

Are you having fun?

This question isn't for partygoers. It's for church folks. Why aren't we having fun?

"Have you lost it, Bob? You don't go to church to have fun," you respond. "Why not?" I ask. Saturday nights are fun. Forget job hassles. Hang with jolly folks. Enjoy lively music. Take away fun, and we're halfway to the grave. Remove mirth, and it's mortician time.

On Sunday morning, out of dread and duty, many swap fun for a pious, pained look. Downbeat music and the minister's slow, dry wit depress them. They suffer through painfully slow prayers. What keeps them awake is that their limbs are asleep. Communion often brings overdoses of gloom.

Am I proposing jokes and laughter at worship services? Not necessarily, although they're preferable to some of the reverential sadness I've seen. Aren't we to act respectfully at church? Absolutely. We should honor and glorify God. But Biblical worship differs from popular conceptions of homage. *Deuteronomy 16* lists three required feasts for Israel. God ordered rejoicing at two of those feasts. God decreed rejoicing even for penitents. Israel returned remorseful and sobbing from Babylonian captivity (*Nehemiah 8*). They were told, "This day is sacred to the Lord. Do not mourn or weep."

Firmly believing in God's care, early Christians assembled with gladness. They confidently expected to be raised to life with Jesus. When they got together, they enjoyed happy hours. *"They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved," Acts 2: 46, 47 NLT.*