

Did God Put Us Here to Have Fun?

I write these words on the eve of the traditional Jewish New Year—a time of introspection, soul-searching and repentance for Jews around the world, a time when even secular Jews seek to make things right with God. At a time like this, it's especially important to ask the question: Why did God create us and put us here on the earth?

According to a young lady named Angel, seen on a recent interview from the Charlotte pride event and self-identified as a straight Christian, "God put us on this earth to be happy, and if being gay makes someone happy, then go for it!"

That is the logic of narcissism, the logic of what has been called "Generation Me" or the "Me First" generation: "God put us on this earth to be happy, and if (fill in the blank) makes someone happy, then go for it!"

That is also the mentality of today's carnal gospel message—a message that proclaims Jesus died for you so you could have a better life in this world. In other words, He died for you to make you happy and so you could have fun.

So if something doesn't make you happy, then it's not from the Lord, but if it makes you happy—if it makes you feel good about yourself and makes you into a bigger and better you—then it is from the Lord. (If you're saying to yourself, "It sounds like some people want to bypass the cross," you're exactly right.)

That, in a nutshell, is the gospel of narcissism, and that is what fuels the false theology embraced by so many young people today (which is one reason my heart really goes out to them; they are like sheep without a shepherd). Is it any surprise that a Google search for the phrase "God put us here to be

happy" yielded 167,000 hits?

In response to Angel's comment, which she posted on my YouTube channel, I asked, "Can you tell me where in the Bible it says that if something makes you happy, God wants you to do it? Thanks!"

She replied with a verse from Ecclesiastes: "To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness" (Eccl. 2:26).

I responded, "Yes, Angel, TO THE MAN WHO PLEASES GOD He gives happiness, which is the opposite of the point you were making. We please God when we believe in Him and live holy lives—not when we please our flesh. Do you agree?"

In other words, God put us here to know Him and serve Him and live for Him, and when we do, the result is boundless joy and true fulfillment, even in the midst of suffering and difficulty and pain.

In sharp contrast to the gospel of narcissism is this radical statement from the late Islamic leader Ayatollah Khomeini, a statement which is extreme even for Islam: "Allah did not create man so that he could have fun. The aim of creation was for mankind to be put to the test through hardship and prayer. An Islamic regime must be serious in every field. There are no jokes in Islam. There is no humor in Islam. There is no fun in Islam. There can be no fun and joy in whatever is serious."

Yet as extreme and austere as this comment is, it contains a fundamental truth (thinking now in terms of the God of the Bible as opposed to Allah): God did not put us here to have fun but to serve Him and to grow in faith and character, thereby becoming more and more like Jesus.

In the world to come, there will be no trials of our faith, no devil to resist, no flesh to crucify, no sinful world to overcome. Unfortunately, as A.W. Tozer observed decades ago,

“The idea that this world is a playground instead of a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of fundamentalist Christians.”

Even more unfortunately, the vast majority of fundamentalist Muslims do believe the world is a battleground instead of a playground, and that’s why they are willing to do anything for the cause of Allah—even things that are demonic and destructive—since they believe they are here to do Allah’s will rather than him being here to keep them happy and entertained.

Is that one reason why Islam is spreading like wildfire in countries where Christians have abandoned the gospel? Could it be that many Muslims are more devoted to a false god and a false religion than many Christians are devoted to the true God and the true religion? Could it be that these Muslims are asking Allah, “What can I do for you?” while the Christians are asking the Lord, “What can You do for me?”

Put another way, a true servant of the Lord asks, “How will this benefit Your work, Father?” whereas a carnal servant asks, “How will this benefit me?”

Without apology, Paul wrote to Timothy and urged him to “endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Messiah Jesus” (2 Tim 2:3), and he explained to the Corinthians that since Jesus died for all of us, then “those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor. 5:15).

That really says it all: We no longer live for ourselves; instead, we live for Him who died for us and was raised again. As expressed elsewhere to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Did you feel the force of those words? “You are not your own”—which is the death blow to the gospel of narcissism. “You were bought at a price”—which means that we are God’s purchased possession, His bondservants as well as His beloved sons and daughters. We are here to do His will.

But this is what the gospel of narcissism and the austere message of radical Islam totally miss: When you encounter Jesus in His glory and beauty, when the burden of your sin falls off your back like a 1,000-pound weight, when His joy and love flood your heart, then you discover the real meaning of life, then you find out why God put you on this earth, and then it becomes the consuming passion of your life to walk with Him, to become like Him, to know Him and to make Him known. Then you are truly alive. Then you discover your true destiny.

It is only then—in the light of the reality of who He is—that “the things of the world grow strangely dim” (or, as Leonard Ravenhill used to say, “grow strangely grim”) “in the light of His glory and grace.”

And it is only then, serving Him and loving Him and pleasing Him, that we discover the life that is truly abundant, the very life of the abundant God, shared with us, His children.

As Jesus said to the Father, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

Don’t sell your soul for carnal pleasures, and don’t be deceived by the joyless message of dead religion. Know the Lord! Everything else will fall into place.

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