



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 2/Issue 17

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

Welcome to Volume 2 of the FBCN Newsletter or the “current new normal” editions.

This week’s reading will be Psalm 93 titled, The LORD Reigns

93 The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.² Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. ³ The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.⁴ Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!

⁵ Your decrees are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore.

This Sunday we will welcome our new Senior Pastor Brandon Myers, his wife Kaiti their daughters Eva and Audrey, and son, Patrick. Pray for the family as they make the transition. Pray that the LORD will anoint him with wisdom and desire to accomplish HIS goals for the First Baptist Church of Niles.

We invite you to Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

One tap mobile

+13126266799

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

Make sure you view the updated prayer list. There are so many needs.

“No, social distancing does not apply to God. We can draw near to Christ. In fact, that’s what I’m yearning to do when I attend a church service. I don’t really want to discuss good ideas. I want to meet God. And, at its best, that’s what Christian liturgy is designed to do.” Mike Frost

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:26 KJV

I recently read this quote and it started me thinking about what our motivation is to attend church. What is the purpose of gathering together to worship? With the Pandemic causing churches to put public gatherings on hold, it seems like a good time to consider why Christians prioritize gathering in the first place. But first a personal story. At a family gathering two millennial male nephews brought up a topic during a conversation after one of their children had participated in their First Communion liturgy. The question they raised was on church attendance because they were not currently attending any church. They brought up the common excuse, Sunday was the only free time that they had, because of work obligations. My response was simple, “You have got to want it! God knows your heart. You are not putting one over on Him by darkening the doors of a church on Sunday morning. If attending is not a priority then don’t go.” Church attendance can not be compared to any other activity in our lives. We have jobs to earn a salary in order to support a standard of living, i.e. food, shelter and clothing. Now we may not enjoy our job, in fact we may even despise going in every day. It may be a daily battle that we fight. But we do it because we need that paycheck. But that’s not how one’s spirituality

works; we are either sold out for Christ or we aren’t.

“We’re seeing among lay people a significant amount of discomfort in going back to formal in-person religious practices,” said Daniel Cox, according to Religion News Service (RNS). Cox is the AEI research fellow who led the study for the Washington D.C.-based think tank. He said, “People are equivocating and uncertain about whether they feel comfortable attending.”

With churches now re-opening under mandated guidelines, some churches are witnessing a decline in the fervency of their congregations. Some members are fearful of returning for safety and health reasons while others are using this opportunity to pull back from areas of ministry where they formerly served. Has a once ardent faith been shaken? In researching the current climate of the church, I came across a new word. The word is “ecclesiophobia,” it is a fear of churches. There are two primary causes, the first being a fear of deities the second being what the church building itself represents.

A recent survey from the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) found that most Americans say they would be uncomfortable attending in-person religious services. The same survey found that the majority (64 %) of the respondents said they would feel either “somewhat uncomfortable” or “very uncomfortable” attending religious services in person right now. In contrast, 36 % said they would feel either “very comfortable” or “somewhat comfortable” doing so.

Aside from the statistics and our own personal reasons the underlying unknown is how is this affecting personal worship? Returning to the opening quote, “No, social distancing does not apply to God. We can draw near to Christ.” Have we, as believers

in Christ, continued drawing near to the Savior? The Pandemic should have not quarantined our worship.

Worship begins in our hearts, not on our lips.

In John 4: 21-24, When Jesus spoke of worship, He was not speaking of congregational worship, but rather of eternal life as a state of worship. The “true worshipers” are those who have eternal life. The believer in Christ who is born of the Spirit, recognizing Jesus as the Truth and the true way to the true God is in a state of worship before God. “*Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ 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. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

We learn three points from this passage. The first being that Jesus reveals a dispensational change in the mode of worship. “The time is coming and is even now when the true worshiper’s worship in [their human] spirit and in truth.” This is more than having the “right attitude” before God. Jesus indicated that the time had come when there would no longer be any special “place” or “time” for worship. Since God is a Spirit and is omnipresent (and He was about to pour His Spirit upon all believers), He can be worshiped anywhere and anytime.

