

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



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Preparing for Worship **Dave Phillips, Germantown**

Preparation for worship is almost as challenging as worship itself. But I would submit that preparation for worship takes place far before one enters the building. It is a state of mind that exists within the individual the week before the worship service.

Several of the Psalms have been termed, “songs of ascent.” Presumably, these were psalms that were sung as the nation of Israel prepared to worship God. As a person reads Psalms 121-134, he can’t help but notice the personal nature of the adoration of God. Specific blessings are enumerated which allow the worshiper to have a greater appreciation for divinity. This appreciation leads to a fuller, deeper sense of gratitude for blessings from God.

One day, outside of the city of Sychar, Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman. As she discussed a drink of water, Jesus spoke of living water. Jesus finally that if she only knew the gift of God, and to whom she was speaking, she would change her request. She was looking at physical water – he was considering spiritual, living water. Her perspective determined what she saw.

Have you ever noticed that we have a tendency to get bogged down in peripheral issues that have an effect on our worship? Temperatures. Noises. Other people. Length of time. All issues that crowd out our appreciation and love for God. When the worship is not particularly meaningful for me, I am tempted to blame someone or something else.

Maybe the “songs of ascent” were a good idea. A way of preparing to come in the presence of God in order to give thanks for his many blessings – both physical and spiritual. Maybe we could prepare our own method of preparation for worship. Our own song. Our own prayer. Our own reading.

When I prepare for worship, I need to think less about what other people are thinking or doing – and more about how well I am prepared.

It’s not their problem. It’s mine.

Finding the Problem **From the Hillsboro Herald, vol. 61**

I heard a story recently about a student name Donald MacDonald from the Isle of Skye (in Scotland), who was admitted into the prestigious Oxford University, and was living in the hall of residence in his first year there. His clan was so excited that one of their own had made it into the upper class of education, but they were concerned how he would do in “that strange land.” After the first month, his mother came to visit.

“And how do you find the English students, Donald?” she asked. “Mother,” he replied in his thick brogue. “They’re such terrible, noisy people. The one on that side keeps banging his head against the wall, and won’t stop. The one on the other side screams and screams and screams, away into the night.”

“Oh Donald! How do you manage to put up with these awful noisy English neighbors?”

“Mother, I do nothing. I just ignore them. I just stay here quietly, playing my bagpipes...”

Popcorn Worship
John Gipson, Little Rock, Arkansas

Years ago Frank Pack expressed a desire to know what really went on during a worship service. He said that just one time he would like for the bodies of the worshipers to go where their minds were.

As a preacher, I don't know if I could stand that. A business-woman, thinking of the house she hoped to sell that afternoon, would suddenly pop out of the assembly and be with her prospect... A teenager might return to Friday night and the touchdown he scored to give his team the victory... Several adults have already popped out of the assembly with their minds fixed on the opening kickoff of a televised football game, and wondering if the service will conclude in time for them to race home and see it... A married couple sits in the pew seething with anger at each other and trying to figure out what to say next in the argument that started on the way to church... An elderly man's thoughts turn to the grave of his wife who was buried on Friday... A woman's mind returns to her kitchen, and the roast she put in the oven... An avid golfer contemplates how he is going to play the fifth hole next time, etc.

If on a Sunday morning our bodies went where our minds did, I'm afraid there would be so much popping in and out that all of us would be dizzy from looking up and down long before the service concluded.

Worship in spirit and in truth is not easily accomplished. It requires discipline on the part of every worshiper.

Make sure your worship this Sunday is a response to God, to what God has done, and to what God is doing. "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

I Drew My Circle Again

When I first became a
member of the church, my circle was
very big... for it included all who, like my-
self had believed and had been baptized. I was
happy in the thought that my brethren were many...
but, having a keen and observant mind, I soon learned
that many of my brethren were erring. I could not tolerate
any people within my circle but those who, like myself, were
right on all points of doctrine and practice. Too, some made
mistakes and sinned. What could I do? I had to do something! I
drew my circle, placing myself and a few as righteous as I within,
and the others without. I soon observed that some within my circle
were self-righteous, unforgiving, jealous and proud, so in righteous
indignation, my circle I drew again, leaving the Publicans and sinners
outside, excluding the Pharisees in all their pride, with myself and
the righteous and humble within. I soon realized in time
that only my family and myself remained in the circle. I
had a good family, but to my surprise, my family fin-
ally disagreed with me. I was always right. A
man must be steadfast. I have never been a
factious man! So in strong determination,
I drew my circle again, leaving
Me quite alone.