

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

BENEFICIAL VERSUS HARMFUL “DECONSTRUCTION” – FIVE DIFFERENCES

By Gardner Hall

“Deconstruction” is a big issue in the Evangelical world as millions leave the religion of their parents to become unbelievers or at least to take on a radically different form of faith.

A beneficial form of “deconstruction” is inherent in the concept of restoration. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to “deconstruct” their false system of faith and replace it with His true system (Matt. 23:23). Hezekiah and Josiah wanted Judah to deconstruct their idolatry to follow God (2 Chron. 29, 30, 34, 35). However, many types of “deconstruction” are obviously harmful.

What is the difference between the beneficial and the harmful?

1. The beneficial comes from a careful study of God’s word. The harmful comes from ingesting heavy doses of worldly wisdom and faddish worldly philosophy.
2. The beneficial is motivated by a deep and sacrificial love of God. The harmful is motivated by rebellion or resentment against those who are perceived to be “too strict” or traditional.
3. The beneficial is careful to retain whatever truth may have been in the “old religion.” The harmful has a “throw-out-the-baby-with-the-bathwater” mentality. An example – A sincere young person may discard the sarcastic, belittling style that some brethren have in dealing with those with homosexual tendencies, even as he accepts the fact that homosexuality is sinful. A harmful “deconstructionist” will try to find a way to justify homosexuality in spite of the scriptures.
4. The beneficial “deconstructionist” is careful to avoid the carnality that increasingly dominates the world. The harmful almost always rationalizes carnal practice and often makes fun of those who are careful in their dress and entertainment choices.
5. Beneficial deconstruction brings one closer to God. God’s word still reigns supreme. Although the harmful deconstructionist may claim loudly to feel closer to God, the truth of the matter is that he is increasingly distant from Biblical principles. Feelings triumph over the Word.

Sometimes traditional brethren criticize those who are beneficially “deconstructing” harmful human traditions to “reconstruct” themselves closer to God’s pattern. However, beneficial deconstructionists aren’t the enemy. We need to be careful to distinguish between them and those who are harmful. ■

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

Chuck Pearson

There seems to be a movement in the Lord’s church today to make worship more “meaningful.” I recently spoke with a preacher for one of the congregations here in Abilene who said that he would “stand on his head” or do anything else (in the area of theatrics, I suppose!) in order to make worship more “meaningful” for members of the church. I wonder, brethren, is this the attitude which we should have? Can we really make worship more meaningful than what God has authorized in the New Testament?

In John 4:23-24, we are told we are to ***“worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him”*** (v.23). Furthermore, we are told that we ***“must worship him in spirit and in truth”*** (v.24). Notice the elements for proper worship: ***“spirit”*** and ***“truth.”***

To worship in *spirit* means that we must have the right attitude in worshiping the Father. God does not want our worship to be vain or insincere. Spiritual worship is that which is done from a pure heart, and in accordance with God’s will (this is not to be confused with emotion. Just because worship “feels good” doesn’t mean it’s spiritual)!

To worship in *truth* means we must worship in a manner that is pleasing to God, doing only the things which he has prescribed! Why is this important? Because we worship a God of truth (John 17:17), a God whom we can know (John 4:22) and whose commandments we can understand (John 8:32).

Is any kind of worship pleasing to God? No, only that which He has authorized! For example, in Leviticus 10, Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, violated the instructions which the Lord had just given to the Israelites regarding the proper way to offer the sacrifice (see Lev. 9). Their intentions may very well have been good! Perhaps they wanted to make the worship more “meaningful.” But it didn’t matter. God had told them what to do in order to offer the sacrifice in a manner pleasing to him. Instead, they ***“offered strange (or unauthorized) fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not”*** (v.1). Did God say they could not offer ***“strange fire?”*** No, rather he had clearly dictated how the offering was to be done. Anything more or less than that was unauthorized and unacceptable! What happened to Nadab and Abihu on account of their innovation? ***“And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord”*** (v.2).

We see then that right worship (according to God’s prescribed pattern) is expected and demanded from God for all who would strive to honor him (today, that means Christians, by means of the commandments for worship given in the New Testament)!

“Meaningful” worship is worship done according to God’s will! There is nothing we have to do (either in adding to or taking away from) in order to improve worship. If worship is somehow boring or uninteresting to us then perhaps it’s us who need to change, not our methods for worshiping God! It’s up to us to find meaning in simple, God-authorized, New Testament worship! It’s not difficult: we worship through prayers, taking the Lord’s supper, giving of our means (contributing), singing, and hearing the word preached. How can this be made more meaningful?

Worship is not for our entertainment, or amusement. It’s commanded by God (Heb. 10:25) and designed for our edification (1 Cor. 14:26). We are made in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). He knows what our needs are (Matt. 6:32). This includes worshiping him! Rather than try to conform worship to our tastes, let us conform our hearts to God’s divine will (Rom. 12:2)! ■

“Those who abuse liberty when they possess it would abuse power could they obtain it.” —Thomas Paine, To The Citizens of the United States, 1802

“It would not only be wrong, but bad policy, to attempt by force what ought to be accomplished by reason.” —Thomas Paine, Rights of Man, II, 1792

“How many observe Christ’s birthday! How few, His precepts! O! ‘tis easier to keep holidays than commandments.” —Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard’s Almanack, c. 1732

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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