Second, worship is not a matter of outward action but a devotional time between our spirit and God. We worship from our spirits.

Third, to worship in truth can refer to sincerity or doctrinal truth. The Pharisees had replaced God's truth with tradition and at the same time were insincere in their worship. One commentator has suggested that Jesus' statement "to worship in spirit and in truth" was a rebuke to both Jews and Samaritans. Jesus emphasized the spirit to the Jews whose worship was outward, and He stressed the truth to the Samaritans who did not know whom or what they worshiped. To worship in spirit and in truth means to sincerely worship the true God through Jesus Christ from our inner beings.

What we see is that worship begins individually and only when we fully comprehend the 'state of worship,' which is that all believers are to be in a perpetual state of worship of God. That our 'attitude of worship' is to be that we worship God with our life and seek to glorify Him in all we do. And finally, this is reflected in our 'practice of worship.' Worship cannot be separated from service. Everything we do ought to be for God's glory, and this is true worship. This can be done in our service, devotion, giving, acts of concern for others' well-being and everyday lives. "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Romans 14:8.

So how should we come before our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ? Take a look at the following quote:

"Humility and reverence should characterize the behavior of all who

come into the presence of God. In the name of Jesus we may come before Him with confidence, but we must not approach Him with boldness of presumption, as though He were on a level with ourselves. There are those who address the great and all-powerful and holy God, who dwells in light unapproachable, as they would address an equal, or even an inferior. There are those who conduct themselves in His house as they would not presume to do in the audience chamber of an earthly ruler. These should remember that they are in His sight whom seraphim adore, before whom angels veil their faces. God is greatly to be revered; all who truly realize His presence will bow in humility before Him and like Jacob beholding the vision of God, they will cry out, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven." (E.White, Patriarchs and Prophets)

It is only when we truly understand worship that we can truly worship God with our lives and seek to glorify Him in all we do that we can understand the importance of joining together with other believers. Because in practice worship is a lifestyle of brokenness before God. Just as He presented Himself a dying sacrifice for us, we are to present ourselves as living sacrifices for Him, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1,2. Worship "cannot" be separated from service. Everything we do ought to be for God's glory, and that is true worship. This can be done by our service, devotion, giving "I have received full payment, and more.

I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." Philippians 4:18. Our acts of concern for others' well-being and our everyday lives. "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Romans 14:8

"A lot of churches today would feel more at home in a movie house, rather than in a house of prayer. More afraid of Holy living than of sinning. Knowing more about money than magnifying Christ in our bodies. It is so compromised, that Holiness and living a sin free life is heresy to the modern church. The modern church is, quite simply, just the world, with a Christian T-shirt on!" Nicky Cruz

Is there a right or wrong way to worship God in Church? Many Christians believe that you can worship God any way you like. But is this Biblical? "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." John 4:23

So from that verse we can know that there is a true way to worship Him. And if there is a true way to worship God, then there must also be a false (wrong) way to worship. Understanding the necessity of individually preparing for worship is radically different than expecting our worship to be generated for us when we get there. Further, we sing as an act of worship, not to create it. So how do we prepare? Here is a three point check list:

Internal preparation of heart: It is each of our responsibilities to be prepared prior to venturing out to church. It's the time where we should be reflecting on the state of our spirit and the readiness of our hearts to worship Him. "in spirit and truth."

