

“How to Have Fun with Integrity”
Philippians 2:11

Today we get the #1 song on Billboard Magazine’s top 100 list ... number one! And frankly, it’s not much of a song. It’s short, shallow, repetitive, and doesn’t say much. But, it’s fun ... BOY is it fun! [Snippet one]

There’s an innocence to the song that is captivating ... play this song in a room of preschoolers, and they’ll hop up and bounce like crazy. It’s fun!

But, as is the case with most kinds of fun, innocence can turn to something else quickly ... to “twist” means to intertwine or interlace two objects, and when those objects are a teenage boy and a teenage girl, doing the “twist” could get a bit too intertwined! I can imagine grandpa coming in the room when the kids are having a dance party ... “Isn’t that cute ... they’re doing the twist!” Today there are many songs our kids listen to that, to an outsider like me, seem innocent ... but to the kids listening to the song, there’s another meaning that escapes me completely.

So, today’s message is a friendly reminder that God wants us to have lots of fun, and lots of integrity, at the same time.

The verse I think that applies best here is from Philippians 2:11, “ And everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and bring glory to God the Father.” There’s a two-fold test to apply to anything that’s fun ...

- 1) Does this “confess” (agree with) my belief that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- 2) Does this “bring glory to” (shine a favorable light upon) God the father.

If what you’re doing for fun can pass these two tests, you’re right on track!

Let’s get into a bit more detail using the story of a fun-loving, fun-seeking, young man we find in Luke 15:11-32, the “prodigal son”.

A. Good fun means waiting for the right time.

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

-- Obviously, this young guy was in a hurry to experience all that life has to offer. But, remember, all that life has to offer happens “in a lifetime” and NOT “over the weekend.”

-- There’s plenty of fun and joy and happiness ahead, you don’t have to rush into it. What I mean is that there’s a time and place for everything and something that God intends for you to enjoy later isn’t meant to be enjoyed today.

-- Example: Sex is for marriage.

B. Good fun means managing yourself well.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

-- A “prodigal” is someone who wastes himself with extravagance. He blew through his money so fast ... so recklessly ... the fun was over before he realized it.

-- Example: Alcohol can be a beverage, enjoyed in moderation. It’s potential for abuse is SO HIGH, I recommend no alcohol use at all. Rushing ahead to the next drink substitutes a chemical buzz for the intended buzz of a growing relationship.

-- Let’s get back to our song, “the twist.” Listen to the second verse. [snippet two]

My daddy is sleepin' and mama ain't around
Yeah daddy is sleepin' and mama ain't around
We're gonna twisty twisty twisty
'Til we turn the house down
Come on and twist yeah baby twist
Oooh-yeah just like this
Come on little miss and do the twist

Chubby Checker’s thinking, “OH! Daddy’s upstairs nappin’ ... momma’s gettin’ groceries ... and we got the downstairs all to ourselves!” Pure innocence, I’m sure. Notice the “prodigal son” wanted to have fun away from daddy ... away from the reassuring glance of momma. Why? To do his own thing of course, without their interference. Here’s the thing though ... **“fun that requires darkness or isolation, produces darkness and isolation.”**

C. Good fun means valuing your friends and family.

¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

-- Truth: He realized what he wanted to get away and discover, he already had at home!

-- Reality check: Some people have never learned how to have fun with integrity from their own family or friends ... all they know is the prodigal lifestyle. It's never too late to learn, if that's you! There's a thousand wholesome ways to have fun, from playing cards with another couple or to attending a bingo night together at church.

D. Good fun means making good decisions.

¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

-- He admitted he was in the wrong place. So, he decided to move to a better place. That's one thing I love about being in Christ ... each day is a fresh start and a new chance to move to a better place.

E. Good fun means having a spirit of celebration.

²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

-- More parties. We need to throw more parties. So many wasted chances to celebrate. God loves a GOOD party.

F. Good fun means being a good example.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

Our song has a big brother too! [snippet 3]

Yeah you should see my little Sis
You should see my my little Sis
She really knows how to rock
She knows how to twist
Come on and twist yeah baby twist
Oooh-yeah just like this
Come on little miss and do the twist
Yeah rock on now
Yeah twist on now
Twist.

Fun people draw a crowd. Fun people are attractive ... for better, or worse. Maybe if the prodigal's big brother hadn't viewed himself as a slave, he could have had a bit more fun himself!

Chubby Checker's song talks about "my little sis." If that's you, be a good role model as a big brother, she needs you to show her how to have good, wholesome, fun.

G. Good fun means seeing life through your heavenly father's eyes.

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

-- The older son is the “stick-in-the-mud.” He’s the “party-pooper.” Too many Christians become so rigid or judgmental that they rule out having any fun at all.
-- Adopt the father’s perspective. Celebrate life. Be disgusted with things that bring death. Remain a hopeful, joyous person, eager to affirm those that turn from death to life.

A closing prayer ... “Dear God, pour into our lives Your thirst for integrity. Help us affirm Your desire for us to live life at its fullest, and to experience all that You desire for us. In Jesus’ name, amen.”