

"FRIVOLOUS FELLOWSHIP" - A Worksheet

Are the two predominant concepts associated with "Christian Fellowship" supposed to be "food" and "fun"? Shouldn't we be able to expect conversation that is *less superficial*? And how about something that fills our *Spirits*, not just our *bellies*?

This group of studies was the outcome of my concern over the empty frivolity that exists in much of so-called "Christian fellowship." I wanted to see what God had to say about such activities (focusing, in this study, on the "fun" aspect).

Being a "worksheet," this is just a starting point for your own studies. Feel free to add additional words, verses, concepts, etc., as you wish. And remove any passages that are not applicable to your specific situation. (These verses are primarily from the New Testament, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; only occasionally from other parts of the Old Testament. In some of the word groups, verses that were deemed not relevant to the study were omitted.)

The verses that were chosen for this study were based mainly on their occurrence in the New International Version of the Bible (occasionally the New American Standard Version). If you use a different translation, you may come-up with a different list of verses, depending on how the translators chose to say it.

(Often the original Hebrew or Greek word can be translated by several English words or phrases. The translator will choose which word or phrase to use. In a *few* places, differences may occur because there may be some question as to the exact interpretation of the passage - though it would be nothing major that would seriously impact any of the Bible's teachings. It also depends on whether the translator is attempting to translate "word for word" or "meaning for meaning.")

In [*brackets with italics*] are some of the words used by various other translations, or if translations vary greatly, a general description of what the word means.

PLEASURE

A. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT PLEASURE

1. Tested and proved to be without any lasting meaning [in this life]. Ecclesiastes. 2:1,2,10
2. Wrong motive for choosing prayer requests. James 4:3
3. Temporary vs. eternal
 - Bad: Pleasures of sin = This pleasure is only temporary. [Sorrow is better; it is better to be mistreated and hurt.] Hebrews 11:25
 - Good: Pleasures associated with God's presence = This pleasure is eternal. Psalm 16:11 [*delight*]

B. CONCERNING A STRONG FOCUS OR EMPHASIS (THAT MANY PEOPLE HAVE) ON PLEASURE

1. Old Testament
 - Characteristic of the heart of fools (the "house of pleasure"). Ecclesiastes 7:4 [*mirth, having a good time*]
 - Results in poverty (the "love of pleasure"). Proverbs 21:17
2. New Testament
 - It once enslaved us... *before* we were saved. Titus 3:3
 - Those "choked" by it *do not* mature in salvation. Luke 8:14
 - Characteristic of apostates (those who claim to be saved, but who have abandoned God's ways.)
 - "love of pleasure" 2 Timothy 3:4
 - "reveling in pleasures" 2 Peter 2:13 [*revel, carouse, indulge, etc.*]
 - Contrasted with "love of God." 2 Timothy 3:4
 - Might as well be dead right now (the "widow living for pleasure") 1 Timothy 5:6

LAUGHTER

A. "LAUGHTER" OF ANIMALS - Job 39:7,18,22; 41:29

B. "GENERAL INFORMATION" [PRIMARY FOCUS = ON "GOOD" TYPES OF LAUGHTER]

1. There is a time to laugh/a time to NOT laugh. Ecclesiastes 3:4
2. It can be from God/it can be shared with others. Genesis 21:6; Job 8:21
3. Associated with...
 - Feasting [and feasting can be either good or bad] Ecclesiastes 10:19
 - Confidence in the future / confidence in God's protection. Job 5:22; Proverbs 31:25 [*smile, rejoice*]
 - Blessings/restored blessings. Genesis 21:6; Job 8:21; Psalm 126:2

C. WARNINGS ABOUT LAUGHTER: It is not as good as many people want to believe.

1. It is NOT "neutral" / it is NOT always good.
 - It is inferior to sorrow. Ecclesiastes 7:3
 - It can be a superficial "mask" - a surface expression that can conceal the true thoughts/emotions of the heart. Proverbs 14:13
 - As a way of life, it is FOOLISH/MADNESS and has no lasting significance/meaning. Ecclesiastes 2:2
2. It is NOT the predominant attitude of those who are "the blessed ones."
 - Major contrast in emphasis between the "blessed ones" and the "cursed ones." Luke 6:21,25
 - NOT an element of repentance/humility. James 4:9
 - Laughter as a fruit of repentance... will come at a LATER time. Job 8:21 (This verse contains a true principle, but it was wrongly applied to Job. See also Luke 6:21.)

