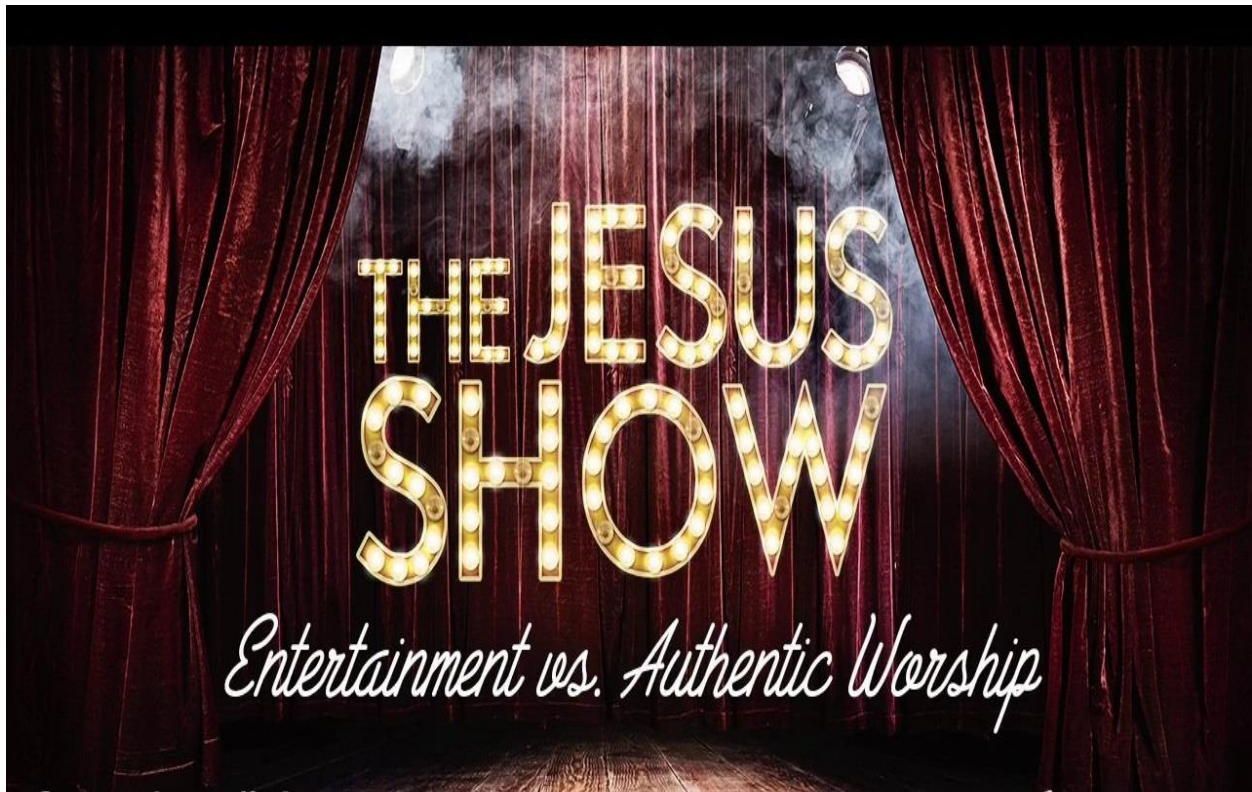


WORSHIP NOT ENTERTAINMENT

by **David Lee Burris**



Influence of Modern Trends on the Church

Is new always better than old? Not always. Some modern trends have had a negative impact on the church.

By Wayne Jackson | [Christian Courier](#)

Influence is a powerful thing.

Every person both influences & is influenced by others in varying degrees. Jesus stressed the importance of godly influence when he compared his disciples to salt (Matthew 5:13).

Paul also warned of the power of bad influence when he noted that “evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33). The Greek word for “companionships” is **homilia** having to do with association. Here it denotes “bad company” (Arndt and Gingrich, 568). We tend to behave like those we run with.

The Influence of the Primitive Church

It is remarkable that the church of Jesus Christ as such was constituted in the initial centuries of its existence was a body of tremendous influence. It revolutionized the antique world. The Lord hinted of this in his prophetic parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33).

