

Entertainment or Worship?

The Bible declares that men are to worship God. God is seeking for such. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, 24). The primary aim and object of worship is to praise God. To honor Him for Who He is and to praise Him for His great grace. Further, the Bible teaches that when we assemble we receive blessings as well. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). We benefit by encouraging each other in the work of the Lord--we are to build each other up (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16).

In contrast to the Bible's teaching, many men today "worship" with self being the focus, not God. They ask, "What's in it for ME?" They say, "I am looking for a church that is suited to ME." Or, "I am searching for a church that meets MY needs." What this amounts to is finding a place, not where truth and righteousness are the foremost concern, but where the most prominent people attend, the most entertaining "show" is put on, or a "smooth" sermon is preached (cf. Rom. 16:17-18).

We agree that man has needs that need to be met. He needs to hear the gospel of God's grace (Romans 10:17). He needs to know his sinfulness (Ephesians 2:1-3). He needs to know God's plan for saving man (Romans 1:16). He needs to know how to live right before God and his fellow man (2 Peter 1:3). This is the point and purpose of the church--spiritual matters. "If I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Unfortunately, there are many "churches" more than willing to cater to the carnal appetite of man. They strive to put on the biggest and best plays. They labor to assemble the best band. They offer classes on finances and weight loss. Their motto is, "If it will boost the numbers, DO IT!" What matters to you, entertainment or worship?

People will object, saying, "But, we need something to bring the people in. With these attractions we can 'reach' people who would not normally hear the gospel." Well, that is the way the devil thinks. He believed man needed worldly, carnal enticements to be lured into serving God. Remember Job? The devil thought he served God because of all his material, earthly blessings (Job 1:9-11). He was wrong! Job still honored God even though his blessings were taken away. Why? Because Job had the right heart, he was determined to serve God regardless. Today, do men need some type of carnal enticement to serve the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there something better or more profound than the pure gospel of the Son of God (Romans 1:16)? Is there something more motivating than the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 34)? No, a thousand times NO!

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, "The fact is, that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn men of its existence, and entreat them to keep out of it. When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly." Think about it. What matters to you, entertainment or worship?

- by **Steven F. Deaton**

The Problem of Apathy

Problems facing the body of Christ are many and varied. The devil opposes us with persecutions, false doctrines, and all kinds of fleshly temptations. But one of his most successful devices is apathy - an attitude of indifference which afflicts Christians and eats away their zeal like a cancer. It is highly contagious and, if unchecked, is fatal to the souls of men and women. In many areas, it has now reached epidemic proportions.

Indifference was the problem with the church in Laodicea. To that dead congregation, Jesus said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold or hot; I would that thou wert cold or hold. So, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev.

3:15-16). How many churches of Christ are in that same condition today?

Brethren, when we spend more time watching TV and playing ball than we do studying and teaching the word of God, are we not indifferent? When we find time to go to the movies and other places of entertainment, but not to visit the sick and erring, are we not indifferent? The time has come for us to wake up and get to work. Our indifference will send us to eternal hell!

- by Steve Cawthon

Two Types of Workers

Someone suggested that, while there are many different kinds of jobs, they could all be broken down into two categories: a) the kind of jobs where you shower after you finish working and b) the type of jobs where you shower before you go to work. Obviously, the first sort of job involves more intense physical effort – the kind where you ‘work up a sweat’.

This put us to thinking about Christians and their level of activity in the kingdom of Christ. Some are very hard at work, doing all they can for the Master. They study hard, pray frequently, attend faithfully, and teach others at every opportunity. They are the ones who step up when volunteers are needed to teach classes or to do chores around the church building. They visit the sick, reach out to the lost, and support the weak. They love the Lord, their brethren, and the lost - and they ‘roll up their sleeves’ and do the work necessary in all of those realms. These are the ones that serve as the real ‘back bone’ of any congregation. Without them the church would suffer, shrivel, and finally die. Such workers are truly needed and much appreciated - may their tribe increase.

Sadly, other Christians are not so energetic when it comes to working for the Lord. They attend services, but not too faithfully. They are not great Bible students and rarely spend time in prayer. They don’t try to teach the lost, and they seldom reach out to even their own brethren. These ‘lukewarm’ Christians are certainly not ‘working up a sweat’ in the kingdom, and need to be reminded of how the Lord views such mediocre performance: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16). Think!

- by Greg Gwin