

PROVIDING IMMUNITY TO FADS IN WORSHIP

Today our congregations are troubled by preachers eager to sample anything proposed for worship that is new or different. Few members would come up with such ideas on their own. They are led astray by enterprising young preachers determined to make a name for themselves.

There are some churches where the promoters of the change agenda cannot gain a foothold. Their schemes for change are dead on arrival. In such congregations brethren have antibodies that make them immune to the smooth and fair speech of change agents (Rom. 16:18).

Those who receive a steady diet of meaningful Bible instruction are safe from this ailment. Knowing God's will, they can spot error, no matter how lovely it is packaged. They have no appetite for anything contrary to the Master's message for the church. They have been fed the meat of the word in the classes and sermons (Heb. 5:14). It has settled deep in the hearts and minds and they will tolerate no changes to the divine plan.

Those whose worship experience is meaningful and genuine are not interested in the promotions of the change agenda. Where elders and preachers provide rich, spiritually uplifting worship, there is no interest in tricks and performance to give them some emotional exhilaration. They are thrilled as they lift up their voices in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). They thrill as they are led in devout, meaningful and sincere prayers to God. They are deeply touched when they commune in memory of the death of their beloved Savior (Matt. 26:26-29). They rejoice at the privilege to give their gifts to the Provider of every good and perfect gift. They feast on well-prepared lessons, spoken with enthusiasm, love and concern. The gimmicks of the promoters of change seem foolish to them. Such things profane the holy worship they already enjoy.

Those who enjoy in a close walk with God have no interest in artificial stimulates offered by the peddlers of change. This walk is pursued when they leave the worship assembly to live their daily lives (I John 1:7). It is presenting oneself to God as a spiritual sacrifice seven day of the week (Rom. 12:1). Those brethren who live sober, righteous and godly lives laced with prayer and devotion have the deep, meaningful relationship with the Father that satisfies their souls.

Those who are actively involved in meaningful Christian service have no need for entertainment when they come to worship. Having experienced pure and undefiled religion in ministering to widows and orphans and in keeping themselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27), they know unspeakable joy in Christ. They do good to all men, especially fellow-Christians (Gal.6:10). They are abound in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). The charades of the change agents seems like silly child's play to them.

Those who are actively engaged in seeking and saving the lost do not need the assistance of performers in order to rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). No greater thrill or satisfaction can be known than leading a lost soul to the Master. It is much like the birth of one's child. To have witnessed the power of God and his gospel (Rom. 1:16), in transforming sinners into saints, changing those who formerly were like lions, but in Christ are like lambs, puts all the show time stuff in the shadows.

While a few disciples might be able to find these blessings by their own initiative, most will need the guidance and leadership of godly preachers and elders, who like good shepherds lead them to the green pastures. Now is the time to take inventory and determine the spiritual status of your flock. You cannot afford to wait until the agents of change appear in your midst. Sheep will follow their shepherds, but the shepherds must lead the way. JHW