3. SOME TYPES OF LAUGHTER CAN BE COMPLETELY EVIL - NOT GOOD AT ALL.
 - Something that fools do (in contrast with what the wise do). Ecclesiastes 7:6
 - Associated with drunkenness/impending judgment. Jeremiah 51:39 [*filled with joy/merriment*]
 - Often an expression of unbelief. Genesis 17:17; 18:12,13,15; Matthew 9:24 [*ridiculed*]; Mark 5:40 [*ridiculed*]; Luke 8:53 [*ridiculed*]

D. EXAMPLES OF LAUGHTER (BOTH GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES)

1. The LORD - laughing at the wicked. Psalm 2:4; 37:13; 59:8
2. LAUGHING AT OTHERS: (People) laughing at the (at times deserved) judgment received by others.
 - Enemies laughing at those who have been judged. Lamentations 1:7 [*mocking*]
 - The righteous laughing at the self-confident. Psalm 52:6
 - A coming conqueror laughing at self-confident cities. Habakkuk 1:10
 - Wisdom laughing at those who reject her. Proverbs 1:26
3. BEING LAUGHED AT: Those who are an object of laughter/ridicule (a "laughingstock"):
 - Because of one's evil deeds. Genesis 38:23; Exodus 32:25 [*objects of derision*]
 - Because of wickedness/(judgment?). Ezekiel 22:4 [*mockery*]
 - Because of judgment or apparent judgment. Job 12:4; Lamentations 3:14 [*(treated as) a joke*]

HAPPY & CHEERFUL

[These two studies were grouped-together for this reason: Though the NIV translation uses the word "happy" for the first group of verses, and the word "cheerful" for the second group, many translations will use similar words for BOTH sets of verses.]

PART 1 - HAPPY, etc.

These verses focus on genuine (God-given) happiness, not on the distorted and perverse types of "happiness" that are associated with evil thinking and godless values.

The NIV uses the word "happy" in these passages. Many other translations use words such as: *joy, rejoice, enjoy, joyful, etc.* Only additional word variations (not related to the word "joy") will be mentioned in *[italicized brackets]*.

A. HAPPINESS AS A GIFT FROM GOD... ASSOCIATED WITH...

1. Wisdom and knowledge (given to those who please God) Ecclesiastes 2:26
2. Doing good (together, they form the "best choice" of how to live) Ecclesiastes 3:12
3. Accepting one's lot in life (& happy in one's work... if/when God enables one to not only *have* possessions/wealth, but also to *enjoy* them...) Ecclesiastes 5:19

B. EFFECTS OF HAPPINESS ON ATTITUDE/APPEARANCE

1. Happiness in the heart... effects the face. Proverbs 15:13 [*glad*]
2. If happy... singing is an appropriate reaction. James 5:13 [*cheerful, in good spirits*]

C. CIRCUMSTANCES (FOR HAPPINESS)

1. When enabled by God. Ecclesiastes 5:19, etc. (See first section, above.)
 2. At the appropriate time of life - when young (but fully aware of your future judgment). [When old, it will be more difficult to be happy.] Ecclesiastes 11:9 [Note: One's awareness of future judgment, if coupled with a desire to be ready for it, will enable a person to have a God-honoring type of happiness. This passage encourages happiness, within a God-fearing context.]
 3. In good times. [In bad times, we should contemplate that they also come from God. (We should also remember Romans 8:28, which tells us that God can use even *bad* times to accomplish good for us!) Ecclesiastes 7:14
 4. When dead! Ecclesiastes 4:2 [*better off, fortunate, (should be) congratulated*] [This passage is NOT looking at the issue from the perspective of one's *eternal* destiny, but from the perspective of being released from the oppression and evil that occurs "under the sun" - that is, in this present life.]
 5. WARNING: Do not be controlled by happiness, since the time is short. [see context] 1 Corinthians 7:30 [Happiness is NOT our #1 focus.]
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PART 2 – CHEERFUL

