

The Joy of Worshipping God Together

Mankind, as God's creation, has no higher tribute than that God "visitest him" (Hebrews 2:6). Similarly, man is never more noble than when he responds by lifting up his hands and heart to worship God.

There is an aspect of the spirit of man that can be fulfilled only by worshipping God. As the eye is designed to behold beauty, and the ear is fitted to listen to harmonious sounds, so is the spirit of man created to worship and serve God (Acts 17:24-28). "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2). Men fulfill their reason for existence only when they "seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him" (Acts 17:27).

God, in infinite wisdom and boundless love has provided that we should worship Him in those ways that both exalt Him and edify us. When we can understand that the worship which pleases God and that He accepts is also that which fulfills our own greatest need, then we shall be able to worship Him with a greater depth of gratitude.

Worshipping together.

While effective worship should, at times, be rendered in the privacy of one's own closet (Matthew 6:6), God has directed also that His people join together sometimes to share in worshipping Him. The company of other people strengthens us in whatever we do, either good or bad. Even as "evil companionships corrupt" (1 Corinthians 15:33), so also the fellowship of others in the true worship of God serves to "provoke unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). When our Lord directed that His worshippers come together "upon the first day of the week... to break bread" (Acts 20:7), He was giving us the benefit of this reinforcement. If one neglects this appointment, or even joins with a church where this weekly communion is not practiced, he not only disobeys Christ, but prevents his own spiritual development.

Singing together.

Christians are admonished, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. (Colossians 3:16). Words of praise, thanksgiving, hope and admonition are all the more powerful when set to appropriate cadence and melody. Such is the value of music. When we sing together with others whose hearts are similarly stirred and attuned to God, our own soul is enlarged in its upward reach toward God and in its outward reach to embrace, in love, our brothers and sisters.

Breaking bread together.

Only in the privacy of his own heart can the worshipper "discern" that he is not merely eating bread and drinking the juice of the grapes, but is participating in "the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27). Yet Christ, through His apostles, instructed that this supper be eaten by disciples who have come together (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20, 33). While we are eating the bread and remembering the body of Jesus, sustained as it was by "bread," in which He fulfilled all righteousness and overcame sin in the flesh, we can look around at others and be impressed that we are not alone in communion with that body. Likewise, as we drink the fruit of the vine, we are reminded that Jesus' blood was truly shed "for many unto the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Such worship helps us become more fully "one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Public prayers.

We do not have to pray aloud to be heard of God for "he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit" (Romans 8:27). Yet, from the earliest days, Christians have been taught to unite in prayer (Acts 2:42; 4:24; 12:12, etc.). Joining our fellow-Christians in prayer about their burdens helps us overcome the temptation to be self-centered in our own prayers. It is also a humbling experience to hear others praying earnestly for us. Those who lead prayers in the assembly would do well to prepare for them as carefully as for a sermon or a class lesson.

David was "glad when they said unto (him), let us go unto the house of Jehovah" (Psalm 122:1). We, too, should learn to rejoice at every opportunity to join our brethren in faithful worship to God. "For the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23).

- by **Bob Crawley**

Change

We hear a lot about 'change'. Politicians frequently talk about changing things in government. Educators discuss changing our schools. Societal trends and technological advances have powerfully changed things in our daily lives. We now hear of 'personal trainers' who try to help people modify their living habits and routines. So, with all this talk about 'change,' what about 'change' when it comes to religious matters?

First, we should observe that some things should not be changed. God has clearly revealed His will for our lives in the inspired Word. What He has taught us – the things the Scriptures command and authorize (Colossians 3:17) – should NOT be altered (Revelation 22:18). Men have imagined that they can change such things, and they have proceeded to do so with abandon. At their whim, via a 'church council', or by a human vote, they make revisions to the 'perfect law of liberty' (James 1:25). Do they really think that they can improve on God's plan? Apparently so! This is wrong, and these 'changes' must be avoided.

Second, some things absolutely should be changed. Here we have in mind any sinful things that exist in our personal lives or in our collective endeavors. It is never too soon to rid ourselves of evil. John the Baptist urged his hearers to "bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). We should do the same, and we ought to do in NOW. Such change is not only good, it is commanded and necessary.

Finally, some change is neither inherently good nor bad. Some things are judgment matters. When this is the case, we can be flexible. We should "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5). It does not have to be 'my way'. I can and should yield to others. This type of change may help to advance the kingdom and do much good. In such cases we must be careful about stubbornly resisting 'change'.