

Learning to Worship

"The preacher's eyes I've never seen, though light in them may shine; for when he prays he closes his, and when he preaches, I close mine."

If I knew who wrote it I wouldn't embarrass him by telling. Besides, if the writer had been worshipping as he should, he wouldn't know that the other's eyes are closed during prayer.

That preacher had probably made a studied effort to learn how to get and keep attention. How many of us make a studied effort to give attention? Both sides may be failing. Granting (please do, or I'll feel terrible) that absolute and unwavering attention is impossible; surely there is some way to improve single-mindedness in the public worship. Perhaps the most important prerequisite is an honest appraisal of our desire. If we do not care - are so little acquainted with true worship as to think "attending," "visiting" and "gazing about the auditorium" is all God expects of us -- there is little use in going further with this.

But people who really want to worship God can improve their efforts. . .

1. "Make not Provisions for the flesh" (Rom. 13:14); that is, do not sit where there are distractions - move toward the front of the building. Unless you are forced (small children, physical disability, etc.) you cannot afford to overlook this means of improving your attention span and enriching your worshipping experience.

2. Practice charity - hear the monotone singer as one who sings to God; and the trite expressions in prayer as the efforts of an embarrassed man, saying what he thinks is expected. (You can pray your own prayer, you know; and if you lead publicly, you can set a better example for others.)

3. Listen with a view to learning! Take notes, reason through the process, being critical in a positive fashion. Better to forsake the preacher while making a note of your own, than to drift sleepily into "limbo."

4. And, when you drift, apologize to God, right then! Ask His help, and worship will become more meaningful.

- by Robert Turner

The Power of Influence

Webster defines the word influence as "the power of persons or things to affect others, seen only in its effects." Though the word influence is only found one time in the King James Version, its meaning is on every page.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his disciples that they are the "salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13-16). There are many interesting things you can say about this figure of speech. Salt is totally worthless while sitting on a shelf, it has to be applied. Salt can also loose its "saltiness." When it looses its power to flavor, it is good for nothing and must be discarded.

Paul told the brethren at Corinth they were an "epistle of Christ known and read by all men" (2 Cor. 3:1-3). Whether we like it or not, every Christian is an advertisement for Christ. It is rather scary to think the honor of Christ is in the hands of his disciples. Men of the world will judge Christ by the character of his followers.

Have you ever considered what type of an advertisement you are? One of our songs suggests that "We are the only Bible the careless world will read, We are the sinners gospel, we are the scoffers creed, We are the Lord's last message, given in deed and word, What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?"

The majority of worldly people will pay very little attention to what we say, but our actions will always be scrutinized. When they think of our character and reputation, our actions will speak louder than our words.

- by David Padfield

In Pursuit of Happiness

The Declaration of Independence famously states that we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights — "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Men are actively

engaged in that pursuit. The problem is that most people are looking for happiness in the wrong places.

Solomon had every opportunity to find happiness in the things of this world. He had wealth, power, pleasure, possessions, and unlimited opportunities to satisfy his desires. Yet after experiencing it all, he concluded that it was "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Not much has changed. People still think happiness can be found in money, gratification, recreation, success, possessions, or popularity. But those things never satisfy for long. The excitement fades, and the search begins again.

Jesus taught a different way. He described the truly blessed life as one characterized by humility, mercy, purity, and a hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:3-12). He warned that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

Real happiness is found in a right relationship with God. David said, "Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15). Solomon eventually reached the same conclusion: "Fear God, and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

If you're looking for happiness, don't search where the world searches. Look where God says it can be found. Think!

- by Greg Gwin