

**I. Introduction**

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood. We are in a series called I'm Too [Blank] for Faith. Today is part five...
  - 1. Part one: I'm Too Successful.
  - 2. Part two: I'm Too Open-Minded.
  - 3. Part three: I'm Too Guilty.
  - 4. Part four: I'm Too Put-Together.
- B. I'm super-excited about how we're filling in the Blank today.
- C. Today's topic:
  - 1. I'm Too [Fun] for Faith
- D. So here's the idea.
- E. Say you get two calls on one night, and two different friends are asking you to hang out. Two different parties.
  - 1. Very different parties.
- F. Party 1
  - 1. The food is bacon wrapped little smokies.
  - 2. The drink is a variety of fine wines and champagnes.
  - 3. The entertainment is Michael Bublé with full band, flashing lights, and a giant dance floor.
- G. Party 2
  - 1. The food is pot luck.
  - 2. The drink is bottled water and coffee.
  - 3. The entertainment is a crowd breaker followed a Bible Study, and it's all topped off with a lecture on abstinence.
    - a) Two invitations, same night.
      - (1) Which party are you going to?
        - (a) Party 2, where the vibe is slow, somber, and studious.
        - (b) Party 1, where the vibe is fast-paced, fascinating, and fun.
- H. I know which one I'm going to. But I'm not going to tell you. Because I don't want to get judged.
- I. This is the dilemma of being a Christian. Christians are stereotyped as uptight, rigid, and anything but fun... or if we do have fun, it's a freakish blend of Amish butter-churning and Hee Haw, all done while wearing skorts.
- J. I'm not going to argue with the stereotype — I've seen it enough with my own eyes. Christians can be un-fun.
- K. I've got a label for them:
  - 1. Separated Christians Opposed to Worldly Living.
    - a) S.C.O.W.L.
  - 2. They make us all look bad. It was SCOWL operatives that created the list of things Christians can't do: dance, go to movies, wear makeup or show the knee for women, play cards except for Uno, and sip Champagne or wine. Those are all vile sins that will land you in hell faster than an Alice Cooper concert.
    - a) When I was a kid, and my church wouldn't allow any music with drums, it was members of SCOWL lurking in the background.
    - b) When friend's church required women to always wear a hat or head covering in church, and had a box of little hankies at the door, in case you forgot yours, that was SCOWL too.
    - c) When I mentioned I got in trouble as a 20-something youth pastor for going to a dance, and they called a special board meeting to discuss my fate, that was a meeting of SCOWL's top operatives. Oh, it wasn't any dance, it was a square dance... and, because it was her birthday, my date was my mom.
      - (1) SCOWL is everywhere, and they make all Christians look bad.
    - d) By the way, last week we talked about the prodigal son's older brother? He was a founding member of SCOWL.
      - (1) Sad to say, there are some very anti-fun groups within Christianity that make us all look bad.
  - 3. Actually, pretty much EVERY group has a subgroup that makes the whole group look bad — political, religious, academic, philosophical — whatever. You can always point to the idiots as an excuse to write off everybody.
  - 4. So, let's get beyond that. Because it's just not fair. Deal? Some Christians are un-fun, but I promise you that there are a whole lot of us who are very, very fun, and I am their poster child.
- L. Today, I'd like to consider with you the question, "What would Jesus say to a person who says, "I'm Too Fun for Faith"?"
- M. Let's start with this Scripture:
  - 1. *"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)*

**II. I'm Too Fun For Faith**

- A. Your image of God is wrong.
  - 1. The character of God is: sovereignty, holiness, righteousness, love, eternal life, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, immutability, truth, and... with for it... fun.
  - 2. If you see him as bleak and gloomy, heavy and always winding up a lighting bolt to blast somebody, your image of God is dead wrong.
    - a) To know God is to know joy.  
*The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him. (Psalms 28:7).*
    - b) To be in God's presence is to experience joy.  
*Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. (Psalms 149:2).*
    - c) To have God's salvation is to have a fountain of joy.  
*Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. (Isaiah 12:3).*

- d) To have a mature faith in God is to have a joy that words can't describe.  
*Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. (1 Peter 1:8).*
3. To me, preaching is like carving a giant block of marble. When Michelangelo carved his amazing sculpture of David, he used a hammer and a chisel. He said, he pictured the image of David inside the marble, and chipped away everything else.
4. When I preach, I believe the hammer is the Holy Spirit and the chisel is the Word of God, the Bible.
5. You are the marble, and inside of you is the mature, healthy, whole, positive identity that Christ has made you, and calls you to be.
6. Every week, I get one or two chances to chisel away some lies, and chop away some misconceptions, and straighten out some errors.
7. The two most important things are how you see yourself, and how you see your God. The labels you put on yourself and the labels you put on God. These create self-fulfilling prophecies.
8. There is a reason why we end our services the way we do.
9. I am trying to shape your image of God.
10. What is the last Bible verse I quote to you 100 percent of the times that I preach.
  - a) Hint: you have a great God, and he is with you every step you take, and...
  - b) The joy of the Lord is your strength.
11. That is a Bible verse.
  - a) *Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10).*
12. The joy of the Lord.
13. God is happy. If you could fly to heaven and see him, you would see perfect happiness. Infinite joy. Heaven's laughter never ends. God never has a bad day. He never loses control. Never worries about the things that you worry about. He has a plan, and it is absolutely fantastic. Nothing can go wrong, because his genius never fails. So he isn't moody. Isn't fussy. He is a God of pleasure. A God of happiness. A God of joy.
  - a) He has joy in his own character.
  - b) He has joy in his salvation.
  - c) He has joy in his Son, Jesus.
  - d) He has joy in his people.
  - e) He has joy in his Word.
  - f) He has joy in you.
14. Heaven will be the opposite of boring. The first thing you will feel when you see God is appreciation. The second thing is joy. You will discover that grace is a party waiting to happen, because the joy of the Lord never has an off switch.
15. Knowing that, getting that, and understanding that is the key to your personal strength. I am trying to carve in you an image of a God that radiates rivers of joy, even in life's darkest, scariest moments.
16. So I remind you every single week... to chip away the doubt and the fear.
17. The joy of the Lord is your strength.
  - a) In your spirit, you can never be stronger than when you believe God is happy.
18. So that's first thing Jesus would say to a person who says, "I'm too fun for faith."
19. The second thing comes from this verse:
  - a) *They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: "We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not weep." (Luke 7:32)*
- B. Your perception of Jesus is backwards.
  1. I would like to erase from every Christian mind the idea that Jesus was a depressing kind of a guy. That never smiled, never cracked a joke, and never had a good time.
  2. Wrong.
  3. Super wrong.
  4. Jesus was a fun guy and a funny guy. What makes it hard to get is that humor doesn't translate. He spoke Aramaic. The New Testament is written in Greek. We speak English.
  5. Humor pretty much doesn't translate.
  6. Jokes don't translate.
  7. Jesus was sarcastic. He was ironic. And he spoke with a twinkle in his eye.
  8. In this verse, Jesus is talking to ultra-religious people. He's tired of them — they're never happy.
  9. So he's had it with them. Let me rephrase what Jesus says here.
    - a) You people are a bunch of spoiled rotten little brats. You sit around and whine to each other all day long. Nobody can please you. We mess around and try to have fun, but you fold your creepy little arms and refuse to play along. So, we go the opposite route. We try serious stories on serious topics, and that doesn't make you happy either. You people are gigantic pains in the neck, as far as I'm concerned, and I'm not going to play your game.
  10. Funny stuff.
  11. Two of his disciples were pretty uncontrollable. James and John were brothers. I guess we could say they had problems with impulse control. They were always blurting stuff out, and arguing over who was Jesus's favorite.
  12. So Jesus gave them a nickname: Boanerges. Hahaha... Actually, it isn't funny till you translate it, and by then, the comedic timing is off.
  13. Boanerges means: "Sons of Commotion." I guess you had to be there. That would be the equivalent of calling James and John a couple of hairy Drama Queens.
  14. So, to make his next joke funny, you need two Aramaic words. Gamla and Galma.

