

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

November 30

2008

Worship Is Not A Spectator Sport

In our society today, we love to be entertained. We sit in front of the television for hours on end with little more involvement than using our thumbs on the remote control to change channels. We enjoy the time as we escape from our day-to-day lives for a while with our minds numbed to what we are watching. We go to the movies, to the ballgame, to the concert. We walk in, sit down, cross our arms, disengage our minds, and basically say, "Entertain me."

Such habits can easily carry over into our worship if we allow them to do so. *"So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouths 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"* (Ezekiel 33:31-32).

Worship is not a spectator sport. It requires our active participation. It is something we give – not something we get. When we assemble together to worship God Almighty, we are to so in accordance with His will – not ours. We are participating in an act of reverence unto the One who created us, and we are to do so with all of our heart.

When we sing, we do so enthusiastically, giving our very best, realizing that this is one way we *"offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15). We raise our voices so that others gathered together will hear us for we are teaching and admonishing them in song (Colossians 3:16). We think about the words of the songs because we are being taught and admonished as well.

We join our minds together as one leads us in prayer. We are focused

on the words being said, understanding that the prayer is being voiced in our behalf unto the Possessor of heaven and earth.

As we partake of the Lord's Supper, we concentrate on the willing sacrifice of our Savior, on His obedience to God the Father, on His love for God – and for us. We think of our unworthiness of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. We show our commitment to the covenant relationship accepted when we were buried in baptism.

We acknowledge that God created us and has provided everything we have – even every breath we take. And we joyfully return back to Him a portion of our rich blessings as the collection plate is being passed. We pray for the wisdom of the elders as they use these funds to further the work of the great Jehovah.

We concentrate on the truths from God's word being preached to us realizing that the value is worth so much more to us than fine gold. God's word is the standard by which our lives will be judged. Nothing can be more important than our standing before the just and righteous Judge on the final day. We understand the importance of learning absolutely as much as we can about God's will for our lives.

Brethren, let us not allow the worship services to become periods of entertainment for any one of us. Let us exhort, admonish, and edify one another to be active participants as we together worship, honor, and glorify Almighty God.

✠ Terry Bennett



The Blessings of an Absolute Commitment

There are two relationships in life in which God demands absolute commitment: one's relationship with Christ as a Christian and one's relationship with his companion in marriage. One can give up his citizenship for another, or his job, or his residence, or his congregational affiliation. But one's commitments to Christ and to his companion are lifetime commitments. Desertion of either results in God's disapproval.

When one becomes a Christian, he pledges his allegiance to Christ as his Lord and King. Persecution may come, or discouragement, or temptation, or church troubles, but he promises to be faithful—faithful as long as he lives. Similarly, when one marries, he pledges to his companion his love and faithfulness "so long as they both shall live." Problems may arise, or sickness, or financial difficulties, or pressure from family members, or misunderstandings, but he promises to be faithful. He will not depart. Divorce will be unthinkable. He is committed to his

companion—he is hers and she is his—and the commitment is absolute.

God's will concerning the permanence of marriage is clearly revealed. In marriage, a man **leaves** his father and mother and **cleaves** to his wife (Genesis 2:24). They are **bound** (Romans 7:2-3). They are **joined together** by God and are not to be **put asunder** (Matthew 19:6). They become **one flesh** (Matthew 19:6). One cannot think of stronger terms to describe permanence of relationship. No wonder Malachi would say that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

The greatest happiness man can experience upon this earth is found in these two realms of absolute commitment. Happiness is not found in half-commitment. A man who is constantly considering other jobs, never becoming committed to his present job, is an unsettled man, torn between options. So with that person who tries to serve the Lord with semi-commitment. He is bored and disinterested, having just enough religion to make him miserable. He tries to hold to the world with one hand and to the Lord with the other, and finds joy in neither. One needs but to look at the apostles and earliest disciples, on the other hand, to see that absolute commitment, the kind of commitment that can accept persecution and render sacrifice, is the basic element of joy in the Lord (Acts 2:41-47; 5:40-42; 16:25).

So it is with marriage. God knew that happiness in marriage could only be in absolute commitment. So he decreed through the apostle Paul, "*Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband*" — one man for one woman until death separates them (1 Corinthians 7:2). His decree may be troublesome to those who have, in the past, ignored His teaching (the consequences of sin are always terrible—Galatians 6:7-8), but it is for the good of mankind, proceeding from God who commands for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13).

1. Absolute commitment provides trust in marriage. The husband does not have to worry about his wife's faithfulness to him, nor does the wife have to worry about the husband, for their commitment to one another is open and obvious. Because of the openness of their commitment temptation to be unfaithful is practically non-existent. The half-committed, on the other hand, will be frequently tempted, for temptation is inherent in partial commitment.

2. Absolute commitment provides security in marriage. Security is an outgrowth of trust and permanency. It is when one doubts the strength and permanency of his relationship with another that he feels insecure.

3. Absolute commitment provides a settled life in marriage. Gone are the troubled, unsettled, insecure days of courtship, replaced by a lasting, secure relationship with one's partner. Naomi described this settled life beautifully when she said of Ruth, "*My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you.*" (Ruth 3:1)

4. Absolute commitment provides a solid foundation upon which to build in marriage. Without this foundation, no quality home can ever be built.

Gus Nichols once wrote that he and his wife had been present for Bible classes the previous Sunday and for both worship periods. He went on to say that they had not made their decision on that Sunday, but had made that decision forty years before when they had first become Christians, and that, in being present for all services, they were just being true to the commitment they had made forty years before. Similarly, I pillowed my head beside my wife last night and awoke this morning by her side. If the Lord wills, I shall do so tonight and shall continue to do so as long as we both shall live. Not that we are just now making that decision, for we made that decision twenty-five years ago and are merely being true to that lifelong commitment we made so many years in the past.

"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

✍️ Bill Hall

<h2>Belleville church of Christ</h2> <p>5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258 www.bellevillechurch.net</p>	
<h3>Schedule of Services</h3>	<h3>Elders</h3>
Sun. Bible Study. 9:30 a.m.	Charles Carpenter. . . (317) 839-3873
Sun. Morning Worship. . . . 10:30 a.m.	James Hahn. (317) 745-1507
Sun. Evening Worship. 5:00 p.m.	
Wed. Bible Study. 7:00 p.m.	
<h3>Evangelist</h3>	<h3>Deacons</h3>
James Hahn. (317) 745-1507	Leon Nevins (317) 272-2966
	Don Perry. (765) 676-5825
	Alvin Stanley. (317) 831-3514