

problem is not in what you are doing but in your heart. And don't be fooled into blaming others (the preaching is bad, the singing is bad, etc.). Put the blame where it belongs - on the one who doesn't properly worship God in spite of distractions and even the failures of others. Remember: "they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24).

(copied from *Guardian of Truth*)

NEWSWORTHY NOTES:

This section removed to preserve member's privacy

Radio Program: WJLS 99.5FM every Sunday at 9:00AM

Website: www.beckleychurch.com

The *Carriage Drive Messenger* is published weekly by the Carriage Drive church of Christ, Beckley, WV
Editor: Bob Pulliam
Building Phone: 252-8108

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday: Bible Study 10:00am
Morning Worship 10:50am
Evening Worship 6:30pm
Wednesday: Bible Study 7:30pm

The Carriage Drive Messenger



Volume 4

February 22, 2009

Number 7

EMOTIONS IN WORSHIP

by Norman E. Sewell

One of the criticisms I seem to be hearing more often these days is that our worship is dry, boring and without emotion. People who have been either participants or even visitors at some "Pentecostal" like services are really turned off by the typical worship of Christians in the Lord's church. But what I am seeing more and more is Christians who want more "emotion" in both their worship and their service to God day by day. Sometimes the criticism is just. Sometimes you find Christians who sing with no enthusiasm at all, who nod off during the sermon or Bible class, and go home not really having worshipped God; and who have no real commitment for living as a Christian day by day. In such cases we need an emotional battery charge, but not what most people think they are looking for. There are three ideas I want to discuss with you:

1. Worship is primarily internal (that which occurs in your heart and expressed in your actions) though it may be affected to some degree by external things.
2. You can do all the right things as mentioned in God's word without truly worshipping.
3. You can have very emotional worship without really worshipping God as he directs.

Worship From the Heart...

You frequently hear of people who dim the lights, or hum or chant, or hold hands, and other "external" thing in order to try to give more meaning to their worship. Now, I admit that worship is certainly affected by external things, but real worship begins in your heart. I love to see young parents bring their babies and little children to worship and Bible study because this means they want them to grow up knowing about God and Jesus and salvation. I admire those young parents very much. Yet the crying of a baby, or the talking and playing of children can sometimes be a disruption to our worship. If you feel that such things hinder your worship then I suggest you are sitting in the wrong place in the meeting house. Why not move toward the front of the building and leave the back to those parents who need to be able to get up and out with their children to care for them and train them. And parents, please consider taking your child out when he is making so much noise that he is distracting those who are trying to worship God.

Some complain that they can't worship because the song leader does a poor job, or the preacher presents a dull lesson they've heard hundreds of times before. Why can't we push aside distractions and simply set our hearts to worship God? We do the same thing all the time: We tune out the kids or our spouse because our minds are so absorbed by the newspaper, a book we're reading, or a TV program. David wrote: "Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation" (Ps 111:1). David also wrote: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps 122:1) Jesus said of the Pharisees, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mt 15:7f). And Jesus told the woman at the well that the time was past for thinking that you must worship in a certain place such as a mountain, or even in Jerusalem. Then he said: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (Jn 4:23).

Worshipping in Truth Without Emotion...

In some worship we do all the right things, but without any of our inner selves involved. To worship God "in spirit" suggests that we worship him from our own spirits, our hearts. How can we worship "in spirit" without our emotions being involved? How can you properly sin "God Is Love," or "How Great Thou Art" or "A Wonderful Saviour" or any

of the host of other great spiritual songs, that we sing without feeling moved by those powerful and majestic words? To worship God acceptably we must not only worship him "in truth" (following the commands and examples given in the New Testament), but we must worship "in spirit." We must offer our worship and praise to God from our hearts and serve him with this same commitment in our every day lives.

Emotional Worship That is not Real Worship...

Emotions are deceiving. Remember how Jacob reacted when his sons returned with Joseph's bloody coat? Jacob knew right away who it belonged to and did just what they wanted, assumed that Joseph had indeed been eaten by some wild animal. His grief and his mourning were just as real as if Joseph was really dead. The point is that when we allow our emotions to rule without our intellect also being involved we may be very much deceived by those very emotions. What many people seem to want is to stir our emotions by something other than the simple pattern of New Testament worship. Some feel more moved by the use of a mechanical instrument of music even though God left such out of the New Testament worship he revealed. Some want to clap their hands and shout because this makes them feel better and stirs their emotions. Others seem to want a stimulating speaker (perhaps a motivational speaker like Lou Holtz or the late Norman Vincent Peale) who will move us with their words to feel good about ourselves. This is not meant to excuse poor sermon preparation or delivery by any preacher of the gospel. But if you are not moved by God's words, his promises and his commands, then that great motivational speaker will only move you in the wrong direction.

Who are we desiring to please? Paul wrote to the Thessalonians "that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (I Th 4:1). When we place the majority of our emphasis on how worship makes us feel we are trying to please ourselves, not God. Certainly worship should lift us up as we praise and honor God. And yes, we ought to leave the meeting house strengthened and encouraged because we worshipped God, even if the song leader messed up the songs, or the preacher "pulled one green." If worship isn't satisfying to you I suggest you do two things. First compare the things you are doing in worship to what God has revealed: singing, prayer, study of God's word, and on the first day of the week giving of your means and eating the Lord's supper. These are things God has ordained and we must do these to worship him "in truth." The second thing is to look into your own heart to see if you are wanting something more or something different from what God wants. If doing God's will isn't enough for you then the