

the proper satisfaction of natural desires, except under special circumstances. He wants us to be grateful for what He provides, but not to make satisfaction of our cravings a primary objective.

Under normal circumstances it is the Christian's duty to keep his body and mind in such a condition that he can serve God effectively. A certain amount of relaxation and rest is a necessity for this purpose, but it should be kept within reasonable limits. Thus a Christian may receive desirable relaxation from watching a certain amount of television. After this point is reached additional watching of television becomes sin.

Revolting against the over-emphasis on pleasure among worldly people, some have adopted the idea that the Christian should not merely abstain from seeking pleasure as an end in itself, but that he should abhor it and try to rid himself of all desire for earthly things. While far preferable to the hedonistic attitude, this is not the teaching of Christianity. The purpose of the Christian is to put Christ and His will first. The Christian seeks a reasonable position, neither striving for pleasure nor trying to avoid it, but seeking to do the will of God.

Aspects of Hedonism

It is important for the Christian to have a clear understanding of three types of pleasure, which can be illustrated by the ways the devil tried to mislead Christ when He was tempted in the desert for 40 days. Each of these temptations represents something which is entirely right in its proper place, but which becomes very dangerous if made a supreme objective.

The first of these temptations related specifically to the cravings of the human body. Luke 4 tells us that Jesus Christ did not eat anything during these 40 days. When He was hungry the devil said to Him; "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

Jesus' hunger was a natural impulse. It was a desire which would be perfectly proper to satisfy and which He normally did satisfy. However, if He used His supernatural power to satisfy His hunger He would be giving this human desire an importance beyond what it deserved. He possessed His supernatural power in order to manifest the glory of God. The devil tempted Him to use this power for merely the satisfaction of His natural instincts.