in Him, some don't and some are indifferent but they all have thoughts about God or a theology of God, because they were created in His image. Romans 1 tells us that the knowledge of God is written on mankind's conscience as well as through all of creation (Rom. 1:18-25).

Part of this knowledge of God, both in our consciences and through creation, moves us to worship. Think back to the hobby of a sports team. We can worship God through that activity or we simply worship creation. This should come as no surprise since the first of the Ten Commandments reads, '*You shall have no other gods before me*' (Exod. 20:3). This being the first and greatest commandment tells us that we are worshipers. We *will* worship.

This first commandment is implying that we will be worshipping other things all the time. This is because we were designed to be worshipers, but now our sin is confusing our worship. Since we are sinners, our understanding of God gets misdirected. We look to money to give us what only God can give us. We look to our spouses/children/friends to give us what only God can give us. We look to hobbies to give us what only God can give us.

1. R.C. Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian*. Reformation Trust Publishing. Lake Mary, Florida (2014).





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In Ed Welch's, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave*, he points out that 'Addictions are ultimately a disorder of worship.'² When we begin worshipping something too much, it becomes an addiction. Now, there are varying levels of addictions, but we can understand the close connections between worship and addiction. This addiction could be *an activity done regularly*; i.e. a hobby. In my experience, I've heard many people refer to things as hobbies which could probably be considered idol worship or addiction.

For example, have you known anyone who has a hobby that's done so regularly that if another person stands in the way of that hobby conflict ensues? Or, maybe you know someone whose hobby completely restructures their entire week? That is, they have to wake up extra early to get a start on this hobby or go to bed much later because they are working on this hobby. Whether they're staying up too late or waking up too early, this is impacting other days in their week. You see, this hobby is *shaping* the rest of their life. It is something they won't allow anyone to get in the way of. Sounds sort of like an addiction, right?

Even if you don't think of your hobbies as idols you are worshipping, be careful! If a hobby is something done regularly it runs the great risk of becoming an idol. The more times you are bowing down to it, the closer it is becoming to your heart.

2. Ed Welch, *Addictions*, preface xvi. P&R Publishing. Phillipsburg, New Jersey (November 1, 2001).





This simply happens to anything that becomes regular or habitual.

Here are some helpful questions to ask of your hobby. Is your hobby something you use as an escape? When you feel stressed, tired or angry, do you flee to your hobby? Why does your hobby bring you happiness? This will help you discern if your hobby is something you worship; if it's something that's subtly become a false god to you. The truth for the Christian is that we are to seek refuge in God (Ps. 2:12, 5:11, 7:1). However, our false gods end up becoming a false refuge for us. We run to them to escape stress and find happiness. Often these idols can offer us a temporary refuge, but they will not give us the refuge we need. Therefore, search your heart and see what it reveals about your hobbies.

Free time

Another aspect to the definition of a hobby was that it's something we do in our free time. If you remember, what I said previously about time is that it's not *our* time. Scripture tells us, *'You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body'* (1 Cor. 6:19b-20).

Now, these verses were discussing sexual sin and the fact that we cannot do what we want with our bodies. However, the principle here informs us that our very lives don't belong to us. We are not autonomous creatures – we belong/answer to another. Therefore, how should we interpret the term 'free





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time'? The lives/time Christ bought us wasn't free for Him. Let us reflect on Philippians 2:5-11:

'Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

What an unmeasurable cost for Jesus Christ! **Free? Free time?!** Jesus Christ left His throne, took on flesh, was misunderstood, hated, mocked, tortured and betrayed for you and for me. What a cost it was to redeem His rebellious children. It certainly wasn't free for Him. Should this give us pause in using the phrase 'free time'?

I know there are times when events or meetings are cancelled and that frees up some time, but Christians must be cautious of throwing around this term. Our lives are not our own and neither is our time. The time we have cost our Savior much, so let us keep that in mind.





Pleasure

Now we get to the last part of the definition. How would you define pleasure? Think of it this way. If you could plan one day to go exactly how you wanted it to go, what would it consist of? What would you like to do? This will help you get closer to defining pleasure.