[The word "cheerful" occurs only 5 times in the NIV. The other instance (besides the four mentioned below) involves a "cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Other translations may use words such as: *happy, glad, joyful, merry*, which would put these specific passages in some other location in this group of worksheets. The basic message found in these verses, however, would remain the same.]

A. THE FOUR VERSES

Proverbs 15:13 Happy [*glad, joyful*] heart ...results: a cheerful [*happy*] face;
CONTRAST: aching [*sad, sorrowful*] heart ...results: a crushed [*broken*] spirit.

Proverbs 15:15 Cheerful [*happy*] heart ...results: (life is like) a continual feast;
CONTRAST: oppressed people [*afflicted, poor*] ...results: their days are wretched [*difficult, evil, full of trouble, etc.*].

Proverbs 15:30 Cheerful look [*light in the eyes, twinkling eyes, etc.*] ...results: joy [*rejoicing*] in heart;
PARALLEL CONCEPT: good news ...results: healthy [*refreshed, strengthened, etc.*] bones.

Proverbs 17:22 Cheerful [*joyful*] heart ...results: (same effect as) good medicine;
CONTRAST: crushed [*broken, depressed*] spirit ...results: dried bones [*drained strength*].

B. A LOOK AT CAUSE/EFFECT; CONTRASTS/PARALLELS (the above 4 verses combined)

“POSITIVE”

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE HEART	WHAT HAPPENS ON THE FACE	THE FINAL EFFECT / RESULTS	VERSE REFERENCE
Happy heart	Cheerful face		Proverbs 15:13
	Cheerful look	Joyful heart (in others) [The ability to cheer-up others.]	Proverbs 15:30
	Expression of (good news)	Healthy bones (in others)	Proverbs 15:30
Cheerful heart		Medicine	Proverbs 17:22
Cheerful heart		Feasting (metaphoric description of a blessed life)	Proverbs 15:15

“NEGATIVE”

CAUSE	EFFECT / RESULT [or “SECOND” CAUSE]	FURTHER EFFECT / RESULTS	VERSE REFERENCE
Aching heart	Crushed spirit		Proverbs 15:13
	Crushed spirit	Dried bones	Proverbs 17:22
Oppression	Wretched days		Proverbs 15:15

C. NOTE - CONTRAST WITH LAUGHTER.

Laughter is merely "on the surface" and has no necessary relationship with what is in the heart. Proverbs 14:13

WORDS

(Selected Passages from Proverbs / Ecclesiastes / New Testament only)

[General principle: There are both good and bad uses for words.]

A. BY THEM WE WILL BE JUDGED

1. We will be condemned or acquitted [*justified, proved innocent*] by God.
Matthew 12:37

B. QUANTITY vs. QUALITY

1. FEW WORDS (small quantities) = GOOD
 - In the presence of God, good words are FEW words. (First LISTEN!)
Ecclesiastes 5:2
 - Restraint in the use of words = what a man of knowledge does. Proverbs 17:27
2. MANY WORDS (large quantities) (Overflowing abundance of words - which characterizes the fool.) = BAD
 - Sin will NOT be absent when many words [*much talk*] is present.
Proverbs 10:19
 - It results in the speech of a fool. Ecclesiastes 5:3
 - It characterizes a fool: he multiplies words [*keeps on talking*]. Ecclesiastes 10:14
 - Like much dreaming, many [*empty*] words are meaningless. Ecclesiastes 5:7
 - The more the words, the less the meaning... until nobody benefits from them. Ecclesiastes 6:11

C. BAD USE OF WORDS

1. Reckless [*careless, rash*] words (they pierce like a sword). Proverbs 12:18
2. Careless [*idle*] words (we will give account for them). Matthew 12:36
3. The fool's words - begin with folly... end with wicked madness. Ecclesiastes 10:13-14

D. ADDITIONAL "WORD" studies that could be examined.

Various verses exist, which mention phrases such as the following:

- Pleasant words
- Words of knowledge
- Reliable words
- Wise words
- Quiet words
- Etc.