Historians have noted that as a consequence of Christianity, many evils of the ancient world were abolished or at least curtailed (e.g., crucifixion, the brutal gladiatorial games, slavery, the abuse of women, infanticide, etc.).

Even skeptics have conceded the point. British philosopher Bertrand Russell conceded that the influence of Christianity “remains the inspiration of much that is most hopeful in our somber world” (Russell, 137).

It is not without significance, however, that when the church was exerting such a wonderful impact, it was being persecuted bitterly. Then, a strange thing happened.

In A.D. 313, Constantine issued his famous “Edict of Toleration,” which brought an end to Christian persecution. Unfortunately, it also accelerated an era of spiritual decline. Christianity even became a state religion. Ultimately, the church was “baptized” in an atmosphere that can only be described as worldliness.

Great and devastating changes were wrought that finally resulted in an egregious, fully-organized apostasy the residue of which abides to this day.

Our More Recent History

The concept of restoring pristine Christianity was revolutionary, both in Europe and in America. Courageous pioneers sought a return to the original pattern of Christ’s religion. The idea caught on, and the cause of the “ancient order” spread like a prairie fire across the frontier in the waning days of the nineteenth century.

In the late 1800s, students of the old Nashville Bible School (later named after David Lipscomb) baptized some 5,000 souls in a five-year period. In the early portion of the last century, the church was one of the fastest growing religious bodies in America.

A typical example of the influence of the church was seen in the Tabernacle Meetings conducted by N. B. Hardeman in the early 1920s. When the first meeting was held in March-April of 1922, the old Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee was “packed and jammed” with 6,000 to 8,000 people. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 were turned away (*Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons*, 11).

And there was no compromise of doctrine in Hardeman’s sermons! Those were glorious days for the kingdom of Christ.

But in the early decades of the previous century, something else was happening. A movement known as “modernism” was evolving. It reflected an inclination to reject the concept of **propositional truth** based on **divine authority**.

Men like Presbyterian clergyman Harry E. Fosdick (1878-1969) argued that the Bible had developed along evolutionary lines. They rejected the supernatural elements of Scripture.

This ideology became pervasive in both Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. A major component of the restoration heritage (the Disciples of Christ) was also influenced by this heresy.

More recently modernism has been succeeded by a philosophy known as “Post-modernism” This dogma, more dangerous even than modernism, is a late 20th-century theory contending there’s no such thing as real knowledge—at least in the objective sense. Rather, truth is subjectively determined by each individual.

One writer says that Postmodernism reflects a “rebellion against all aspects of the modern culture that had prevailed in the West since the late 19th century” (Dever, 30).

Postmodernism has impacted the religious community at large in a devastating fashion, and the churches of Christ have been significantly influenced by this ideology as well.

The Trendy Church

Over the past several decades there has developed a growing mentality that the church is an outdated organism. Somehow, we have lost touch with the “millennial” generation. Therefore, it’s imperative (they say) that we update the church model. We must make it more trendy.

This idea is rooted in a cultural phenomenon that may be figuratively described as “**societal osmosis.**” Environmental influences silently and slowly move from one realm to another. The trends of secular society to a significant degree have seeped into the religious fabric of our culture.

There is no better example of this than the current endorsement of homosexual unions in some of the historic Protestant sects. *That which once was an abomination is now fashionable.*

Further, the contaminated elements of “Christendom” in differing degrees ultimately trickle into the church. Not a few citizens of Christ’s kingdom are like the Israel of Samuel’s day. They lust to be like the nations [churches] round-about (1 Samuel 8:5).

Consider briefly some of the major changes that have been observable in the church over the past several decades.

A New Call for Denominational Blending

Though a few radical “voices of concern” (e.g., Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett) were being raised a half-century ago, scarcely anyone would have dreamed that high-powered people in some of our major schools would be calling now for an ecumenical blending with denominationalists in the swaddling days of the new millennium.

And yet, voices as “sectarian” as anything imaginable are now frequent and unrestrained within our midst. No longer is J. D. Tant’s quip, “Brethren, we are drifting,” *apropos*. Many are now rushing with a head of steam towards a “Casey Jones” disaster.

Subjective Faith

We are progressively departing from a dependence on the New Testament as the authoritative source of instruction in religion and ethics towards a subjective-style, get-in-touch-with-your-feelings philosophy.

Many congregations no longer have substantial Bible classes where the Word of God is explored deeply and taught powerfully, with a solid application made to Christian living. Rather, we have “sharing” sessions wherein we “testify” of exciting events we’ve experienced in the work-place.

Even some of our Bible class literature (not a little of which has been transported from denominational publishing concerns) is filled with people-centered scenarios. “What would you do if you were in Johnny’s place?” The biblical emphasis is paper thin.

At the same time, a “new hermeneutic” has evolved by which the authority of **apostolic example** is questioned, the concept of **necessary inference** is ridiculed, the matter of the **silence of the Scriptures** is affirmed to be a pure fabrication.

Feminism in the Church

The influence of society’s feminists is also being felt in the church. As denominational groups ordain female “priests” and “clergy,” congregations from Connecticut to California are also opting for an expanded role for women.

Church after church is announcing that Christian ladies will be progressively employed in leadership roles. The New Testament subordination of women is viewed as a cultural oddity of the first century with little, if any, application for today.

Again, some of our [church affiliated] institutions of higher education are leading the way in this digression.

Erosion of Marriage

When Hollywood blazed the trail in serial “marriage,” many wondered if small-town America could be far behind. It wasn’t. Now, the same pattern is seen running rampant in the church.

“Single again” groups are in vogue. Experts and counselors in “marriage enrichment” skills are in great demand, while seminar directors generally are careful to throw a wide loop that avoids confrontation with the biblical law of divorce and remarriage.

Every sort of quirky notion imaginable, the design of which is to “sanctify” adulterous liaisons, has surfaced in recent years. While we must have sincere compassion for those who are victims of divorce, the compromise of biblical truth is not a solution for these heartaches.

Gimmick-based Evangelism

Just as the world of denominationalism has been gimmick-driven in recent years, so our people have not been far behind. We have explored every mechanism under the sun helpful for attracting the public’s attention.

We have offered a variety of classes and a host of public services within our neighborhoods in hopes of enticing the baby-boomers, Generation-X, and now Millennials. All the while, we largely have ignored the very thing responsible for our greatest success — the wonderful and simple proclamation of the gospel.

While some labor under the illusion that the modern world no longer wants the message of a dusty book twenty centuries old, actually, just the reverse is true. Many are starving for spiritual truth. Rich Bible teaching presented by those who are excited about the treasures of scripture is attracting the attention of many lost people.

“Contemporary” Worship

The denominational world has little interest in the teaching of the New Testament in terms of a divinely-authorized worship format. Will-worship (Colossians 2:23) for the most part has been the order of the day.

With roots that reach deep into paganism, Catholicism has been steeped in pageantry for centuries. Early Protestantism attempted a remedy. Calvin, Wesley, Spurgeon, and other notable Protestant scholars, for example, expressed strong views against the use of instrumental music in Christian worship.

Ferguson has noted that the expression *A cappella* (which refers to purely vocal music) literally means “in the style of the church.” His exhaustive research led to this conclusion:

The classical form of church music is unaccompanied song. To abstain from the use of the instrument is not a peculiar aberration of ‘a frontier American sect’; this was easily, until comparatively recent times, the majority tradition of Christian history (Ferguson, 83).

Less than fifty years removed from Ferguson’s comment, it is not at all uncommon to hear prominent brethren arguing that instrumental music is a non-issue that certainly ought not to be treated as a test of Christian fellowship.

“There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether instrumental music is used in worship” (Osburn, 90).

It is almost certain that conditions are developing among churches of Christ that eventually will accommodate large-scale innovations in congregational worship.

Even now, a number of sizable churches following the lead of denominational groups (Veith, 4-5) are staggering their services, providing a "traditional" worship format for the older generation (dare we say, "fogies"?). Then also a jazzed up service is arranged for those who are more contemporary.

Too, it is a sad commentary on our attitude toward the hours of sacred worship that our dress has degenerated to casual, not to mention sloppy. Sandals and shorts are observable not infrequently in some places.

**What has happened to our sense of solemnity of occasion?
What impression do we convey to community visitors?**

Conclusion

In his letter to the saints in Rome, Paul instructed the brethren to "be not fashioned according to the world" (Romans 12:2). The present imperative form of the verb means, "stop being fashioned [conformed — KJV]!" The principle involved in this admonition is broad in its application. Barclay attempts to catch the spirit of it.

"Don't try to match your life to all the fashions of this world; don't be like the chameleon which takes its color from its surroundings; don't go with the world; don't let the world decide what you are going to be like" (170).

Let us summon the courage to make the appropriate applications, yielding to truth and common sense, rather than fickle trends of an unspiritual society.



How do entertainment & worship differ? Can worship be entertaining? Can entertainment also be worship? What is edification and how does it relate to entertainment? These questions disturb and confuse many. They are leading to a great deal of controversy and could divide the church. It is for this reason that we must reexamine the Scriptures in coordination with an honest look at our practices. The Christian's goal isn't only to remain biblical but also to please God all ways (Colossians 1:10). Jesus said, "I always do what pleases" the Father (John 8:29).

Some Basic Definitions

Worship: "to adore or pay divine honors to as a deity; to revere with supreme respect and veneration."

Entertain: "to engage the attention of, with anything that causes the time to pass pleasantly, as conversation, music or the like; to divert; to please; to amuse."

Entertainment: "something that entertains; an interesting, diverting, amusing thing, as a show or performance." Entertainment in and of itself is by no means sinful. It has its place in the Christian life. Perform: "to give a performance of; to render or enact, as a piece of music, dramatic role, etc."

Performance: "a formal exhibition of skill or talent, as a play, musical program, etc.; a show." "Special" singing is often used to describe songs sung by solos or small groups.

The difference between Worship and Entertainment - God intends the worship of His church in song to be both vertical (speaking to God above) and horizontal (speaking to those around us).

First, Scripture instructs Christians to "sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:19). They are to "sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). The Hebrew writer urges, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name" (13:15). **This vertical dimension must be present for any song to be regarded as worship. God is first & foremost the audience of our worship.** Our first task is to adore and to please Him. Any act that takes the focus off God or acts to the glory of man rather than God can never be regarded as worship.

Those who seek or accept praise for themselves rather than glorify God have in all times been responsible for grave error (Numbers 20:12; Psalm 19:13; Acts 12:20-23). Christians are to do all things to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Second, musical worship has a horizontal dimension. Paul exhorted Ephesians to “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19). He instructed the Colossians: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16). One reason why early Christians assembled together was to “encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Paul instructed the church at Corinth that their psalms were to edify; “let all things be done for edification” (1 Corinthians 14:26). Worship directed toward God was also to “build up” brethren. All Christians have the responsibility of speaking, teaching and counseling one another.

The function of entertainment as a pastime must never be confused with the reverent and sacred act of worship. One must wonder at the behavior of some of the contemporary singing groups who have blended their religious songs with an entertaining style. It has left many confused as to whether to call their activity entertainment or worship. This confusion serves their purpose; for if they are criticized for their actions in worship, they say they are entertaining. And if they are accused of entertaining, they speak of their ministry, “leading the congregation in worship.”

A further confusion related to worship and entertainment is the function of the heart. Some, not understanding the nature of worship, believe that the stirring of their hearts constitutes worship. Songs of all kinds have the ability to stir the heart. Dramatic, theatrical and love songs can be charged with great emotion and passion. Emotion doesn't make them songs of worship. Many songs that do contain religious thoughts may be filled with fervor and with passion but not be worship. Singing to worship requires understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15); its purpose is to teach and admonish, to give thanks and to praise. Worship in song is the intentional act of the heart and lips to glorify God. One must remember that simply because the hearts of an audience are stirred, God's name may not have been glorified or His heart pleased by the aroma of the sacrifices.

Things that are holy are not to be cheapened by making them common. God's name is never to be taken in vain. To turn our worship into a performance or a show can never please God. It fails to give God the glory due His holy name. The worship of the tabernacle in the Old Testament was a serious matter to God, because He is a holy God. He insists on being treated holy. This theme is a major tenet of the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy.

To treat worship as a common matter is a great offense to God, no matter how pleasing it may be to men. It is the same for the church today. Those who enter worship must never do anything that takes the focus off of the holy respect due to our God. Realizing the importance of God-directed worship, Jimmy Jividen correctly observed: “God desires worship directed from the heart of man. All of the pomp of men, all of the orderliness of form, all of the beauty of art and all of the emotional stimulation evoked through drama and music cannot substitute for the simple devotion of a humble heart.”

Small group singing & solos may take the focus off God & put it on performers. The emphasis here may be put on the beauty of the voice rather than on the greatness of God. Such a concept forgets that God Himself is the audience. Our worship is to be directed to Him so we might offer to Him a sacrifice of praise. Worship was never intended to be showy. Such an idea could never reflect the respect and reverence due to our Creator and Savior. Singing hymns is a sacred act of the heart and lips; its sole purpose is to express love and/or gratitude for God. People can perform the right act but with the wrong motive.

Jesus sharply condemned the Pharisees for their “showy” religion (Matthew 6:1-18). We too must be careful that we do not practice our acts of righteousness to be seen. **Small group singing and solos are exclusive rather than inclusive.** By their very nature choruses ask for trained singers & melodic voices. One music ministry advertised for audition to be a part of their chorus. One must wonder if there are any qualifications as to which Christians may worship publicly. The Scriptures, after all, instruct every Christian to sing. Why should anyone be then excluded from worshiping because he is a poor singer or tone deaf? If God does not care whether a brother or sister is tone deaf, why should we? When small groups perform, there will always be the question of who may be a part of it. Artistic concerns, then, become a standard of inclusion and of exclusion. Such standards could never have been part of the first century church. Paul opposed at every turn the sectarianism, arrogance and jealousy the immature church at Corinth had experienced with their spiritual gifts. Solos & small group singing will inevitably lead to conflicts among the immature. The problems of jealousy and ego based upon musical skill will abound. Most denominations have had enduring problems with choirs, for it grants the opportunity for the worst in personalities to come out. If a church were assembling a choir, there are some Christians who would never be asked to join. The reason is because they are not good singers. In small group singing and solos, artistic concerns become more important than one’s right to adore God.

We must then ask when has God ever considered music skill as criteria for his worshipers? Why should anyone who has that musical skill have the right to include or exclude anyone on the basis of that skill? Solos and small group singing asks the church members to worship through others. If one silently listens to others sing, one has not fulfilled his responsibility to praise God with his lips, to speak, teach, or admonish. Every Christian has responsibility to sing, and no one else can fulfill that responsibility for him. Although one's heart has been stirred by another's singing, one hasn't sung if he has merely "sung in his heart." Singing is an act of both the heart and the lips. To sing and not make melody in one's heart is not worship. It mocks God! In the same way, to stir one's heart but not speak with one's lips, is to fail to do what God has asked.

May one please God simply by observing others partaking of the Lord's communion? Although one's heart may be stirred greatly in the remembering, has one obeyed the directive if he has not eaten the bread or drunk the cup? May one please God simply by observing others contributing to the Lord's church? Although one's heart may be stirred deeply with love and gratitude, has one obeyed the Lord's instructions? Has one become a Christian who has observed another being baptized? Although in his heart he may have believed and have genuinely repented, is he regarded as obedient if he is not baptized?

Obedience must be heartfelt (Romans 6:17-18), but one is not free from sin until he has acted in obedience. The heart and the act are necessary. No one can worship for another. To observe another person fulfill his responsibility is not the same as one worshiping the Lord for himself.

Sanders, Phil. *Adrift: Postmodernism in the Church*. Gospel Advocate Company. Kindle Edition.

Entertaining Ourselves or Are We Worshiping?




THE CHURCH **WORSHIP** From Issue: **Discovery 2/1/2009**

In Ezekiel 33:31-32, God told Ezekiel: “They come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they don’t do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.” **In other words, the people were entertained by Ezekiel’s preaching. They listened, and even acted like God’s children, but in their hearts, they just wanted to be entertained.**

This attitude has plagued religion for centuries, but has now been taken a step further. Instead of being entertained by worship, people have tried to make worship entertainment. For example, they’ve introduced mechanical instruments, dramas, and hand-clapping into the worship service. Sadly, these additions can be found even in the church of our Lord. It seems as though some people have forgotten what worship is all about. That leads us to an important question: how does God feel about all these things?

From the beginning, God wanted man to worship Him according to the commandments He gave. When Cain and Abel offered their worship to God, Abel’s was acceptable, but Cain’s was not (Genesis 4:1-5). Why? Abel obeyed what God said to do in worship, but Cain didn’t. Later, under the Law of Moses, two priests tried to change things in their approach to God, and God sent fire to consume them (Leviticus 10:1-2). The lesson is obvious: do not change God’s pattern for worship. Therefore, when the New Testament tells us what God considers acceptable worship (singing, giving, preaching, praying, and partaking of the Lord’s Supper), we should make no changes. **Worship was never intended to be “entertaining,” and people should be ashamed when they try to make it so.** Worship is a blessing and it should be done “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Today, too many people are like the people in Ezekiel’s day who were going “after their gain,” forgetting that worship is not for them, but for God.



“The problem with this **entertainment orientation** is that the very object of worship is forgotten. God is to be the 'audience' in worship. Jesus told the Samaritan Woman at the Well that ignorant worship was not acceptable to God, even though it may have been sincere or enjoyable. 'God is a Spirit: and that they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). To worship God in spirit and truth means that worship must be from the heart, not just outward acts, and that it must be done in the exact obedience to God's commands. The worship must be directed to Him, not to the whims of the worshipers.”

Bob Prichard

Workbook “Satan’s Assault On The Faith” - Chapter “Entertainment Vs. Worship”

Joel Osteen and the Lakewood Church epitomize much of the ‘new’ in religious thinking today. . . Marketing of Lakewood Church is seen all over the Houston, Texas area on billboards, papers, magazines, the Internet, and television. Their ‘image’ is very important, and the smiling Joel Osteen with open arms and up-turned hands is almost a trademark. Most of the religious world would call this a great success.

Sadly, that cannot be what God thinks. Mr. Osteen has admitted his preaching focuses on ‘the goodness of God’ rather than discussing sin. The church music is ‘contemporary’ (meaning it sounds like pop radio music) and the lessons are high tech. Many who have gone to Lakewood Church in the past have told that the lessons are lacking in content and depth. It’s all about ‘feeling good.’ That’s exactly the method of modern worship in mega-churches.

The focus in such worship assemblies has shifted away from God and focuses on the individual. Rather than being about ‘worship’ it is about ‘entertainment.’ Rather than singing as a congregation, groups listen to praise bands and choirs. You don’t see these groups partaking of the Lord’s Supper - except perhaps on Christmas and Easter (when it is politically correct to do so as a church that supposedly follows Christ).

Emotions run high in these entertaining events. They are designed to create that emotional reaction. They want people to get ‘pumped up’ by the music. They want people to ‘cry with tears’ at the videos. They want folks to ‘feel’ as if they have been ‘moved’ by the experience.

