



Leisure

After spending time for work, study, sleep, eating, and other necessary activities, we are left with “free time” or “leisure time.” Leisure may include relaxing, recreation and entertainment.¹

1. What kinds of things do *you* like to do in your free time?

What Does the Bible Say about Leisure?

The Bible speaks about the need for rest (*e.g. Mark 6:31*) but says little about recreation and entertainment which are the focus of this lesson.² However, the Bible gives us principles that apply to our leisure.

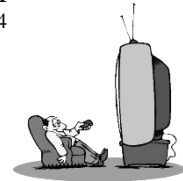
Place of Leisure

While the Bible says little about leisure activities, they do have a place in the Christian’s life. It’s good to have some “leisure time” and find enjoyment in the good things of God’s creation.

- 📖 “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (*1 Timothy 4:4-5*).³

Leisure has a place in our lives, but it can take either a proper place or a wrong place.

2. In what ways can leisure take a wrong place (wrong order) in our lives?⁴



- 📖 “...There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be ...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (*2 Timothy 3:1-3, NIV*).

¹ *leisure* – ‘use of free time for enjoyment;’ *recreation* – ‘activity done for enjoyment when one is not working;’ *entertainment* – ‘the action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment.’ (*Oxford Dictionaries*)
As someone has put it, ‘Leisure is being able to do what you want instead of what you must.’

² God commanded his people to rest (*Exodus 20:8-11*) but leisure also includes entertainment and recreation. What does the Bible say? The words ‘entertain’ and ‘entertainment’ are used only in the context of kings or rulers (*Judges 16: 25, 27; Daniel 6:18*) or in the sense of hospitality (*Acts 28:7; Hebrews 13:2*). The word ‘recreation’ is not found in the Bible. The Bible mentions sports but typically only as metaphors for the Christian life (*1 Cor. 9:24-25; 2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 12:1*). The Bible gives evidence that banquets, music, and dancing were common activities in various settings (*e.g., Genesis 31:27; Isa. 5:12; Luke 7:32*). Archeology gives evidence of board games. It should be noted that common people in Bible times had less time and opportunities for leisure than we do today.

³ The context of these verses is Paul’s response to false teaching that apparently measured holiness by what is denied or given up – in particular, giving up marriage and abstaining from certain foods (*1 Tim. 4:3*). Paul’s response can be applied more generally. Christians may differ concerning what is appropriate use of our free time, including our choices of leisure activities. Other relevant passages include Romans 14:1-23, 1 Corinthians 8; 10:23-33.

⁴ Leisure takes a ‘wrong place’ when it displaces other things (and persons) that are more important. Leisure takes a ‘wrong place’ when: we allow it to be our focus or goal, or place we seek fulfillment; we allow it to distract us from our responsibilities; we become consumed by it or addicted to it. Leisure takes a ‘wrong place’ when it harms relationships with loved ones, or negatively affects our relationship with God. Leisure can become our ‘god.’

3. How can we keep leisure in its proper place (proper order)?

- 📖 “But seek first [God’s] kingdom and his righteousness...” (*Matthew 6:33*).⁵
- 📖 “Live as children of light... Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (*Ephesians 5:8b, 15-16, NIV*).⁶
- 📖 “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*1 Corinthians 10:31*).



Pitfalls of Leisure

Leisure activities can be good for us, or bad for us. There are pitfalls (dangers) in leisure.⁷

4. How can we avoid, or guard against, the pitfalls of leisure? Consider specific examples.⁸

- 📖 “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (*Philippians 4:8, NIV*).
- 📖 “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (*Proverbs 4:23*).⁹

We can guard against pitfalls by asking ourselves questions. For example: If Jesus were physically here, would I invite him to join me in this activity? What would he say about it?¹⁰

Proposals for Leisure

As participants in ICF, we’ve had many good leisure activities through the years.

5. Do you have ideas for doing something together this month? What are they?

Reflection/Application

- Consider the leisure activities in your life. Are they taking a proper place or a wrong place in your life? Are they subject to pitfalls? By God’s grace, make the necessary changes so that whatever you do, you can enjoy it with Jesus, and do it all for the glory (honor) of God.¹¹

⁵ This phrase comes from a different context – Jesus’ teaching on worry (*Matt. 6:25-34*) but it applies to all of life!

⁶ In this dark world, Christians (‘children of light’) are to use their time and opportunities wisely, sharing the ‘light’ of Jesus (his goodness, righteousness and truth) with others through their actions and words (*cp. Colossians 3:17*).

⁷ Some leisure activities are morally bad in themselves. Some leisure activities involve association with, or exposure to, immorality. We should consider how our leisure activities affect us and others, whether positively or negatively.

⁸ As we get specific, the subject of leisure may become controversial because people have different beliefs about what leisure activities are appropriate for Christians (see footnote 3).

⁹ *David wrote to the LORD*, ‘I will be careful to lead a blameless life— when will you come to me? I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart. I will not look with approval on anything that is vile (worthless). I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it.’ (*Psalms 101:2-3, NIV*)

¹⁰ Of course, Jesus is always with his followers in the spiritual sense but asking these questions causes us to think. Other questions: Why do I want to do it? What purpose will it serve? Will it help or hinder holy living? Does it violate my conscience? May it cause others to stumble? May it tempt me into sin? Can I glorify (honor) God in it?

¹¹ To enjoy time with Jesus, we first need to trust in him as our crucified and risen Savior. Have you done that?