

Some Strange Festivals

Everybody likes to have fun. Who doesn't like a party – even if it's for no reason at all?

As a matter of fact, if you look at some of the strange festivals we celebrate here in the United States, you will soon realize that people can come up with *any* excuse to have a good time.

According to the book *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, the citizens of Monte Rio, California, hold a yearly festival in honor of the “spring invasion of the banana slug.”

Residents of Pasadena, California, hold a yearly *Doo Dah Parade*, which showcases a “garbage can drum corps.” The people of Myerstown, Pennsylvania, hold a celebration every Oct. 14 in honor of *Bald Head Day*.

Backwards Day, in which people wear their clothes backward and walk backward, is a big celebration in Fort Wayne, Indiana. And the citizens of Millington, Tennessee, are proud to host the yearly celebration of *International Goat Day*, which showcases the wonders of, well, goats!

We never lose our taste for fun. It's life-affirming. Market researchers report every year that the market keeps growing for Halloween costumes for adults. Why? Dressing up and pretending to be Superman or Cinderella or a mummy is fun. “Adult” technologies, like cell phones and computers, come pre-loaded with video games on them. More and more adults are giving themselves permission to have fun in their daily lives.



And there are endless possibilities for enjoyment in almost any facet of life. Except, it seems, in our worship of God. Many would agree that we take on some strange mannerisms when we go to church. We walk a little slower, talk a little quieter, exercise a little more restraint and a little less enthusiasm – as if, somehow, the church is a museum or a funeral home, not a meeting place where brothers and sisters celebrate the greatest joy on earth.

In a fun article by Tim Sims and Dan Pegoda entitled *101 Things to Do During a Dull Sermon*, they offer some suggestions:

- Pass a note to the organist asking whether he or she is playing requests.
- See if a yawn really is contagious.

(more)

- Devise ways of climbing into the balcony without using the stairs.
- Using church bulletins or visitor cards for raw materials, design, test and modify a collection of paper airplanes.
- Sit on the back row and roll a handful of marbles under the pews ahead of you. After the service, credit yourself with 10 points for every marble that made it to the front.
- Raise your hand and ask for permission to go to the restroom.

Mind you, I'm not recommending these actions. But I guess we find them funny because we relate to what they represent. Somehow, we've forgotten the message of Psalm 16, that in God's presence there is not just joy, but fullness of joy.

Obedience to God is a pathway to joy. But in order for us to obey God's commands, we must understand God. And that requires a relationship with God – a relationship that is only available through knowing God's son, Jesus Christ. When we know God, then we know that sincere worship and devotion flow from a sense of joy, not obligation.

Jesus said it: *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly* (John 10:10 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter