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What Does God Desire For Us?

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The question posed in the title is reasonable enough. It is natural for us to wonder what is on the mind of God and what He is thinking for His creation. It may be hard for us, well ... no, it is impossible for us to fully understand all that God knows and has in His mind. Jehovah God spoke, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”** (Isaiah 55:8-9) That makes it very plain—God is on a different level than us. We cannot ‘read the mind’ of God, and yet, we really can know what He wants for mankind. He has never made His will a secret but has revealed His desire for us.

God **“desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”** (1 Timothy 2:4) There it is ... God’s will for us. To know the truth. Truth is our means of salvation and how we come to know God and His will. Truth is why Jesus came to earth ... **“I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”** (John 18:37) Jesus said, **“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”** (John 8:32) Truth is what delivers us to freedom from sins. How can we understand God’s desire for us? To know His truth which will set us free from sin.

Perhaps the next question would be: What are we going to do with the truth? The apostle Paul rejoiced at the response to truth in Rome, **“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”** (Romans 6:17-18) What will you do with truth?

Two Men Attend Worship Services

Bill Hall

Two men attend worship services. The first man attends wholly out of a sense of duty. He understands the teaching of Hebrews 10:25, **“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,”** and is determined to obey faithfully that teaching. He will not allow anything within his power to stand in the way of his attending the worship periods of the church.

The second man recognizes his duty in this matter too, but his primary motivation in attendance is his love for the Lord and his joy in blending his voice and heart with other Christians in praise and adoration to the Lord. He delights in worship and the spiritual strength he derives through worship.

The first man is mentally passive throughout the worship service. If the words of the song happen to catch his attention, he observes and appreciates them. Otherwise, he just sings along with little concern for what he is singing. If the sermon is interesting, he listens. Otherwise, he just relaxes, and hopes the time won’t drag too badly. He does meditate briefly concerning Christ’s suffering and death as he partakes of the supper, for somehow the importance of the memorial feast has been impressed upon his mind.

The second man comes mentally prepared to worship. He pays close attention to the words of each song and makes the sentiment of the songs his own sentiment. In fact, he sometimes studies the words of frequently used songs so he will be sure he understands their meaning. Depth of meaning is of greater importance to him than a catchy tune or rhythmic beat. He listens to each phrase of the prayer that is led, and if he can approve the petitions of the prayer, he unites with the one who leads with his **“Amen.”** He discerns the Lord’s body as he breaks bread, and he listens carefully to the sermon, volunteering his attention, hiding the word in his heart, that he might not sin against God (Psalm 119:11). If his mind

wanders occasionally, he brings it back to the worship. He worships with a consciousness of God as the object of his worship, the One toward whom these expressions of adoration are directed.

The first man reduces his service to a mere code of external rites, while the second man obeys “from the heart,” combining the outward with the inward. The first man is more likely to be satisfied with his service to the Lord, for he has accepted the easier standard, but it is the second man who enjoys God’s approval. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Two men sincerely try to worship. The first man, though, is frustrated throughout. His frustrations begin with the opening announcements when the man in charge takes ten minutes to say what any normal man could say in three. He is hardly over that when the song leader adds to his frustrations, selecting a song he is sure contains an unscriptural phrase. The man who presides at the table doesn’t help when he uses the term “loaf” instead of “bread,” and then the man who is called on to “give thanks for the bread” gives thanks for everything but the bread. The preacher makes a major contribution by totally misapplying a passage of scripture (“He probably didn’t spend enough time on that one,” the man thinks). When the worship period is finally dismissed, he tries to share his frustrations with those around him, but no one seems to care.

The second man observes many of the mistakes the first man observes. In fact, without fanfare he just doesn’t sing the questionable phrase in the song and he silently thanks God for the bread when he realizes the leader’s failure to do so. But while observing mistakes, he focuses attention on the good sentiments of the songs that are used, and on the death of his Savior during the Lord’s Supper. He makes the prayer that is led his own and appreciates the good thoughts presented in the lesson. He has come to worship God. He makes allowances for human frailty on the part of the leaders in worship, appreciates their sincere efforts, and refuses to let their mistakes keep him from his purpose.

The first man is to be pitied. His ability to “worship” is dependent on the ability of the leaders in the worship period, and any half-observant person knows how inept that leadership can be at times. He comes to worship, but spends the hour criticizing. He blames others for that which is really his own problem. Consequently, his problem with worship becomes a problem also with his brethren; but one cannot have a problem with his worship and his brethren without having a problem in his relationship with God.

The second man, by maintaining a positive attitude toward his brethren, even when they make mistakes, is able to worship acceptably and is drawn closer to God by his worship.

In which of these two men do you see a reflection of yourself? The need is obvious! We must cast off our laziness and indifference, revitalize our spirits, and bring ourselves to worship God acceptably. There is a considerable difference between mere attendance of a worship service and truly acceptable worship. I am not condoning sloppily conducted worship periods. Leaders in worship should seek to avoid mistakes and to do their work effectively. But acceptable worship depends far more on the heart and attitude of the worshiper than on the abilities of leaders. Our first man may point the finger of blame at others, but his real need is a total change of attitude within himself.