(THE EMPHASIS in these verses is not so much on *whether or not it is good to use words*, but on *what their effect will be*. Most, if not all, would probably be *good* uses of words.)

MISC. OTHER WORDS RELATED TO TALKING

A. SPEECH

1. Examples of good speech
 - o Truthful speech [*word of truth*] = Paul's example. 2 Corinthians 6:7
 - o Being an example of (proper) speech [*word*] = required of Timothy [all leaders, by implication] 1 Timothy 4:12
2. Example of bad speech - the speech [*voice*] of a fool originates in "many words." Ecclesiastes 5:3

B. TALK

1. Foolish [*silly*] talk is to be avoided. Ephesians 5:4

C. JOKING

1. Connected to deception. Proverbs 26:19
2. "Coarse [*vulgar, obscene*] joking [*jesting*]" - out of place among believers. Ephesians 5:4
3. An example - a message that was considered false was viewed as "joking." (In reality, the message was true.) Genesis 19:14

D. MOCKING

1. Mocking the poor - an expression of contempt [*insult*] toward God. Proverbs 17:5

E. [The use of one's TONGUE = another possible word to study - not done here.]

FOOLS/FOOLISH

PART 1 - HIS MOUTH

A. The foolish person is predominantly associated with speaking/talking/use of his mouth.

1. Chattering [*babbling, prating*] fool. Proverbs 10:8,10
 - [Note on v. 10, differences between var. translations - The Hebrew manuscripts say the same as v. 8b: "foolish talk / babbling fool... (etc.)"; but the ancient Greek translations (which some translators prefer) say: "Bold rebuke leads to peace."]
2. The mouth of the fool.
 - Proverbs 15:2 - gushes [*spouts, pours out*] folly [*foolishness*]
 - Proverbs 15:14 - feeds on folly [*foolishness*]
 - Proverbs 18:7 - brings his destruction/ruin
 - Proverbs 26:7 - [about the uselessness of a proverb when he quotes it]
 - Proverbs 26:9 - [about the uselessness of a proverb when he quotes it]
3. The speech of a fool. Ecclesiastes 5:3 - associated with lots of talking/"many words"
4. Multiplies words / keeps on talking. Ecclesiastes 10:14
5. Consumed by his own lips. Ecclesiastes 10:12
6. Making rash promises/vows; God not pleased with such people. Ecclesiastes 5:4

B. If he would only keep quiet... he would be thought wise! Proverbs 17:28

PART 2 - HIS HEART

A. The heart/mind of fools...

1. A source of folly [*foolishness*]. Proverbs 12:23
2. In the house of pleasure [*mirth, a good time*]. Ecclesiastes 7:4

B. Pleasure-oriented/light-hearted (connected with the "house of pleasure" in the previous section). [Also associated with the presence of *words*.]

1. The song [*praise*] of fools. Ecclesiastes 7:5
2. Laughter of fools. Ecclesiastes 7:6
 - o Note also Ecclesiastes 2:2, which describes laughter (if it is the focus of one's life) as foolish [*madness*].

CONTROL (See also "Self-Control")

[Note: the general concept of "control" is found in many contexts, and can be translated in many different ways. Sometimes it might not even be found in the original languages, but needs added for smooth reading in the English language. (The *idea* might be present, though the word isn't.) In these passages, the NIV happened to use the word "control," though other words may be equally acceptable.]

A. CONTROL OF NATURE/CREATION/THINGS IN IT

1. All things - under Jesus' control. Philippians 3:21 [*subdue, subject all things, bring under (his) authority*]
2. Clouds - under God's control Job 37:15 [*command*]
3. Plagues - under God's control Revelation 16:9 [*power/authority*]
4. Animals - put under Nebuchadnezzar's control (by God) Jeremiah 28:14 [*(animals) "given" (to him, to serve him)*]

B. CONTROL OF WORLD/WEALTH/POSSESSIONS

1. The whole world system - controlled by the evil one. 1 John 5:19 [*under the power of...*]
2. Treasures of Egypt (etc.) - controlled by "self-exalting king." Daniel 11:43 [*have power over*]
3. The works of one's hands - controlled (after he dies) by the one who inherits it - regardless of whether the inheritor is wise or foolish. Ecclesiastes 2:19 [*be master over*] [RESULTS: There is no "lasting meaning" in the works of one's hands.]

C. CONTROLLING OTHERS: nations/peoples/individuals being controlled by others

1. In general - nations, etc., controlled by various leaders or by other nations, etc. Joshua 18:1 [*subdued*]; 2 Samuel 8:1 & 1 Chronicles 18:1 [*(take) from the hand/grip (of)*]; 2 Samuel 8:3 & 1 Chronicles 18:3 [*rule, dominion, power*]; 1 Kings 11:24 [*reigned, became king*]; 2 Chronicles 17:5 [*in his hand (made secure)*]; 25:3 [*in his hand, well established*]
2. Specific individuals controlled by others
 - Weak-willed women - controlled by apostates (people who claim to be "Christian" but who have departed from the truth of God). 2 Timothy 3:6 [*captivate, get influence over, mislead*]
 - A husband "controlling" one's wife in a proper, legitimate, and holy manner. [*** Depends on the interpretation of the word "vessel" - whether it is referring to the man, or to his wife. (The other interpretation is mentioned in a section, below.)*] 1 Thessalonians 4:4 [*possess, live with, acquire*]

D. CONTROLLING SELF: control (or lack of it) over one's emotions/actions/words/self

1. A general example of being "out of control" (Israelites, when sacrificing to the golden cow). Exodus 32:25 [*out of hand, wild*]
2. Controlling of one's emotions/temper
 - Better than conquering a city. Proverbs 16:32 [*slow to anger, patient*]
 - A characteristic of the wise man (not the fool). Proverbs 29:11 [*(he) holds back (anger)*]
 - A specific instance in which *lack of control* was not wrong: Unable to keep control of one's emotions (in an emotional situation) - Joseph. Genesis 45:1
3. Control of one's Body (focus = on sexual self-control)
 - The need to control one's body in a proper, holy manner. [*** Depends on the interpretation of the word "vessel" - whether it is referring to the man, or to his wife. (The other interpretation is mentioned in a section, above.)*] 1 Thessalonians 4:4 [*possess, live with, acquire*]
 - Sexual self-control & marriage:
 - If you have sexual self-control: a good reason to NOT marry. 1 Corinthians 7:37 [*power (over his will/desires)*]
 - If you *don't* have sexual self-control: a good reason to marry. 1 Corinthians 7:9 [*self-control*]
4. Controlling one's "prophetic spirit"
 - It is under the prophet's control. 1 Corinthians 14:32 [*subject (to their) control; subject (to them)*]

E. CONTROL OF THE SPIRIT/RIGHTEOUSNESS VS. CONTROL OF THE FLESH [*Which of them controls us?*]

1. Control by the Spirit
 - It is true of *all* who have the Spirit of God/Christ. Romans 8:9 [*to be "in" (or) living by (the flesh - vs. the Spirit)*]
 - The mind controlled by the Spirit contrasted with the mind of sinful man: the first results in life/peace; the second in death. Romans 8:6 [*(a mind) set on (or) concerned with... (the flesh or Spirit)*]
2. The "control of righteousness" - does not effect those who are slaves to sin. Romans 6:20 [*(free) "from" (or) "in regard to" (its control); felt no obligation to do it (that is, to do what is right)*]
3. Control by the flesh
 - This *once* applied to us (and it resulted in fruit that led to death). Romans 7:5 [*(living) "in" (the flesh / corrupt natural inclinations)*]
 - It is *no longer* true of us (who have the Spirit of God/Christ). Romans 8:9 [*to be "in" (or) living by (the flesh)*]
 - Those controlled by the flesh CANNOT please God. Romans 8:8 [*to be "in" (or) living by (the flesh)*]

