

The Empty Path Of Pleasure

By Ravi Zacharias

Enjoyment was the highest principle guiding philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's decisions. However, he later wrote that this pursuit radically failed him. Here's what he said. "In the bottomless ocean of pleasure, I have sounded in vain for a spot to cast anchor. I have felt the almost irresistible power with which one pleasure drags another after it, the kind of adulterated enthusiasm which it is capable of producing, the boredom, the torment which follow."

I have talked about the need for an over-arching story to life, by which all experiences can be pulled together, and how the denial of this story lands a person in self-destruction and spiritual emptiness. Today, let us glimpse at the path many follow-the way of pleasure.

Regarding this quest for self-fulfillment, sociologist Daniel Yankelovich arrived at an astounding analysis. He'd studied several couples in their pursuits and came to this conclusion. Please notice the word "and" in his summary of one particular couple he called "Abby and Mark."

Here's what he said. "If you feel it is imperative to fill all your needs, and if these needs are contradictory or in conflict with those of others, or are simply unfillable, then frustration inevitably follows. To Abby and to Mark self-fulfillment means having a career and marriage and children and sexual freedom and autonomy and being liberal and having money and choosing non-conformity and insisting social justice and enjoying city life and country living and simplicity and graciousness and reading and good friends and on and on."

He adds, "The individual is not truly fulfilled by becoming ever more autonomous. Indeed, to move too far in this direction is to risk psychosis, the ultimate form of autonomy. The injunction"-notice this now please- "The injunction that to find one's self, one must lose one's self, contains the truth any seeker of fulfillment needs to grasp."

Chesterton's dictum has proven true? Meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain, but from being weary of pleasure.

Have you cast your anchor, as Kierkegaard did, in "the bottomless ocean of pleasure," only to discover unfulfillment and emptiness?

Did you hear the sociologist's injunction-"to find one's self, one must lose one's self"-and you know this is actually a biblical one, taken from the words of Jesus? And the most dramatic truth of Jesus' life is that it contradicts us in the way we experience ourselves as alive and compels us to radically redefine what we mean by life. In putting our life into His hands, we find the life He has for us. That is truly living