John 4:24. This begins well in advance of the service. The examining of self should begin as we retire the night prior to our attending a service. Every action, thought, word and deed will have a determinative effect, positively or negatively, on our readiness for worship. A phrase that I heard a long time ago was, "Keeping short accounts with God and men." It means so much more than the five words can express. Rev. Nick Batzig provides the superb definition that follows:

❖ *Confess Your Sins. Believers are people who confess their sin. That is part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. If a man or woman, boy or girl, never confesses their sin, they reveal that they do not believe that they are sinners in need of a Savior. A true believer is one who has learned, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to say, "Will you please forgive me?" This is true in the vertical dimension of our relationship with God, first and foremost; and, it is true in the horizontal relationships we have with others. If we don't confess our sin, we evidence that we are not sincere in our profession of faith in Christ. We must first confess our sins to the Lord. We learn this from Psalm 51, where David prays, "Against You and You only have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4). Even though David had sinned against Uriah, Bathsheba, both of their families, his family and all of Israel, he viewed his sin, first and foremost, as that which he committed against the Lord. It was sin because he broke God's law. We too must first go to the Lord and then to others. When we go to others, but not to the Lord, we functionally act like the man or woman who goes to the priest in the confessional but not to God in heaven.*

❖ *Confess Your Sins Particularly. The Westminster Confession of Faith has an intriguing statement about this in its chapter on repentance, where we read, "Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly" (WCF 15.5). In short, we must never conclude that it is sufficient to confess that we are generally sinners or that we have generally sinned. When we confess our sin to God and men, we are to confess our sins specifically. We are to own the guilt of the particular sins that we have done. We are to examine our actions against the Law of God (i.e. the Ten Commandments) and confess the particular ways in which we have broken His law. My wife and I try to teach our boys to do this when they have sinned against one another. We teach them not to say, "I'm sorry." Instead, we seek to teach them to say, "Will you please forgive me for doing x, y or z." We also try to do so in our marriage. It is good for husbands to ask their wives to forgive them for sinful anger, for lack of gentleness, for lack of understanding, for pride, for laziness, for indifference, etc. Likewise, it is good for a wife to ask her husband to forgive her for all the ways that she has specifically failed to obey the Lord in her relation to him. Likewise, members of the church need to learn to confess particular sins to one another. When one member of the church has sinned against another, he or she needs to go to the offended party and seek out their forgiveness for what they have specifically done wrong. Sadly, this occurs quite infrequently in the family, in marriages and in the church.*

❖ *Confess Your Sins Quickly. One of the sure signs that there is something out of alignment in your soul is that you do not go to the Lord and confess your sins as soon as you recognize that you have sinned against Him. Pride keeps us from uninhibited confession of sin. The same is true with regard to our relation to others. Like the disciples in the Garden, our flesh would rather sleep than engage in the spiritual work of prayer...especially when we have sinned. The Apostle Paul warned believers not to "let the sun go down" on sinful anger, because Satan will most certainly get a foothold in our relationships when we do so. We must learn to confess our sins quickly.*

❖ *Confess Your Sins Continually. We must continually go to God and men in confession and contrition. We must resist the temptation to give into sin and stop confessing it. Confessing and seeking to forsake sin is one of the means of Christian growth in grace. When we stop doing so, we have begun the first step toward backsliding or apostasy. It doesn't matter how many times we may fall into the same sin, we must go back to the Lord and back to those against whom we have sinned in order to seek our forgiveness. The Proverbs tell us, "The righteous falls seven times and rises again" (Prov. 24:16). When Simon Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive his brother seven times, Jesus told him to do so seventy times seven (Matt. 18:22) This means that we should repeatedly confess our sins to God and men--no matter how many times we have sinned.*

❖ *Approach Others When Sinned Against. Part of keeping short accounts with others is going to them when you believe that they have sinned against you. Jesus taught us to do so when he said,*

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother" (Matt. 18:15). It is just as much our responsibility to humbly and forthrightly address what we believe to be the spiritual debt of others to us as it is for them to come to us and confess their sin. This has got to be one of the least practiced, yet most important, parts of the Christian life. In a culture that essentially says, "Live and let live," believers need to learn what it means to go to and lovingly confront a brother or sister when they believe that he or she has personally sinned against them. Often, one believer is oblivious to the fact that he or she has sinned against another. Telling a brother or sister your fault is part of helping them keep short accounts with God and men.

