

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Why Are You Here?

By Kyle Campbell

Why are you here? Have you ever really stopped to think about it? You decided to get up on a Sunday morning, change into your nicer clothes, and sit from one to two hours in a different looking building among people you only see a couple of times a week. All of this and it's your day off as well (for most anyway). Why are you here? The answer to this question is so important that it may very well indicate where you will spend eternity after this life is over. Could there be any more important question? Consider four possible answers:

“My wife or husband will be upset if I don't come.” If that's your answer we're glad that you're here but it says a lot. Does this mean that you feel you don't need to be here (other than for your spouse)? Or do you feel the Lord isn't concerned one way or the other? Perhaps you're not concerned how the Lord feels, one way or the other. Is this what the Lord wants from those who worship Him? Just a warm body filling up a space on the pew? Jesus said, **“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”** (John 4:24). Just being here doesn't “count” if you refuse to worship God in spirit.

“My parents make me come.” Many stop attending as soon as they have the choice. Young people, there are many things your parents make you do. Such things as going to school, doing your homework, practicing cleanliness, and brushing your teeth. Which of these will you stop doing once you have the choice? Do you really think you'll regret having a good education? How much more important are the spiritual values your parents are trying to instill in you? The Lord uses young hands and feet in His service as well as older hands and feet. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, **“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”** The wisest man in the world said that we should **“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no delight in them’”** (Eccl. 12:1). Be busy in the Lord's work. You can make a difference.

“I'm here because God said I have to come.” In many respects this isn't a bad reason at all. We often do things just because God said so, even when we don't understand why. But what often accompanies this kind of reasoning is an attitude of doing only what I have to do. In other words, it isn't, “God, how much can I do?” It's, “God, how little can I do and still get by?” Many seem to think that as long as they partake of the Lord's Supper they've met their “minimum weekly requirements” and are free to go wherever they please the rest of the week. Typically these members never teach a class, visit the sick, talk to their neighbors about the Lord, or offer much encouragement in the work of the church. Why? They aren't here! God requires worship for a reason. He said through the apostle Paul, **“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near”** (Heb. 10:24-25). Do you think God wants those who only go through a ritual of service to Him? Does God want children whose main claim to being His child is that they're there for the Lord's Supper? Here's what God said to the children of Israel when they only “went through the motions” of worship to Him thinking that was all He wanted: **“I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps”** (Amos 5:21-23). Serve God out of love from a pure heart.

“I'm here because I love the Lord.” I'm here because I'm a sinner and need a Savior. I'm here because of all the Lord has done for me. I'm here because I love my brethren and enjoy being together. I'm here because I like to worship God. I'm here because I need to be here! I need my brethren praying with me and for me. It lifts me

up to sing praises to God. The Lord's Supper is so much more than juice and bread. It's a communion together of the body and blood of our Lord and Savior. God's Word should be sweeter than honey to us. Therefore we enjoy studying from God's Book. And our Lord has blessed us in so many physical ways. Isn't it a blessing to be able to give back to Him? Then when it's time to leave, don't you feel better prepared to face the world? Perhaps our worship together helps to "disarm" Satan somewhat as we go about the rest of our week.

Be glad for the privilege of worship. Come because you love the Lord. Truly our God is the Most High, deserving all honor, glory, and worship. ***"I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies"*** (2 Sam. 22:4).

Now, why are you here? ■



Value & Conduct

By Steven F. Deaton

When we pay a lot for something, we have high expectations, whether it is a car, computer, house, tool, animal, etc. If it fails to perform the job we desire, we become upset, even angry at times.

Christians have been purchased at a high price, the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 7:23; Acts 20:28). As such, they are valuable and a certain level of "performance," or conduct, is expected of them (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Not all are required to produce a ***"hundredfold,"*** but all are expected to live up to their potential (Matt. 13:23; 25:14-30).

Christian, are you conducting yourself in a way that reflects the price paid for you? Do you resist temptation (James 4:7)? When you sin, are you remorseful and repentant (2 Cor. 7:10)? Are you searching the scriptures and growing in faith (Acts 17:11; 2 Peter 3:18)? Have you tried to reach the lost (Luke 19:10)? ■



Seed and Soil

By Jim R. Everett

The productivity of seed is directly proportionate to the fertility of soil. It matters not how good the seed is, if it is planted in bad soil; either it will not germinate or, having germinated, it will produce a sickly plant. So it is with the word of God and human hearts.

In the parable of ***"The Sower,"*** stress is laid, not on the power of the seed, but, on the kind of soil in which it is sown. Four kinds of soil are mentioned in which the seed is sown - the wayside, rocky places, soil in which thorns are abundant, and good soil (Luke 8:1-15; Matt. 13:1-23). Each of these represents four different kinds of human hearts, while the seed is called ***"the word of God"*** (Luke 8:11).

The deficiencies of the first three kinds of soil do not, in any way, cast reflection upon the power of the seed to produce life. The problem is in the soil and not in the seed. Neither should men speak of the word of God as powerless to convert men - the potential to produce new life and to change men is found in the word of God (see Rom. 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). So why doesn't it always bring forth an abundant harvest? - because the soil, the human heart, is not receptive or it is encumbered with the cares of the world. So, let's not blame God for our lack of productivity - the kind of soil we are has been our choice.

What are the ingredients of fertile soil? Jesus defines it thusly: ***"... they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience"*** (Luke 8:15). I believe there are still human beings with good hearts that want the word of God. Is your soil good? ■

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

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