

“Plop, Pray, and Pay”

David Halbrook

A blogger named Thom Schultz describes what bothers and bores some people about public worship—they view it simply as a time to “plop, pray, and pay.” Why this view?

The Bible is not that person’s guide When Jesus was asked about public worship, He taught that the Father “is seeking” true worshipers---people who sincerely worship God the right way (Jn. 4:23-24). This true worship produces true joy and strength, not a feeling of “plop, pray, and pay.”

Or, the Bible is not the guide of that person’s church Sometimes this view of worship is the result of man-made doctrines being added to God’s ways. People hear a demand for “tithes” but read Paul simply say to “give as he purposes in his heart” (2 Cor. 9:6; 1 Cor. 16:2). Worshiping according to the demands of man easily produces a “plop, pray, and pay” view because the meaning, joy, and strength God offers is only available by true worship (1 Kg. 12:28-33; Mt. 15:8-9; Col. 2:22-23).

The church of Christ in Quail Valley is seeking to learn and spread only the teaching and tradition given by God in Scripture--the only defense against “plop, pray, and pay.”

Editor’s Note: This week’s article in *Arkansas Weekly* describes an idea attributed to people sometimes called “The Dones,” meaning people who are “done with church,” though they may claim ongoing allegiance to God. As always, people have different reasons for what they do, but the same book offers the solution they need.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Our fall gospel meeting with Donnie Rader is September 13-18.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
church of Christ--Quail Valley

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Sincere Heath Rogers

“That you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:10).

One of Paul’s desires for the Christians in Philippi was that they be sincere. To be sincere is to be without deceit, pretense, or hypocrisy; it is to be truthful, straightforward, and honest.

The English word “sincere” comes from the Latin word *sincerus*, which is actually a compound word: *sine* (“without”) and *caries* (“decay”). Hence, the term literally means “without decay” or “without defilement.”

In Philippians 1:10, the word “sincere” is translated from the Greek word *eilikrines* which means “judged by sunlight, tested as genuine.” W.E. Vine says this Greek word means “unalloyed,” which corresponds perfectly with the Latin term meaning “without defilement.”

Christians are to be genuine and honest people; we are to be transparent and real. Specifically, our love for one another is to be sincere. *“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart”* (1 Pet. 1:22). *“Let love be without hypocrisy...”* (Rom. 12:9).

Our faith is to be sincere. *“Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith”* (1 Tim. 1:5). Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God (Heb. 11:6). The word of God has been designed by God to develop a real and genuine faith in good and honest hearts (Rom. 10:17).

Our service is to be sincere. Twice, Paul told slaves to serve their masters *“in sincerity of heart”* (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22). While we are not slaves, many of us are employees. As the old saying goes, we are to put in an “honest (sincere) day’s work for an honest day’s pay.” The service we render to one another is to be sincere; it must be without ulterior motives and without complaining.

Satan's Blinders Eric Reynolds

If the devil can get someone headed in the wrong direction, I imagine his next move is to insulate that person from any calls to turn back. Some common deceptions that harden us against the truth:

1) "Anyone who criticizes me is a 'hater.'" Instead of hearing what they have to say, I'll just assume they are bitter, jealous, etc.

2) "Those who rebuke me are hypocrites." This dismisses any rebuke because of flaws (real or imagined) in the rebuker.

3) "Admonitions are attacks!" Those who criticize are seen as the enemy, and their words are personal attacks. I must shield myself from their hurtful words (and any truth they might contain).

4) "Only God can judge me." Who do these people think they are, trying to correct me? They should focus on themselves and leave me alone.

5) "True friends are those who support me." I will choose to focus on the opinions of those who agree with me.

If someone adopts these attitudes toward admonitions, they will be impervious to correction. Isn't that exactly what the devil would want? Here are five truths from God regarding criticism (quotations from the ESV):

1) "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy" (Proverbs 27:6). Someone who agrees all the time might not be our friend. A true friend says what we need to hear, even if it hurts.

2) "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). If a criticism is founded in God's word, we should accept it regardless of who the messenger is.

3) "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Just because someone says something we don't want to hear does not make them an enemy. The important question is: are they speaking the truth?

4) "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2Tim.4:2). Preaching the word includes not only encouragement but also reproof and rebukes.

5) "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death" (James 5:19-20). We are our brothers' keeper.

It could be that someone who is criticizing me is indeed just an enemy, attacking me with hateful, false words. But it may also be that the very one I think is my enemy is being a true friend, reaching out with the truth to turn me from heading in the wrong direction. How can I know? By listening to their words and then evaluating myself based on God's word to see if the criticism is valid or not. It may just be that God is using that person to help me.

Faith and Friends

Kyle Campbell

In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar set up an image and commanded the people to worship it. This included three Hebrew worthies: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The three men refused to worship the image, even after being threatened by being thrown into a fiery furnace. They knew he would make good on his promise (Jeremiah 29:22), but they were confident God would deliver them (v. 17). Enraged, Nebuchadnezzar did indeed throw them into the furnace. Interestingly, they had no logical reason to believe that God would deliver them from the fiery furnace; they had no "precedent" to fall back on, and that is true faith (Hebrews 11:1, 34). Acting on one's faith separates true faith from superficial profession. The young men made no excuses when it came to bowing down before the image. Faith can only improve when it is used (1 Peter 1:6-7; Job 27:1-6; 42:1-6). The passage from Peter is especially pertinent considering how far the apostle had come since the days of Jesus (cp. Matthew 8:26; 14:27, 50-52; Luke 22:54-62).

God allowed those men to suffer by being thrown into the fiery furnace, but He did not allow them to go through it alone. If bad friends can hurt (1 Corinthians 15:33), imagine what good friends can do! Good friends are invaluable (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Proverbs 17:17; 27:6, 9-10, 17). Under the Old Law, if a friend enticed someone to leave God and serve idols, they were to be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:6-11). God knew the potential of bad influences! The friends we chose, even when we are older, make a huge difference as to whether we will be faithful or unfaithful. Delilah was a terrible influence on Samson (Judges 16:4-21), but Aquila and Priscilla built one another up (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19). Make sure you choose wisely!

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