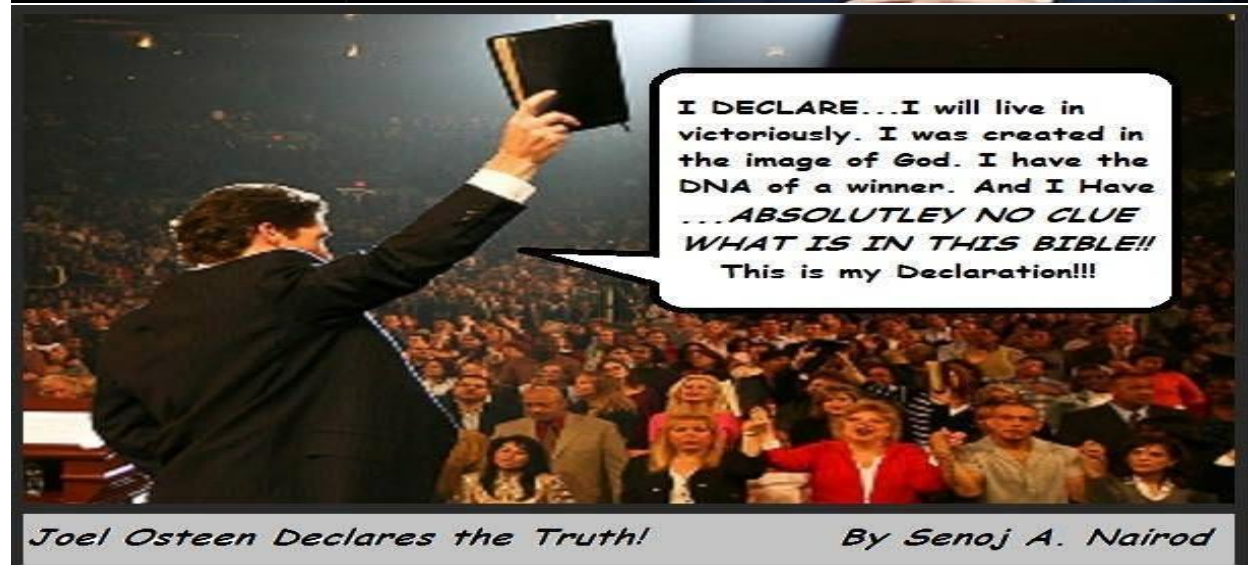
There is nothing wrong with emotion in a worship assembly – but to arouse **emotional responses is not the purpose of worship.** That’s what has been missed so greatly – people have forgotten why we worship. Must we follow the trend toward entertainment in order for people to learn the truth of God? I think not!

Satan has again concocted a method to draw people away from God. They believe they are serving Him, when in fact they are not even pleasing Him. Entertainment only benefits *us* – it does not benefit God. God did not send His Son to die on the cross so we could be entertained.

Satan’s success is growing. Entertainment as ‘worship’ is a work of the devil and we should have no part in it.



False Teacher
"IN DEALING WITH PEOPLE FOR SEVERAL YEARS, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, ONE THING I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT 99.9% OF PEOPLE ARE NOT BAD PEOPLE. THEY MAY MAKE POOR CHOICES, BUT DEEP DOWN, THEY'VE GOT A GOOD HEART."
Joel Osteen
NONE IS RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE
Romans 3:10
THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND DESPERATELY WICKED
Jeremiah 17:9
NoneAreGood.com





Worship or Entertainment?



There are some very important danger signs we need to watch for in our culture today as "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). The

Spirit breathed those words through the apostle Paul's pen 2,000 years ago in a land far away yet they read like the headline news of today. Satan is still at it – he never slows down - *"the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* (I Peter 5:8).

And do you know Satan's more powerful temptation tool that he uses every day to draw you and me away from God? The answer: **selfishness**. Satan knows if he can get us to focus on ourselves he will have us coming his way and away from the Lord.

Here is the tricky, sneaky, conniving, low-down snake in the grass devil's extra ploy: Satan doesn't only tempt us when we are out there in the world. He tempts us in this building on Sunday – right now. He entices us to selfishly make worship about us feeling good rather than make it about praising and adoring and honoring the great creator God of this universe and His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Anytime we make Sunday worship about us and we put the priority on our personal pleasure the meaning of worship is forfeited. God loves for us to have joy and peace and for us to love to worship and sing, etc. **It is good when we are uplifted in spirit on Sunday; however, that should be the by-product of everything being about God**, and then in turn God blesses us. The main focus should not be on us feeling good!

Worship is **NOT** entertainment. Worship is a time we express to God that He is worthy of everything we have and everything we are. God is the audience, **NOT** us. Let's let Him know that today & every day from here to eternal glory. – *Walnut Hill Church of Christ*



God is a Spirit: and
they that worship him
must worship him in
spirit and in truth.

John 4:24 KJV

Do We Worship or Do We Entertain?

It seems that many people today have lost sight of what worship's all about. Many assemble in the name of the Lord to be entertained. What's the purpose of the church's assembly? Is it to offer up worship directed toward God or provide entertainment directed toward the people?



