

# CURRENT EVENTS

## Hedonism

It has been said before that the problem in our culture is that nobody thinks anymore – they just feel. But what is meant by this exactly? It means that feelings are the things that control many peoples' actions, words, and thoughts. Feelings are the *control center* for many people. But what is meant by feelings, exactly?

There is an old teaching going back to Epicurus, as well as in the various portions of the Bible, where people and cultures pursue *pleasure* as the goal for life. But it is a bit more complex than this, though. Pleasure is associated with goodness, and pain is associated with evil. That which feels good, must be good. That which feels bad, must be bad. And so, the goal of hedonism is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain – at all costs.

The Apostle Paul hits on this mentality in Philippians where he talks about individuals who have god as their stomach – their highest desire and good is whatever their stomach demands. The book of Judges alludes to this mindset as well – in those days, there was no king in Israel, people did whatever they felt like doing.

To the point, hedonism fixates on pleasure and pain – maximizes one and despises the other.

But is this so very prevalent? Listen to the following quotes taken from American icons:

*"God wants my life to be about being successful and being happy. As long as you're not hurting anyone, your choices are your choices."*

- Miley Cyrus

*"I'd far rather be happy than right any day."*

- Girlfriendology

*"Never be ashamed of what you feel. You have the right to feel any emotion that you want, and to do what makes you Happy."*

- Demi Lovato

*"I don't really know her, and I'm trying to understand it because I don't fully understand it either, but I also want everyone to be happy . . . I want her to be happy, which is what I want for her and me."*

- Ellen Degeneres

Now, how shall we understand hedonism from a Biblical perspective?

- 1) Is suffering always bad for a person? See Psalm 119, as well as Romans 5:3-4.
- 2) If a person's pleasure is their *control center*, what if another person's pleasure is another person's pain? What happens when everyone does what they think is right in their own eyes?
- 3) According to Paul and Judges, what does a Hedonist lack – or, perhaps we could say it this way, how are hedonists nearsighted, or narrow-minded?
- 4) Examine Ecclesiastes 2. What was the result of Solomon's hedonistic appetite? What did he conclude?
- 5) Contemplate the difference between pleasure and contentment. Can one have contentment within pleasure and pain?
- 6) Are there churches that promote an atmosphere of hedonism vs. an atmosphere of, "Take up your cross"? If so, why?
- 7) What is our control center, if not our feelings?

### GENERAL DEFINITION:

*Pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life.*

### TAUGHT BY:

- Epicurus (341-270 BC)
- Modern Culture
- Philippians 3:19
- Judges 17:6
- Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

### BROADER DEFINITION:

*Hedonism is the idea that all people have the right to do everything in their power to get the greatest amount of pleasure possible (assuming that their actions do not infringe on the equal rights of others). It is also the idea that every person's pleasure should far surpass their amount of pain.*

### DISCUSSION PASSAGE

*Philippians 3:19 - Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

*Judges 17:6 - In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

*Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 - Everything I wanted I took—I never said no to myself. I gave in to every impulse, held back nothing. I sucked the marrow of pleasure out of every task—my reward to myself for a hard day's work! Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke. Smoke and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing.*

