

WORSHIP OR PERFORMANCE: SPECTATOR OR PARTICIPANT

As we continued our lessons on the body of Christ (the church, Colossians 1:18), we began to look at activities the church, as a group, is involved in. Most recently we noted that the church was to engage in worship. We believe it wise to examine worship more closely inasmuch as much done today in the name of worship is not. As Cain discovered, offering to God what He does not desire is catastrophic (Genesis 4). Many so-called worship services have more the appearance of concert or theatrical performances than any worship service known to the inspired writers.

Myth 1: I don't get anything out of the services.

This is a frequent and probably accurate complaint lodged by some. Certainly, those leading in public worship are to offer their best unto God. The preacher must seek to honestly and truthfully deliver God's word to what should be a hungry audience of hearers (Matthew 5:6). Woe under the preacher that wastes the time of the disciples because of his own ill preparation and lack of study. However, the problem may go much deeper. The problem may lie with our own lack of understanding about worship. Worship is something we do. It is not something done to or for us. Notice, we pray *to* God (Matthew 6:9; 9:38; Acts 8:22; 2 Corinthians 13:7;). We sing praises *to* God (Romans 15:9; I Corinthians 14:15; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). We gather about the Lord's table *to remember Him* (Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:24,25). We make financial offerings *to* God (I Corinthians 16:2). And, we read and study *about* God Acts 4:2; 8:5; 9:20; 13:5; I Corinthians 15:1,2). There is simply no element of worship that is directed at the individual. All of worship is *directed to God*. Therefore, be not concerned what you get out of worship, rather worry what you put into it!

You will find that the more you give unto God, the more you will "get out of the worship.

Myth 2: But it just seems so good and I feel so fulfilled.

Let us be so careful never to allow our ideas to stand for God's ideas. Truly, His ways are above our ways and beyond even our ability to consider them (Romans 11:33-36). So many people want to stop John 4:24 before getting to the end: Yes we worship in spirit, but also in truth. We are not judges of truth, rather the Almighty is (Psalms 25:5; 119:151; John 17:17).

Also, our feelings are rarely an accurate guide to truth because it is so easy to sway and mold our own conscience (I Timothy 4:2). For all his knowledge and wisdom, Paul would say that his feelings, his conscience, was unreliable (Acts 23:1).

No, the wise follower of Christ will worship in the precise fashion the Lord and His Apostles detailed. We will not seek to deviate from His ways even if we think we are improving upon the Lord's plan. Our knowledge and wisdom simply fails to even compare to that of Jehovah God (Job 38-41). Let's give to God the praise and devotion he so richly deserves, but let us do so without additions of men.

--Bryant Evans

NEXT WEEK: ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP