

Appreciation Usually Involves Training

We tend to appreciate things we've been trained to appreciate. For instance, classical music is not on the list of things I enjoy. I wasn't exposed to it in my formative years, which is really OK with me- I'm really not complaining here. I never learned to play an instrument of any kind. I can play a radio, if it works right and doesn't have too many buttons! So, the complicated chords and rhythms of classical music really don't appeal to me. I can't sing along with it, or whistle, hum, or tap my foot to it. None of which means that I'm unimpressed with the dedication and talent of those who can play it, or that I'm somehow prejudiced against the snobs (just teasing!) who spend countless hours enjoying it. I just haven't been trained, nor have I trained myself, to truly appreciate classical music. Therefore, I don't enjoy it.

If we can understand that simple illustration, perhaps we can see why so many people "get nothing out of" worship services. The probable cause is that they haven't been trained to appreciate them. They were not exposed to them as children, or at least not properly exposed. Even if they were "taken to church" as kids, did their parents demonstrate the attitude of the Psalmist, "*I was glad when they said, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord,'*" [Psalm 122:1](#)? Or was it more like, "Come on Johnny and Suzy we **have to go** to church, and I'm going to tan your hides if you make us late, or misbehave!"? Children learn to appreciate and enjoy what they're taught to appreciate and enjoy. They also often learn to appreciate and enjoy what they see their parents appreciating and enjoying. If assembling with the saints is a "have to" task you participate in only begrudgingly and when it is convenient, it will likely never be anything more for your children. If you "pass the time" in services by watching and playing with babies or on your phone, doing your nails, sighing, sleeping, or constantly going to the restroom or water fountain, services will likely never truly be "worship" for you, or for your children either.

Worship is supposed to be a pleasurable experience. Unfortunately, some who realize this fact, and yet recognize that it isn't so for many folks, have sought to make New Testament worship into something God never intended it to be: entertainment. Instead of teaching and training people to appreciate and enjoy the true worship of God, we've made the services about us. We want it to be more dramatic, so we add drama. We want it to be more fun, so we add entertainment. We want it to be more emotional, so we add elements to stir the emotions. As the old timers might say, "We're chewing on the hind-leg of the problem here!" New Testament "worship" doesn't need propping up with gimmicks and tricks. The problem isn't with the "worship"- it is with the "worshippers" who are more dedicated to themselves than to God, cf. [Philippians 3:18-19](#). When our services are dictated by "what we like" instead of by "what God said" we're on the wrong track! Ask yourself this question: **If our worship innovations are such good ideas, why didn't God think of and provide for them in the New Testament? Did we really think God didn't know how He was best worshipped?** Listen closely to [John 4:23](#), "*...true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers.*"

God never promised to accept anything and everything we give to Him just because we call it "worship." That notion didn't fly under the Old Law (read [Malachi](#)), and it won't work under the New Testament either. We can't do what pleases us and call it "worship." God defines how we should worship Him. Instead of trying to cater to the whims of our carnally-minded selves, why

not learn to appreciate and enjoy: (1) reading and studying God's divine Word together, 1Timothy 4:13-16; (2) singing praises to His great name with emotion and understanding, Colossians 3:16; (3) blending our hearts together in earnest prayer and petition to the Almighty who loves us, 1Timothy 2:1-8; (4) generously and thankfully returning a portion of that with which He has blessed us to Him, 1Corinthians 16:1-2; 2Corinthians 9:6-7; and (5) commemorating the blessed and holy sacrifice of Jesus Christ by partaking the emblems that represent His precious body and blood, 1Corinthians 11:23-34? We can do all of these things in a spirit of true appreciation, deep emotion, and glorious praise if we try. And we can enjoy participating in them if we train ourselves to appreciate doing things God's way. *"Therefore do not be partakers with them; you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord,"* Ephesians 5:7-10. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)