

Do All To The Glory Of God!

Casualness

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Given 08-Sep-12; Sermon #1119c

You are very familiar with this scripture:

I Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

To me, that is one of the foundational, if not the foundation scripture, in the Bible. "You shall have no other gods before Me" is another one, of course. But they are very closely associated.

Today in this commentary, I am speaking to the greater churches of God (including us) to consider whether we are doing all to the glory of God when we come before Him to worship in an acceptable manner.

Jesus reveals in John 4:23-24,

John 4:23-24 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Partly because of disunity, many of the greater churches of God have become casual churches. It used to be that when people attended Sabbath services, they wore attire that, by and large, demonstrated (at least outwardly) a reverence and respect for the sovereign God of the universe. But even among congregations with mature leaders, casualness has clearly crept in.

This decline in formality has dominated mainstream "Christian" churches over the last few decades. Now we see "non-traditional" services becoming the new standard for professing Christians. "Non-traditional" is a religious codeword for contemporary or progressive religion. The primary reason given is: "It is necessary in order to attract and retain young adults," which, of course, is not biblical. It's unbiblical because Jesus taught, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44).

The church is for those whom God has called; it is not a recruiting center or halfway house for the undecided and unrepentant, where compromised Christians huddle together to try and figure out how to lure outsiders in by appealing to their wants and desires.

When effort is made to keep young adults or draw in new members to a place of worship by the use of social activities, sports, appealing music, or a casual atmosphere, rather than emphasizing fear, reverence and submission to our God and Father and our savior Jesus Christ by the Word of God in repentance and faith, most will leave when the enticements are no longer stimulating, the newness wears off, or they are enticed by something else.

Why? Because they have come to the wrong place, at the wrong time, to the wrong person, for the wrong reasons. They are coming to mere men for momentary gratification instead of to worship their Creator.

Conditions when appearing before God to worship Him at Sabbath services are quite different for many people compared to what they were a couple of decades ago when many congregations had hundreds of people attending, requiring careful organization in the form of formalities.

Today, however, the size of groups gathering together for services is relatively small, and in many cases Services are held in our homes with family members as the primary attendees. There is a tendency in these small groups or in the comfort and privacy of our own homes to let formalities slip into casualness.

It starts slow. It begins with people becoming lax in their dress. First, the men stop wearing their suit jackets. Then the tie is missing and the shirt opens up, and they grab something to sip on through services. The women begin to wear flip-flops and sloppy or immodest clothing. I've heard of people at home not even bothering to get dressed, still wearing their pajamas or shorts through Sabbath services.

Some of the responsibility for this casual attitude may fall on the leadership—the ministry—of the churches for not emphasizing enough that we are to do all to the glory of God—everything in our lives; twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The same responsibility falls on the parents.

Although the parents should be teaching their children proper respect and reverence when they appear before their omnipotent Creator God, the children pick up a wrong message from their parents that the gathering is little different from sitting down to watch TV. They have their snacks and they lay down on the couch or floor, ready to fall asleep as they do every week when the snacks and drinks are exhausted.

Welcome to the new modern progressive church, where, as one commercial that ran here in Charlotte for many years bragged—while advertising that they serve popcorn: “It isn’t like church at all!”—and they were proud of that. Most of you remember that commercial.

Hopefully, this is not how any of the members of God’s church come before the Great God and His Son in the formal worship service on the Sabbath. In contemporary services in the world’s churches, this appears to be quite common. I just can’t imagine it happening with the elect of God.

Jesus Christ revealed to the Laodicean church,

Revelation 3:15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot."

Jesus found His church’s tepid indifference repugnant, to say the least. That is a warning to all of God’s people. If we don’t heed Christ’s warning, we have reason to dread the indignation of the Savior.

This should serve as a sad reminder of the casualness toward God that was predicted to take its toll on some people in God’s church. It already has on so many people before us.

The president of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville, Tom Rainer, pointed out the same problem and its consequences in a *USA Today* article:

A decade ago teens were coming to church youth group to play, coming for the entertainment, coming for the pizza. They're not even coming for the pizza anymore. They say, "We don't see the church as relevant, as meeting our needs or where we need to be today."

So the emphasis of the churches of the world is entirely wrong.

God's prophet Jeremiah declares,

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the Lord: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. But they said [speaking about Israel], 'We will not walk in it.'" [How arrogant!]

This general transition from devotion to casualness is taking its toll on the churches of God. Sadly, the relaxed attitude and lack of seriousness we see increasing in God's church today is the reflection of a rebellious and perverse society that is addicted to pleasure, and of which we do not want any part.

The apostle Paul had a way of stating it emphatically; he told the Thessalonians:

II Thessalonians 2:13-14 . . . God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you . . .

II Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

We are called and chosen "for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth"—not sports, not entertainment, not to make us happy as human beings. How much more clearly can it be said?

How many kids have been bribed to church over the years with entertainment and sports?

Do these kids even know what their needs are?

Can pleasure junkies really ever differentiate between want and need?

God's church must be careful that it is not just one more enabler in a culture of pleasure addiction, spoiling our children by offering them whatever they want so they will like church enough to keep coming back, while hoping and praying they will somehow, some way, someday learn to like God the Father and Jesus Christ, too.

We must not teach our young people through poor example that worship is just another theater and/or concert venue where we come to feast our eyes and ears on gratifying sights and sounds, where we come to consume our pleasures before God, the great Giver of all things pleasurable.

Do we act so casually at Sabbath services that we send the message to the new and the young that God is like us? It is an incredibly selfish way to look at God. It means that God's sole purpose is to be at our beck and call to make us happy. But God is not like us!

The truth of God—His doctrines and His way of life—are much more powerful and effective in strengthening those who are called according to God's purpose. We are the ones who must be transformed to *His* image, not He to ours.

The apostle Paul told the Roman Christians,

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

And what is that transformation? To the Corinthian believers he said,

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

I speak from experience. In thinking back, almost 50 years ago (when I began attending God's church with my parents at age 9 and all the way down to today), it was NOT the social activities or church sports that convinced me to stay in the church; it was God's calling and His teaching of His doctrines through His Word and His ministers about His way of life, salvation and eternal life in His Kingdom that convicted and compelled me to dedicate my life to Him. In those early years when I was a child in the church, we had one social and one picnic a year—and I am still here!

My wife Susan has attended God's church for more than 50 years (since she was 5). She says the same thing: It is the conviction that developed through God's Spirit from a true knowledge of God, learned through His doctrines, laws and principles, that has convicted and compelled her devotion to God. This all comes down to having a love, a deep *agape* love, for God. I am sure you long-term members can say the same.

May we do all that we can to glorify God in our lives!