

CHIEF

MINISTRIES

WITNESSES

February 2014

Greetings in Jesus name!

Time marches on! Are you redeeming yours? Ephesians 5:16 says *"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"*. In other words, buy up those moments which others throw away. Improve every moment to make up for those lost in sin. That verse is stuck between two others that are also very important. Verse 15 says to *walk circumspectly*, or look carefully then how you walk avoiding pitfalls and enemies - live the gospel by watching your conduct. And verse 17 says, *don't be a fool!*, But understand what the will of the Lord is. Don't become a madman! And finally in verse 18-20; it says, *"do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

As a praise and worship leader, I love leading people to the throne by encouraging them to sing praise to God. I see men each week deal with condemnation and guilt. And I see men who say they love God but simply refuse to enter into worship. I think it's because of wrongly formulated attitudes of the mind and heart.

No doubt the biggest problem that stops or hinders our worship is our pride. Pride has ruined far more worship services than all the forces of hell combined. I feel pride gravitates towards conservative low-key worship because the ego is never fed by all out worship. Pride restrains us from lifting our voices without fear in the congregation. Pride will incarcerate us in a self-righteous prison of spiritual bondage. Pride comes up with the excuse such as "well that's just not my style of praise." And pride never takes the blame or acknowledges fault. Unfortunately, your flesh is never going to tell your spirit "your problem is pride, ol' buddy!"

Worship is the humbling of self and the exalting of God. Pride is sin. And yet, we're more concerned about the opinions of others than we are about the Lord's opinions, at precisely the time when the Lord should fill our thoughts. I've heard some guys say "I don't feel like worshipping today, my spirit is willing but my flesh is weak." But... We must participate in worship, especially during those times when we do not feel like it. If we allow our worship to be controlled by our feelings, we will never gain victory in our Christian walk. We do not worship because we feel like it. We worship because Christ is worthy!

Or how about presumption, we saunter into the service to get our front row seat and say, "Hi there God -good to see you again this week." And God says, "The voice is familiar, but I don't recognize the face." We assume our right to approach Him after living selfishly all week long. How often we presume on God's grace and expect His spirit of blessing to be showered on us without any sacrifice, investment of prayer, or humble repentance.

Then there's spectatorism. We get caught up watching the proceedings of a worship service and afterward find that we have done everything but worship. Paul made no mention of the ministry of surveillance in his epistles. We are called not to peruse but to participate.

Corporate worship too often resembles a spectator sport. A football game is 50 million people needing exercise, watching 22 people needing rest. Sometimes our services seem like so much is going on around the platform, that the worshiper is required to contribute relatively little in order for the service to succeed.

We have a pretty good choir where I lead worship on occasion however, it seemed for a while that what we did was in behalf of the "audience". No one can worship for another. We have all been called, as a spiritual priesthood, to offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord (see Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Peter 2:5-6, and Revelation 1:6). None of us is a spectator, but we should all be participants in raising high His glorious praise.

Sentimentalism can also stymie worship. We often become sentimental in worship when we become more taken up with the music than with the message of our songs. Overly familiar songs are in danger of becoming sentimental for us. These are songs that are so well known and common that they lose their effectiveness in stimulating our minds to worship. I, as a worship leader, understand the strong emotional pull of music and the easy way we can become sentimental over a favorite tune.

Even Israel rejected the word of the Lord through his servant Ezekiel, the Lord said the following about Israel; *"Israel, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice."* (Ezekiel 33:32) God knows how easily we can get caught up in the beauty of a nice melody, without the message changing us in the least. We should occasionally ask ourselves while praising if we're just guilty of "gettin' down" with the music without giving any heed to the message of the song. We've been created to enjoy music. God has placed that sensitivity in us, and it is good. But God has intended that music help us to open our hearts and become more receptive to Him. We are never to worship music or place inordinate emphasis on it.

A sixth wrong attitude of worship is the paying of mere lip service. How easy it can be to mouth the words of the song, all the while knowing our heart is not a part of the message. Nothing is more repugnant to God than half-heartedness and hypocrisy. At one point in Israel's history, the Hebrews were sacrificing to the heathen gods and then were turning around and fulfilling the Mosaic sacrifices to God. Notice what God said to them through the prophet Amos: *"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grains offerings, I will not accept them. So you bring me choice fellowship offerings I will have no regard for them. Take away the noise of your songs, to the melody of your harps, I will not listen."* (Amos 5:21-23) God would prefer that we keep our mouths shut then worship Him by just putting up a front.

Another dangerous attitude is the fear of manipulation. We might think, "I'm not going to let this worship leader 'hype' me! He can try cheerleading if he wants to, but just see if he can get me to respond!" Whether or not the approach of the worship leader is proper is irrelevant; the problem is my refusal to enter into worship simply because I allow myself the luxury of being irritated with the worship leader style. God is worthy of my praise regardless of any human issues manifested by the leadership.

A final attitude we must change is wrapped up in the seven last words of a dying church: "We've never done it this way before". That's all the more reason to do it! Our worship is likely to improve if we stir ourselves to be innovative, be willing to try new things, and be ready to experiment and explore all that God has for us in worship.

Becoming a worshiper is a privilege and a challenge. It is the one thing that excites the Father's heart above all else. Once people are prepared to enter into worship without reservation, however, the church leadership must come to a proper understanding of the role of worship in the congregation. Our services will be more effective when our worship is conducted with a definite purpose.

Next month, only a couple weeks away, I'm going to discuss the full purpose of congregational worship and what it takes to become a worshiper!

A worshiper is one whose perspective is being expanded, whose focus is decreasing on self and whose interest are flamed by the passion of God himself.

How wonderful worship is! How glorious it is! As the river of God begins to flow during our times of worship, it brings life, abundance and healing, washing over broken hearts and restoring parched souls.

I'm praying all of us will become greater worshipers of God.

Be blessed!

Chief

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Christ's

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