

Spontaneous Worship

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True worship must come from the heart, as our Savior said – “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Merely going through the motions in rote ritualism is not acceptable worship to God. However, in reacting against such cold formalism, many have gone to the opposite extreme. Being spontaneous is all the rage nowadays. People turn their emotions loose to do whatever strikes their fancy at the moment, assuming all the while that they are being spiritual and that God is pleased with it.

Spirituality, as presented in the Bible, has nothing whatsoever to do with putting your brain in neutral and just doing whatever feels right. Simply being spontaneous doesn’t make anything either right or wrong; but spontaneous acts of worship, ungoverned by sound reasoning from the Scriptures, can be sinful. Consider two examples:

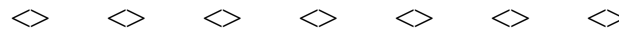
Two sons of Aaron, Israel’s first High Priest, offered spontaneous worship. It was an exciting time! The new priesthood had just been consecrated (Leviticus 8). Aaron had offered various sacrifices and had blessed the people. God showed His approval as “*fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces*” (Leviticus 9:24).

At this point, Aaron’s two sons, Nadab and Abihu, burned an incense offering to God. This appears to have been neither the morning nor evening incense offering specified in the Law of Moses. Rather, it was an additional, spontaneous act. Had the two priests made this extra offering in the prescribed manner, using fire from the altar of burnt offering, it might have been accepted. However, they “*offered profane (common) fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So*

fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:1, 2).

The apostle John also offered spontaneous worship – twice – to an angel! (See Revelation 19:10 & 22:8.) John had seen and heard some phenomenal things. We understand how he was temporarily overawed and “*fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things*” (22:8). Still, in both cases, John was commanded: “*See that you do not do that! . . . Worship God*” (19:10; 22:9). John knew better than to worship angels; but, in a highly emotion-charged state, he did so without thinking it through clearly.

Let us not allow our worship to degenerate into cold, dead formalism. At the same time, let us resist the trend toward raw emotionalism under the guise of spirituality. Let us worship God truly, from the heart, always being guided by God’s word, which is truth.



Glimpse From The Past

This seems a cheerful world, Donatus, when I view it from this fair garden, under the shadow of these vines. But if I climbed some great mountain and looked out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see – brigands on the high roads, pirates on the seas; in the amphitheatres men murdered to please applauding crowds; under all roofs misery and selfishness. It is really a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world.

Yet in the midst of it I have found a quiet and holy people. They have discovered a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasures of this sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are the Christians – and I am one of them.

--Cyprian (200-258 AD)

Getting Ready for Sunday

Here are seven suggestions to consider doing on Saturday, to get ready for Sunday.

1. Go to bed early on Saturday night. Get plenty of rest. Sleepiness is not conducive to spirituality. Don’t tire yourself so much the day before the Lord’s Day, that you can’t worship properly.
2. Set yourself up for success. Ask what truths you’ll hear that will make a difference in your life in Christ and service to God.
3. Seek out someone who is spiritually needy. Ask the Lord to show you a person who you can be a friend to.
4. Invite someone to go with you to the assembly. Explain to them ahead of time what to expect. Tell them what advantages come from participation.
5. Read your Bible and pray on Saturday. And the day before. And the day before that. People who seek God during the week can best praise him on Sunday.
6. Leave self at the door before entering the building, auditorium, or room where the church meets. Put God – his character, his works, his will, his purpose, his goodness – squarely in the center of your focus.
7. Edify and be edified. Give and learn to receive. Show yourself friendly, and gain friends. Draw near to the Lord, and he will draw near to you. Learn and practice the principle of reciprocity.