SELF-CONTROL (See also "Control")

A. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SELF-CONTROL AND SALVATION / SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. An element of "faith in Jesus Christ." Acts 24:25 (compare to v. 24)
2. Taught to us by the grace [*saving kindness*] of God. Titus 2:12
3. Fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:23
4. Must be added to *faith* (and the other listed Christian virtues), in increasing measure. 2 Peter 1:6 (v. 5-7)

B. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SELF-CONTROL AND OTHER THINGS

1. NOW: Things that are, or that should [i.e., must] be done.
 - Belonging to the "day." 1 Thessalonians 5:8 [*sober*]
 - Minds prepared for action. (Also: confident hope.) 1 Peter 1:13
 - Prayer. 1 Peter 4:7
 - Putting on faith/love/hope. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 [*sober*]
2. FUTURE: Things to come
 - Anticipation of "the end." 1 Peter 4:7
 - Waiting for Jesus Christ Titus 2:12 (& v. 13)
 - Minds focused on the grace/kindness you confidently hope for [look forward to] - (to be given/received when Jesus returns). 1 Peter 1:13
3. Opposition to evil
 - Saying "NO" to ungodliness and worldly passions. Titus 2:12
 - Resisting the Devil 1 Peter 5:8 (& v.9)

C. ADDITIONAL ATTITUDES & CHARACTER TRAITS THAT ARE REQUIRED (IN ADDITION TO SELF-CONTROL)

1. Proper use of the mind; attentiveness
 - "Alert and self-controlled." 1 Thessalonians 5:6 [*sober*], 1 Peter 5:8 [*sober*]
 - "Clear-minded and self-controlled." 1 Peter 4:7 [*both words translated various ways*]

2. Other Characteristics/qualities required in believer's lives.
 - List of qualifications for being an overseer. 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8 [*both verses: sober-minded, good judgment, sensible, etc.*]
 - List of virtues / character traits, that must be ever-increasing in the believer's life. 2 Peter 1:5-6
 - List of several things an older woman must teach younger women, regarding how to live their lives. Titus 2:5 [*self controlled, sensible, wise, discreet, etc.*]
 - One of the several characteristics required of older men Titus 2:2 [*sensible, wise, good judgment*]
 - How the grace of God teaches all of us to live: self-controlled, upright, and godly. Titus 2:12 [*sensibly, temperately, self-restrained*]

D. REQUIRED BY...

1. Overseers 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8 [*both verses: sober-minded, good judgment, sensible, etc.*]
2. Older men Titus 2:2 [*sensible, wise, good judgment, etc.*]
3. Younger men Titus 2:6 [*sensible, wise, good judgment, etc.*]
4. Older women are to teach it to younger women. [Implies that both must have it.] Titus 2:5 [*self controlled, sensible, wise, discreet, etc.*]
5. DIRECT COMMANDS APPLIED TO ALL - 1 Thessalonians 5:6,8; 1 Peter 1:13,5:8; 2 Peter 1:6; etc.

E. LACK OF SELF-CONTROL

1. General comments about it
 - Those without it are likened to a city with broken-down walls (= defenseless). Proverbs 25:28
 - A characteristic of people in the "Last Days." 2 Timothy 3:3 [*profligate*]
 - Lack of self-control in sexual matters is one of the reasons that a husband and wife should *not* avoid sexual relations for extended periods of time. 1 Corinthians 7:5
2. People who don't have self-control: what they are like
 - Nearsighted, blind, forgetful about being cleansed from past sins. 2 Peter 1:6+
 - Sleeping in darkness. 1 Thessalonians 5:6