

engaging experience in town? You see, I thought our goal was to please our Heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 5:9). While experiences have no boundaries, our Heavenly Father does, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace...all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). The question isn't, "What experience can we offer to keep people here?" The question is, "What can we do to communicate our praise to the Father in a way that is well-pleasing to Him?"

An experience validates.

Experience driven churches leave their members feeling validated and justified. The crowds interpret their good feelings as an indication, from God, they're doing alright. A person can go out on Saturday night, drinking and fornicating, but if they have a good "worship experience" on Sunday morning, they feel as if God has stamped His approval on them, saying, "You're still in my grace. You have nothing to worry about." However, this is what His word says: "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:3-6). The test for being in Christ has nothing to do with feelings or a good experience in worship. The test has to do with faithfulness, doing our absolute best to keep His commandments and walk as He walked.

Should We Become an Experience Driven Church?

I'm not advocating an emotionless, stoic, spiritual existence. I'm not saying that there is no experience to be had in New Testament worship. What I am saying is that we cannot be experience driven. We must be driven to please God. In pleasing God, we will have a substantive experience, rather than a shallow emotional experience. Pleasing God is experienced by faith, rather than by a physical or emotional experience. I cannot yet see God's smile when I please Him. I cannot yet hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I cannot yet feel His loving hand upon me, patting me on the back. But, by faith I have an assurance and conviction of the things I cannot experience with my flesh (Hebrews 11:1). I will not put my confidence in the experiences of the flesh. Nor will I encourage others to do so, by promoting an experience driven religion. Instead, I will teach and preach the religion of Scripture; the religion of faith in Jesus Christ, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

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Edifier

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Attending church services regularly is like making a path through the forest: the more often you use it, the less obstruction you find in the way."

Sunday Worship:

Will Vann, Preacher

9:30 am Bible Study

863-899-0987

10:20 am Worship

Email: wvann@yahoo.com

12:30 pm Afternoon

www.evantchurchofchrist.org

Wednesday Night

7:pm

Experience Driven Church

I stumbled across a blog post entitled, "Why are Churches of Christ Shrinking?" The author's premise is that congregations of the church of Christ are shrinking because they fail to recognize our shift in culture. "Younger generations," he says, "come into our worship services looking for an experience. And what do they get? A lecture. Information." The author claims the churches of Christ will lose many of our 18-35 year olds if we don't adopt, what I call an, "Experience Driven Church" model.

As a member of the church of Christ, and one who falls into the 18-35 year old group, I have something to say about this. First, to a certain extent, I agree with him. After all, we live in a culture which is experience driven. People value experiences. Theme parks, rock concerts, movie theaters, etc. all capitalize on our experience driven culture. All reports indicate that our economy is in a poor state, yet you wouldn't know it by looking at ticket sales. People will still line up around the block and fork over unbelievably large sums of money for an experience. Is it any wonder that this experience driven culture is looking for an experience driven church? It is inevitable that those religious groups, willing to offer a tailored experience, will grow numerically in our current experience driven climate. Here are some things about emotional experiences which appeal to the masses:

An experience does not challenge.

It does not force you to alter your thinking, your life, or your behavior. An experience simply makes you feel; while asking nothing in return. There were certainly experiences in Scripture, and the crowds loved them! The Israelites miraculously crossed the Red Sea; that would be quite the experience, wouldn't you say? After the crossing, they sang, they danced, and they played the tambourine (Exodus 15:1-21). But, just a few short verses later, (when life brought challenges) the same crowd was dissatisfied (Exodus 15:24). When Jesus fed the five thousand, healed the sick, and raised the dead, people flocked to Him. But, when Jesus challenged them, the experience driven followers left (John 6:66). The only ones who stayed, were those who knew He had the "words of eternal life" (John 6:68). In other words, those who stayed were those who were motivated by faith.

2. An Experience has no boundaries.

The aforementioned blog post encourages churches of Christ to incorporate mood lighting, video, music, body movement, and social media into the worship experience. I'm sure he's right, this kind of experience will draw a crowd. But, here's something to consider, experience driven churches will never be able to keep up with others in their experience driven industry. MTV and Disney will always have more money and will be able to provide a more engaging experience. Those are the kinds of groups with whom these experience driven churches are trying to compete. They will always struggle, because people will always want brighter, faster, and more exciting experiences. After all, an experience has no boundaries. But, when did our goal become to provide the most

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Those to Serve

(B) Calvin Burks FV) Jeffrey Burks

(O) Doug Pruett (A) Kyle Stifflemire

1st prayer Mike Mallett 2nd prayer Vernon Houts

Announcements: Keith Stifflemire Singing: Judd Wall

Prayer List: Naomi Wall , Mildred Lovell , Gene Payne, Lloyd Crownover, Ruby Jones, Pray for our nation, our Troops and Law Enforcement

Ephesians 6:1-4 (KJV)

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:18-22 (KJV)

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

**Thanks to
Will & Autumn for having the
fellowship at their home.**



To

Jana Wall May 18th

Cassidy Stapp June 2nd

Loyd Crownover June 5th

Jeret Burks June 7th

Warren Miller 15th

Naomi Wall June 23rd

Dates to Remember

May 29th

Noon Fellowship Meal

May 30th

Memorial Day

June 14th

Flag Day