- a) Galma means gnat, like the little bug.
- b) Gamla means camel, like the big hairy beast.
- 15. Jesus said:
  - a) *"Blind guides, who strain out a gnat [galma] and swallow a camel [gamla]! (Matthew 23:24).*
- 16. That's some good material there.
- 17. He mocked people. Hugged babies. Hung out with sinners. Made water into wine. And generally had a good time.
- 18. It's a horrible tragedy that for almost 2,000 years, all the artwork of Jesus showed this depressing, listless dude who never gets in the sun and whose face would shatter like glass if he even tried to smile.
- 19. Finally, there was this big breakthrough in 1973.
- 20. It wasn't until 1973 that somebody drew a picture of Jesus, not frowning, not grimacing, not looking like he had indigestion. Finally, somebody drew a picture of Jesus laughing. The artist was named Willis Wheately. He drew the picture for a nationwide evangelism push in Canada, in 1973.
  - a) It really was a breakthrough in art about Jesus.
- 21. And I'm glad. Because if you met Jesus, and went out for burgers, I am one hundred percent sure you would have a great time.
- 22. Unless you turned into some kind of goofy excuse for a hyper-saintly religious freak.
  - a) Then, you'd have a bad time, and Jesus wouldn't be laughing with you, he'd be laughing at you, and getting the whole restaurant to join in.
- 23. Bottom line: If you think Jesus is depressing, your perception of him is backwards.
  - a) The third thing Jesus would say to the partier who says, "I'm too fun for faith" is this:
- C. Your idea of fun is too shallow.
  - 1. You don't know what fun is.
  - 2. You can't handle the fun.
  - 3. You believe in God. You go to church — it's part of your life. You have a real relationship with Jesus. You study your Bible on and off, but then your really fun friends call you. They're having a party and you just have to go.
  - 4. So, you head to the party, knock back a few drinks, start to loosen up, dance with a person whose really cute, and order a pizza at midnight. Inside, your conscience is telling you to just go home, but who wants to miss a party.
  - 5. The next morning, your head is pounding, your heart is breaking, and you can't even look at yourself in the mirror.
  - 6. The Bible talks about you, and it's motivated by compassion:
    - a) *For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the pagans —when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. (1 Peter 4:3, 4).*
      - (1) Lewdness
      - (2) Lusts
      - (3) Drunkenness
      - (4) Revelries
      - (5) Drinking parties
      - (6) Abominable idolatries
      - (7) Flood of dissipation
    - (a) This is called a catalog of vices. Ancient literature is full of them, including the Bible.
    - b) I was going to run through these one by one, but why? Let's just say, "Frat party."
    - c) If Jesus showed up at a frat party, he would look around and say, Your idea of fun is too shallow.
  - 7. Self-destruction isn't fun. Having your heart broken isn't fun. Letting yourself be used isn't fun. Anonymous sex, pornographic sex, casual hook ups, unmarried sex is a mile below the real thing when it comes to the real joy that God's way offers.
    - a) Because you divorce the physical act from the ever-deepening emotional and spiritual bonded-ness that only marriage can bring.
  - 8. It's not that Jesus is mad... it's that he feels compassion, and can't stand to see people mess up their own lives.
    - a) "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." ~C.S. Lewis
  - 9. Jesus did not come to shrink the boundaries of your life. He did not live and die and live again so he could imprison you in a playpen of stupid rules and limiting regulations.
  - 10. He designed you for overwhelming joy. For laughter till you can't catch your breath. For a happiness human language can't describe.
  - 11. That is your destiny, if you are a child of God.
  - 12. That is your spiritual birthright. You are an heir of joy unspeakable and full of glory.
  - 13. When you experience one minute of the fun, joy, and pleasure of heaven, you will realize that the best times you ever had on earth were a very pale shadow of the breathtaking pleasures of the presence of God.
  - 14. And all the little stuff you do to make yourself happy is a kid playing in the mud.
  - 15. Your idea of fun is way too shallow.
  - 16. The last thing I think Jesus would say is this:
- D. "Your prodigal partying is anesthesia to dull the pain of feeling lost."
  - 1. One of the biggest breakthroughs I ever made was many years ago when I was preaching through the book of Galatians, long, long ago, and far, far away.
  - 2. I came to this verse:

- a) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22, 23).*
3. The first part is pretty simple, but that last line made me scratch my head.
4. Against these things there is no law.
5. What's he saying?
6. He's not just saying that that these things aren't illegal, because that's too obvious.
7. And he's not just saying that none of these things are spiritually off limits, though that's true, but that's not the point because that's not obvious either.
8. There are times I have to teach through Bible verses I just don't get, and I study and think and study till I get it, if I can.
9. But this one burst my little brain when I put it with the previous paragraph, which is, surprisingly enough, another catalogue of vices.
  - a) *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21).*
10. So, there's a catalog of vices and then a catalog of virtues.
11. What's he saying, and why the obvious statement that there is no law against the virtues — when it's so obvious. Why state it.
12. Here's the breakthrough I had.
13. Remember the phrase: against such there is no LAW.
14. The idea is that law is something that limits you, something that binds you, something that hems you in. Law squeezes in the boundaries of your freedom.
15. If you want to squeeze yourself into a tiny little corner, go ahead and define your fun as a frat party every single night.
  - a) Define your fun as unrestrained sexuality.
  - b) Define your fun as the pursuit of pleasure.
  - c) Define your fun as losing yourself in drugs, in drink, in addictions.
  - d) Define your fun as whatever it takes to deaden the pain of an empty life.
    - (1) Because when you do that, you build a jail cell around your heart. Your actions may look free, but in the end, you have imprisoned your own spirit.
    - (2) You have squeezed yourself into a trap.
    - (3) Make this your idea of fun, and go in too deeply, and even though you think you're free, one day you will wake up and look around, and all you will see are prison walls.
    - (4) And only the supernatural power of God can set you free.
16. What are people looking for? What is the world's great quest? What is the dream, the hope, and the longing of the human heart?
  - a) Love.
  - b) Joy.
  - c) Peace.
17. People trade everything they have for love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
  - a) When you can step out of the trap of worldly joy, and step into a life with God by his Spirit and his Word — that is true freedom. That is a vast plain... as far as the eye can see, no walls in sight. Nothing to stop you. Nothing to hem you in. An unbounded field of pleasures and joys and laughter to last forever.
  - b) Against such there is no law, no limits, no rules.
  - c) Just the glorious freedom of the children of God.

### III. Conclusion

- A. God is calling you into his joy.
- B. It wasn't till the prodigal son came home that he was able to join the party.
- C. I have been a Christian a long time. I have seen all kinds of people, and listened to all kinds of broken-hearted stories.
- D. The funnest, funniest people I have known have been Christians who walk with God.
- E. And to anybody who says, I'm too fun for Jesus, in my head, I'm thinking... No, you're actually boring. But with my mouth I'm saying... I'm glad you're having a good time. If it ever stops working for you, hit me up. Let's talk. Because maybe there's a deeper, more lasting joy waiting for you, and I'd love to tell you about him.