

A devotion from Lutheran Women's Missionary League–Canada

Meandering through “simple pleasures”

If you log on to the Internet and “google” the phrase *simple pleasures*, you will get 12,300,000 hits (as of July 2006). In contrast, googling the phrase *complex pleasures* only garners 5,240,000 hits. Can you draw any conclusions from this little search?

High-tech toys and “gadgets” are the desire of many hearts and hands. They are “simple to use” and “easy to handle.” Have we moved away from appreciating life’s simpler pleasures?

Whether it be simple or otherwise, is there a “dark side” or a dead end to pleasure? See **Ecclesiastes 2, especially verses 1-11**. What simple pleasures can turn into addictions?

We look for simple delights to cheer our day. Many people say the *smell* of fresh bread is a simple pleasure. Or maybe they enjoy the *taste* of warm chocolate chip cookies. Others like the *feel* of clean sheets, while still others appreciate *seeing* the sun go down or *hearing* the sounds of springtime. Do simple pleasures affect the body or the mind? What does this say about the God who created us?

When you break them down, simple pleasures like birds singing, green grass, fresh flowers, and healthy hands, eyes, and ears really are not all that simple. Why is this so? Does the scientific examination and study of these things show us how complex God’s creation really is?

The “Old Adam” within us prefers secrecy and cunning. Human beings can be two-faced and deceitful, operating with hidden agendas. With this in mind, why would we simply enjoy those who are open, frank, candid, forthright, truthful, and honest in their speech and actions? Why are these people, so to speak, “a breath of fresh air”?

Read **Matthew 5:37**. Another simple pleasure is “a short answer”! Compare **Ecclesiastes 5:1-3**. To make things simple, we will do well to avoid flattery, half-truths, and attempts to impress others with impressive words. How does this also influence our prayers? See **Matthew 6:7**.

I'm not sure why, but many people dislike poetry. Given the choice, I prefer *short* poems that *rhyme*. Perhaps this could be called a simple pleasure. (Don't tell my wife I enjoy poetry.) Simple things like words, or paints, or musical notes can be combined to compose "masterpieces." Can you think of some religious masterpieces? What makes them so?

Some people enjoy "comfort foods" as a simple pleasure: chocolate, cheese, chips, etc. Read **Mark 8:1-9a**. How is "comfort food" extended to the crowd? How else does God extend His compassion to His people today in the form of holy food?

How did a long walk become a simple pleasure for two disciples? See **Luke 24:32**. (You may wish to read the whole story, 24:13-35.)

How did a "simple bath" turn into a great joy for one man? See **Acts 8:36-39**. (You may wish to read the whole story, 8:26-40.)

How did a simple conversation result in many souls becoming followers of the Saviour? See **John 4:39**. (You may wish to read the whole story, 4:3-43.)

Consider **Ecclesiastes 9:7-9**. How do family meals offer a simple enjoyment?

Is there any contrast or difference between simple pleasures and godly treasures? Consider the words of Jesus in **Matthew 6:19-21**, where He instructs us not to "heap up" or accumulate treasures. Why do we feel a certain "release" when we clean out the clutter and simplify our lives? Would it make our lives more simple or pleasurable if we took to heart Jesus' words in **Luke 12:33**? In view of all this, could "giving things away" become a simple pleasure?

The *Small Catechism* of Dr. Martin Luther has been described as "a road map to the Scriptures." He himself called it a "simple" statement of Christian teaching. How can the catechism be understood as a simple pleasure? You may wish to read the first two paragraphs in Luther's Preface to the *Small Catechism*.

Though Dr. Luther called the catechism "simple," he did not agree with those who regarded it as simple and "silly." If you have a Book of Concord, you may enjoy reading the Longer Preface to the *Large Catechism*, paragraphs 5-9, 12-13.

Closing: sing or pray *Lutheran Worship*, #333, "God's Word Is Our Great Heritage" (TLH #283).

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