The word "worship" in our Bible is translated from terms that literally mean, "to kiss the hand in token of reverence, to bow down before, or humbly beseech." When Christians come together in their assembly it should be to worship God. Jesus declared, "True worshipers shall

worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" ([John 4:23-24](#)).

This statement tells us there are two things involved in the proper worshipping of God. First, worship must be "in spirit" - our worship must be offered sincerely from the heart. This isn't, however, the only requirement of acceptable worship. Jesus also stated that our worship must be "in truth" - as the truth directs. In His word, God not only tells us to worship, but gives us divine directions as to how we must worship Him. In reading of the New Testament we find five acts of worship in which the first century Christians involved themselves. Early Christians came together to study and hear God's word proclaimed, to pray, and to sing. When meeting on the first day of the week they also partook of the Lord's Supper and give of their means. ([Acts 2:42](#); [20:7](#); [Ephesians 5:19](#); [1 Corinthians 11:23-29](#); [16:2](#)).

All these acts of worship are spiritual in nature. However, many today have left this pattern and have turned the Lord's church into something more social than spiritual. Instead of assembling to worship God in the way God directs, the emphasis is on entertaining the audience.

Jesus taught that it is possible to worship Him in an unacceptable manner. "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines - precepts of men" ([Matt. 15: 9](#)). To worship God in an acceptable manner our worship must be in "spirit and truth"- with the proper attitude and as the truth of God directs.

The church of Christ and the purpose of its assemblies is spiritual in nature and not social. Jesus' statement before Pilate plainly shows the nature of His kingdom. He said His "kingdom is not of this world" and that He came into the world "to bear witness of the truth" ([Jn. 18:36-37](#)).

The purpose and work of the redeemed individuals that make up Christ kingdom is spiritual in nature. The "house of God, which is the church of the living God" is "the pillar and ground of the truth" ([1 Timothy 3:15](#)). Jesus came to bear witness of the truth, a mission that is neither social or recreational. His church is the pillar and ground of that same truth. Thus, the church's purpose is also one that is spiritual.

The church is made up of individuals whose birth is spiritual ([Jn. 3:2-7](#)), their walk in life is one that is spiritual ([Gal. 5:16-17](#)), their worship is spiritual ([Jn. 4:24](#)), and they are involved in a spiritual warfare ([Eph. 6:12-13](#)).

The reasoning of many for offering [social and materially centered programming] in the name of the Lord is, "We must offer these things if we are going to reach the people in our fast pace society – especially our young people." But such reasoning simply shows a lack of faith in the power of the word of God and the affect it can have on people of all ages if proclaimed in its purity.

Concerts, plays, shows, and other forms of entertainment can be enjoyable and have a place in life, but their place is not in the work and worship of the Lord's church; for its nature is spiritual and not social.

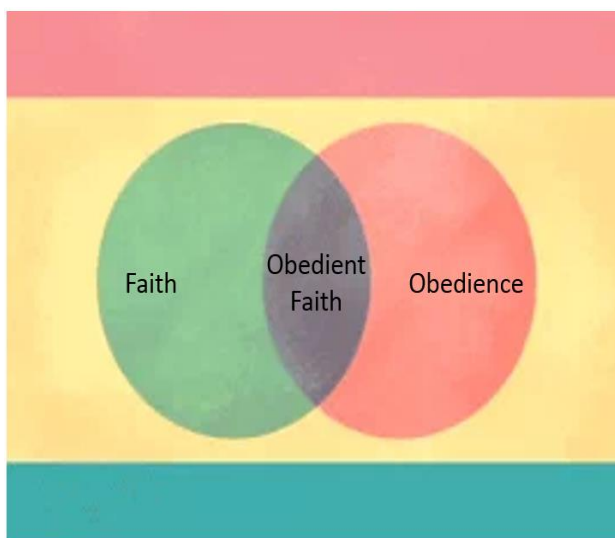
In the picture John gives us of the Lord being worshiped in Revelation 5 we see that worship has nothing to do with the entertainment of the worshipers except for their joy of serving & adoring their Lord. "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever. And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped." ([Revelation 5:13-14](#)).

Let's not confuse worshiping God with entertainment!
- Westwood Church of Christ

AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

