

FUN & PLEASURE

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God and I share a personal joke about a particular garden gate, and I find myself smiling when I think of it. There are the times when I'm hanging out with Jesus and I start feeling overwhelmed by His power and presence, and He says, "I'm not Mr. President today," and I know exactly what He means. A while back I was in the shower when I received a text message from God. When I see red and yellow flowers together I know what Holy Spirit is telling me and I find myself grinning. Last night Jesus and I were laughing as we remembered hanging out in the tree house together.

Have you ever thought of how much pleasure your relationship with God brings? I'm talking about the daily, specific things that are so enjoyable. While God is holy, glorious, and we are to worship Him in reverence, there is also the side of God that wants to get closer to us, to be our best Friend. If you look at God in the Trinity you will find a Father that wants you to call Him "Daddy" (Romans 8:15), a Bridegroom that wants to be one in Spirit with you (I Corinthians 6:17), and a Counselor and Tutor who lives in you and wants to be your best Friend and Helper. In every way God wants to relate to you on a personal level. **To keep God only in the throne room is to keep Him unapproachable and to miss knowing a wonderful God who is full of life and fun.**

I once dreamed that I was camping with a group of people and we badly needed some dishes, pans, and such for cooking, so a friend and I set off to see what we could find in the surrounding woods. Before long the woods opened into a clearing holding a very large building. It had no windows, just a door in the front. We went inside, as I was hoping to find some things we could use at the campsite. Filling the large room were row upon row of shelves reaching all the way to the ceiling. Each shelf was covered with items made of precious metals and jewels, all beautiful. I suddenly realized that we were in God's warehouse and that we were free to take anything we wanted. I immediately began to load my arms with practical things like bowls and cups. The fact that they were solid gold was beside the point, I was looking for anything we could use back at camp.

As I walked among the shelves I was amazed at the beauty of everything there, how intricate and exquisite each piece was. Making my way to the back of the building I noticed my friend standing at the last row of shelves. I walked over to see what they had chosen to take, and was so surprised by their choice I just stood and stared. They had somehow found a few little discs made out of wood. You know, the kind with a hollowed out indentation and referred to as "worry stones," to be carried in your pocket. My friend was holding some small wooden discs for that purpose. As I stood staring in amazement at their choice, I woke.

Out of the whole warehouse of everything anyone could possibly want, this person had only chosen that tiny, worthless item. In real life they were living the same way. **God had so much for them, but they wouldn't take any of it.**

It was years later that I realized what this dream showed me about my own relationship with God. Of all the beautiful things there, I only chose the practical. Not only did I not choose anything for pleasure or beauty but it had never entered my mind to do so. In real life I treated my Christianity the same way. I didn't consciously realize that my relationship with God was based on practicality, but it was.

I think that for the most part many of us live a practical Christianity, living under the impression that God is all business and service. However, even Adam and Eve, at the end of the day, got to enjoy God for pleasure. The question is, do you get fun and pleasure from hanging out with God every day? I mean with God Himself, and specific things, not that you love teaching your Sunday School class or you're always blessed to witness to people or you love the beauty of the Sunday service. I'm talking about with God Himself, just because you love Him so desperately and because He's so much fun and because He so desperately loves you back.

Something cool happened to me this morning. I'm really into fun and pleasure, and at the beginning of the year I was thinking about how I could add even more fun into my day to counteract all the real-life stresses and pressures, and I came up with this idea. I picked out all the Bible verses I could find where Jesus, as my Bridegroom, personally says something to me, and then printed three copies of them so I'd have a lot to draw from. I cut them apart, folded them into fourths, and put them into a beautiful box I found for half price at Big Lots. Yeah, it did have Christmas pictures on it but beggars can't be choosers, and I was just happy

to have a pretty box. Being obsessive compulsive I stirred the verses good, tossing them well to mix them.

Every morning now, since January the first, I sit on my bed eating my wonderful breakfast with my lovely plate and mug, and I draw out a verse and read it. It is a verse specifically from Jesus to me about how much He loves me. Then I copy the verse into my little red notebook and write my thoughts about it.

So this morning I drew my verse and it was the same verse that I drew yesterday. When I drew it yesterday it had really touched me, so getting the same verse again today was God personally emphasizing it to me. "My heart is changed within me," He said, "All my compassion is aroused." (Hosea 11:8) How cool is that? "All" God's compassion is a lot, and He lavishes it on me. It was like getting a big hug from God.

The other night I wrote this in my notebook:

Time with You gives me peace, makes me laugh, renews my strength, overwhelms me with your love, gives me insight, fills my heart with love for you, lifts my burdens, calms my fears, makes me think, smoothes out my frustrations, heals my hurts, and gives me confidence, contentment, and joy. Wow! What would life look like if I spent LOTS of time with You?"

I was thinking about that the next morning as I opened the book I read each day during breakfast called *We Brake For Joy*, by Women of Faith. I always skip the verse at the top and jump straight into the story, but that day it caught my eye as I read: *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.* (Acts 4:13) I love it when God validates my thoughts and feelings.

There are times both personally and corporately when we worship God in awe and humility, but He also wants to get closer to us than that. He wants to be our Friend. We say that but we have a hard time really believing it, or letting Him get close enough to enjoy us. However, if we'll start *expecting* God to be real and to *want* to enjoy our company, we'll be surprised at how much fun He is.

What do some of my daily pleasures with God look like? During the day when I'm in situations I don't want to be in He catches my eye across the room and grins, and I can't help but laugh. When I'm tired I slip away, (even if the only place I can be alone is the bathroom), and just let Him hold me. His arms are so strong and loving. I love all the ways He finds to remind me during the day that He loves me, like now when my glance falls on this wonderful candle on my desk that smells of cinnamon (thank you Trini), and I pick it up and take a big whiff and smile with Him. He loves things that smell wonderful, after all He created them and gave us a nose to enjoy them. When the sun touches my skin my heart turns to Him and I cry out "Shine on me!" Walking at night I remember the fun Jesus and I had the night we danced on the stars, and we laugh together and remember. Tonight I was eating a banana as Jesus and I hung out and talked. Part of the conversation went like this.

(Me) "Do you like bananas? Oh yeah, of course you do, you made them. You probably like to eat all the food you made, huh? Is there anything you don't like?"

(Jesus) "Intestines. We didn't create them to be eaten."

We laughed a lot, just relaxing and enjoying each other. Everything about my day reminds me of good times together with God.

People's pleasure in their relationship with God will look different, but we should all be enjoying Him. Besides your regular Bible reading, devotionals, disciplines, or whatever, you need to learn to enjoy God Himself, just because He's worth knowing and enjoying and because He so wants to enjoy you. You'll soon discover what a huge pleasure it is to do everything together. You'll find yourself laughing more than you've ever laughed before, and building memories that will carry you through hard times.

Don't step inside God's warehouse and only take a wooden disc or some practical bowls and cups. **Pile your arms with the beautiful and pleasurable.**