❖ **Forgive Others**

Indiscriminately. We must guard against only forgiving those we like. To do so would be to show affinity not forgiveness. No matter who comes to us and asks us to forgive them, we are to stand ready to extend the forgiveness for which they are coming. We have no right to hold faults over the heads of those who have come to us because we don't like their personality. I have seen some of the roughest of persons come to a place of deep brokenness over their sins--only to hear those they have sinned against criticize them for that roughness. We are not called to only forgive our friends. We are called to forgive any who repent and seek that forgiveness from us.

❖ **Forgive Others Continually.** As noted above, Jesus taught us to forgive and unlimited number of times (i.e. the sense of "seventy

times seven"). We are all ready to write others off when they sin against us a certain number of times. One of my friends often reminds me that most relationships--because of the self-righteousness in our hearts--can only handle one or two offenses. However, when we remember how much God has forgiven us, how can we not repeatedly forgive others. If we set a certain limit on how much we forgive others, we are in danger of having God hold our offenses against us. The parable of the two debtors (Luke 7:36-50) is a frightening indictment against those who do so. This does not mean that there will not be consequences for those who continually sin against another. A husband who continually cheats on his wife is most certainly subject to her executing her God-given right to divorce him. However, she must repeatedly and continually forgive him of his sin if he repents, just as God does for us in Christ.

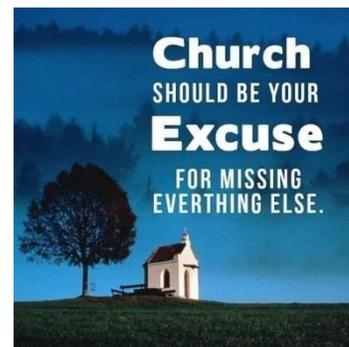
I have witnessed the last three points being ignored the most by Christians who are not heeding to the entirety of scripture. "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-17. This would be a true sin, not just a difference of opinion. It is obvious enough that the whole church would recognize it as a sin. It is far better to go to him and make things right than brood over it and engender hatred toward him. The word "you" makes it personal. This may be done by

injuring one's character, person or property. Personal offenses should be taken care of privately if the offending party is willing to do so. If he is not willing to be reconciled, then two or three more are to be taken along as witnesses (v.16). If he still refuses to repent, then it is to be made public before the church (v. 17).

Pre-service preparation: This is that short period of time between our arrival at church and the beginning of the worship service. How we interact with others reminds us that we are here as part of a body. Intentionally quieting our spirits before the service begins will also enable us to set distractions aside and again focus our corporate attention on God. The time that the opening prelude is played is the time during which we should be emptying our minds of everything that preceded that moment and prepare us for the service.

Post-service continuation: Worship should continue as we leave the service. It can happen in our homes, at our schools and through our work. It can't be contained in a single location, context, culture, style, artistic expression or vehicle of communication. So it doesn't matter how good our worship is when we gather. It is incomplete until it continues when we scatter. Post-service worship then leads us in a continuous circle back to step 1.

As worship should not start when we enter the church building, it should not stop when we leave.





PRAYER LIST

- ✓ Continuing Prayers for loss: All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who continue to lose loved ones due to COVID 19.
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs: Rita McManus, Maria Hatfield, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria, Alex Figueroa
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs: Pastor Brandon Myers, Our Deacons, Financial support.
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries: BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy, Vitel, Ebi and Esther Perinbaraj, Gaetano and Krista Paolino
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs: Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman, George Bizadellis
- ✓ Continuing Prayers for: The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect. Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic especially Mylin and Errol Lardizabal and Liza Mitchell. Erwin Lickmann pray for wisdom regarding future living arrangements for Elizabeth and himself.

Mikaelle (Mikey) at Olivet Nazarene College. The college is experiencing several cases of COVID. Mikey is ok at this time.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family, we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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