

Celebrating God at Church, Part 4 | the consequences of celebration

I. The Blessings of Celebrating God at Church

- **We will grow in our knowledge and understanding of God.**
- **We will grow in our love of God.**
- **We will live wisely in this world by being salt and light to those in darkness.**
- **We will build each other up in truth and love.**
- Now, it's unfortunate that there's a subjectivity to all of this. People who participate in cults and false religions would readily say that they're growing in the love of their deity as well as knowing and understanding him better.
 - And — no doubt — the most ardent of them will be living accordingly. They may offer daily sacrifices, they may proselytize, and they may even blow themselves up as an act of worship to their false god.
 - But that doesn't mean they're accomplishing anything outside of their own power and for their own glory.
 - So, how can we know we're receiving the genuine blessings of truly worshipping God at church? Well, in order to answer that question, I want to focus on the last two.
 - It's very hard to know whether we're really growing in our love for God or simply our love of loving religious practices.
 - It's very hard to know if our knowledge and understanding of God is penetrating deeper than simply an accumulation of facts.
 - Therefore, just like genuine love for mankind cannot exist outside of genuine love for God, we're going to use the application of our love for God to judge the strength of our love for God.
 - The means we need to look at our involvement in evangelism and corporate sanctification.

II. How to Know If You're Experiencing the Consequences of Celebration

- **You'll Participate in Biblical Evangelism**
 - Other than entering into a relationship with God, the second most beautiful thing in the world is to introduce someone else to God and have them too enter into a relationship with Him.
 - In nearly every single letter from Paul, he starts with a gushing reminder of the fact that very little brings him more joy than to know those people are children of God.
 - The only reason God doesn't immediately take us home following our conversion is that He wants us to participate in the glorious commission that is going into all the world, preaching the gospel, and making disciples in every land.
 - If we are born again, then we must never forget that we were nothing more than wicked, God-hating sinners. But He loved us, and for no other reason than He is good, He sent His son to redeem us.
 - That reality should have us all shouting His praises from the rooftops. We should all have blogs. We should all have podcasts. We should all be starting churches so that other people can come to know our Lord!
 - God wants to use the pastor to equip you to understand how to introduce others to Christ.
 - But even though it's not hard to share Christ, and even though we're surrounded by hundreds of unbelieving neighbors and classmates and coworkers, and even though it's nearly impossible to not have opportunities to evangelize, so many professing Christians never think to talk to other people about the God that supposedly changed their lives.

- That's one huge blessing of participating in the right kind of church for the glory of God — you'll be actively engaged in evangelism.
- You may have been hoping that the consequences of assembling with God's people would be that you would feel better or live better or become wealthier or healthier, but that's not true. Sure, you may feel better, but our emotions are not the arbiter of what pleases the Lord.
- And, generally speaking, if by "live better" we mean being conformed to the image of Christ, then, yes, that will happen.
- But being conformed to the image of Christ will result in us living like Him. He came to this earth in submission to the Father in order to do whatever it would take to bring people to God . . . even though it would require His death.
- That's the consequence of attending a good church.
- **You'll Participate in Biblical Discipleship**
 - Corporate Sanctification is a short way of talking about the process that God wants all of us to play in each other becoming more like Christ.
 - God wants me to work out my own salvation in fear and trembling, but He also wants you to participate in the process of me working out my salvation in fear and trembling. In fact, to be honest, I *need* the body of Christ in order to mature as quickly and as well as I should.
 - There's no such thing as a maverick Christian — no lone rangers. No castaway Christians.
 - You need other believers if you want to be transformed into the image of Christ.
 - Ephesians 4:11-16 — Here's what God has in store for you as you assemble and participate with a Christ-Honoring body of believers.
 - Pastor/Teachers are God's gift to us so that we may be equipped to do what the church has been called to do.
 - But they've also been called to build "*up the body of Christ.*"
 - The Greek word translated "*build up*" refers to the precision and efficiency of a skilled architect. When we listen to the preaching of God's word and participate in the application of it to our lives, God will use it to make the body of Christ bigger and stronger. He will use it to mature *you* in that process.
 - Do you want to really, truly, genuinely, be mature? Paul tells us that the purpose is for us to be as mature as the fullness of Christ Himself.
 - God doesn't want you and your kids to be thrown around by the conflicting and destructive failure philosophies that so easily invade our homes and our hearts.
 - The lies of Satan produce doubts and dash our hopes on the rocks of errant worldviews. And the world is doing this on purpose.
 - And God wants to use His church to disrupt that plan.
 - God wants to use His church — and if you are a born-again follower of Christ, then you are part of that church — He wants to use the church to train us to speak the Truth in love.
 - He wants to help us grow and be better connected with Jesus Christ — the Head of the body. It's Christ who nourishes us, and since sickness in the body can hinder the brain from communicating with the rest of the body, God wants to make us healthy and strong so that connection with Christ can flourish in every joint.
 - And God wants to use the church to help each you work properly so that you and your local body of believers can all participate in the grand and glorious goal of flourishing in the body of Christ.