

Amusements and Jewelry

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | September 11, 2009



What kind of amusement, recreation, and jewelry is appropriate for Christians in light of Ezekiel 16: 10-14 (Many Christian Churches do not support the wearing of Jewelry, is this a conflict?)

I work with the youth of our church and would like address the above concerns biblically.

Thanks for your questions. The primary goal of parenting and education is to use our adult influence to help our children develop Christlike character. Understanding that each human being, since Adam sinned, is born infected with fear and selfishness, we realize our children need influences to bring them to love and trust in God. We, as mature Christians, understand that feelings or passions lead to temptation (James 1:14) and truth heals or sets free (John 8:32). Thus, we realize that the Holy Spirit works to bring each of us to a true knowledge of God. Anything which tends to obstruct the true knowledge of God works to our and our children's eternal demise.

With this in mind, we understand that more than specific behavior or activity is involved. The critical issue is the underlying reasons and motives for the behaviors.

For instance, 2000 years ago the Jews knew that the Sabbath was God's holy day. But they failed to understand the truth about the Lord of the Sabbath and therefore, even though behaviorally conformed to Sabbath observance they crucified Christ. The specific behavior is not as important as the underlying mindset and heart attitude.

Far too many parents and teachers obstruct their children's view of God by making arbitrary rules to conform to cultural standards without actually providing underlying reasons or principles for those rules. This is most commonly seen when it comes to jewelry. The Bible does not teach it is sinful to wear jewelry. The Bible teaches that selfishness, self-exaltation, self-aggrandizement, self-promotion, haughtiness, arrogance, pride etc. is sinful. We are to love others more than self. When jewelry is worn as a means of aggrandizing self, when jewelry is worn as a means of exalting self, when monies are diverted from helping others in order to exalt self the problem is not the jewelry but the selfish heart which doesn't love.

I know many prideful "Christians" who criticize those who wear jewelry because "jewelry is sinful". Yet these same "Christians" spend tens of thousands of dollars on watches, furs, cars, artwork and other means of adorning themselves. Some even make self the center by being so plain, bland, and frankly unattractive that they stand out of the crowd as the one "most self-abasing" reminding me of the man who said, "I am humble and proud of it."

I have seen faculty at Christian universities drive young people from God by their unloving and even cruel treatment of a student wearing a \$10 pair of earrings. When I think of how Christ treated the woman caught in adultery, I have no doubt He would not condemn a young lady for wearing a \$10 pair of earrings.

So, what is the issue? Christians are to be like Christ. They are to stand apart from the world. They are to live lives to the beat of love's constant call and be so contrary to the world's value of promoting self that people stop and take notice.

If jewelry confuses the issue and causes the truth about God's character of love to be obscured or somehow undermines our ability to witness faithfully about God then we must evaluate seriously why wear it? But, I will say with conviction, our separation from the world is not primarily seen in our clothes or adornments but in our character. Our lives are to be beacons of Christlike grace, love, goodness, and self-sacrifice so that people will see our good works and praise God in heaven. I have seen Christlike love in persons wearing jewelry and I have seen Satan's selfish heart in the condemning preacher or teacher who berates a teenager wearing stud earrings.

Regarding games, it is also about character development. Chess and checkers and certain card games require strategizing, planning, patience, and anticipation and the playing of these games can assist in developing these abilities. Games can also teach lessons of cooperation, socialization, self-discipline and grace, both in winning and losing. All of these are lessons of life which can be valuable tools for a mature individual.

The danger in games is when the end goal is "winning" and promoting "self" at the expense of the other party. Many games inherently lean toward the destruction of the other party in order for self to win. This can, if not guarded against, tend toward strengthening the selfish drives and the "win at all cost" tendencies thus undermining mature character development.

Parents and teachers can mitigate against such tendencies by focusing on the relationships with those

playing the games, esteeming how one plays rather than winning the event, having debriefing discussions after the game is over, teaching values of honest participation rather than winning at all costs.

So, in my view, the issue is character development, becoming like Christ and not specific games or behaviors but rather the underlying heart attitude which leads to those behaviors.