Our sinful hearts often do a great job of convincing us that God is against our joy. Think back to Adam and Eve. God gave and gave and gave, but they were convinced life was lacking something. They were convinced God was keeping them from something. In a similar way most of us believe church is boring and the world is fun. Service to God's Kingdom results in loss, but service to our kingdoms results in a good time. Let's consider two important verses of Scripture here.

In Hebrews 11:25 we read of Moses *'choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin'*. This verse tells us many things, but one thing it teaches us is that sin is fun. I have always said, if sin wasn't fun we wouldn't be tempted to indulge it. Sin does bring pleasure, but it's fleeting.

Therefore, our hobbies may bring about pleasure, but if we aren't seeing these earthly pleasures through the lens of Scripture, they are fleeting. They possess a pleasure that will not last.

Another Scripture I want us to look at comes from Luke 9:24, *'For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever*





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loses his life for my sake will save it. When I was younger I knew this verse was profound, but I didn't really understand it. Basically this verse is telling us that the more we live for selfish pursuits, the more empty our lives will be. That is, we could indulge ourselves in money, possessions, the pursuit of happiness, success and yet ultimately you will – guaranteed, one hundred percent – lose your life.

The movie, *About a Boy*, follows the story of Will Freeman (Hugh Grant) who is an immature man that has lived a life for himself. When Will was young, he had a hit song that brought him fame and fortune and he has exploited that fame and fortune in the pursuit of his kingdom. However, Will Freeman is not a *free-man* at all and has become enslaved to his selfish pursuits. He's become cynical because he has actually experienced so much in life and it has not brought him pleasure. In one particular scene of the film he remarks, *'I had lived a full life, but wasted it.'*

Will is affirming what Jesus Christ said, as well as testifying how many of us live our lives. We try, so hard, to save our lives by filling them with so many things. So many pleasures, but we have full lives that are wasted.

Take a look at your hobbies. Look at the things you do on a regular basis. Are they feeble attempts to save our lives and give us earthly (fleeting) pleasures? The interesting promise we have from Luke is that when we lose our lives in the world's eyes, we actually get more fulfilment. Isn't that the





way God always works? He works backwards from the world. If you give, you receive. If you lose, you find.

God does not rob our joy, He redefines it. He gives us a deeper, fuller joy when our pleasure is rooted in Him. Are your hobbies, or regular activities, lived with this mind-set? I see many a hobby that pulls people away from Lord's Day worship and service. Many a hobby that wears people down, so they're physically present on Sundays but spiritually absent.

So what am I saying? I am not saying quit all of your hobbies, but I am asking you to evaluate them. Are your hobbies in competition with the Lord's Kingdom? Are they keeping you from serving your church and others? Are they selfish pursuits of your own pleasure? Do they rob your family of significant time? Do they draw you closer to the Lord and make you a more significant servant for His Kingdom?

Let me give you a personal example. For starters, I don't have this figured out by any means. One hobby I enjoy is movies. I've seen a lot of movies in my lifetime, but it wasn't until recently that I started watching them from a biblical perspective. I look back on my life and think of the time I've wasted watching movies. There have been times I've looked to movies to fill the void in my heart. I've used them merely as an escape. A selfish means to give me what I want.

However, I saw emptiness time and time again from film. My hobby failed me. However, now that I have begun to engage my mind a bit more and consider film through the





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lens of Scripture, I've found more enjoyment from the hobby. It actually fails me less and I end up being blessed by this approach. I've also refused to watch some movies, not simply because of the content, but because of the time it would cost. I realized I had a limited amount and I didn't want to spend it on that particular movie.

Please do not hear me propagating a karma-ish theology. What I am affirming is what Luke said. I became more aware of using film for my selfish pleasure and started viewing it Scripturally and God actually did what He said He would. I enjoy movies more when I use them for my glory less. Apply this to your hobbies. See them as a means to teach you more about the Lord. If you discover that your hobby is in fact in competition with God, maybe it's time for a new hobby.

TIME TO THINK

- * How did this chapter redefine your hobbies? Do you see some of your hobbies as idols?
- * What do you think about the notion of 'free time'? Do you think Christ's finished work will have an impact on the next available 'free time' that comes across your path?
- * What do you typically run to for pleasure? Why is it that our hearts are typically drawn to temporal things when we have 'free time'? What does that reveal about our hearts?

