**Why do we do that? By Thailer Jimerson**

Sometimes, whether I’m speaking to those with considerable background in the Church of Christ, those new to our tradition, or even those without, I get a confused look and a question that sounds something like “Why do you guys do the things you do?”, by which they usually mean, why do we worship in the way we do and have quirky opinions about the use of our church money, and why are we so conservative about how we use the building.

These are really good questions and though I plan on addressing these topics in considerable detail from the pulpit at a later time, presently I want to address a few issues here in this article. I’m going to address (a) instruments in worship, (b) communion on the first day of the week, and (c) entertainment and the church building.

But before we get to that, I want to provide a brief explanation for why those of you who’ve sat underneath my preaching for a few years seldom hear me address these topics. Even though I have preached on these things before, I don’t handle these topics (which have often to the detriment of the church become pet topics) often, not because I don’t care about how we worship but because this is not the meat to feed a church with. I’ve been to congregations where this is the majority of what they hear. And those congregations are dying. And why should we expect any different, for who can expect a child to thrive off of vitamins? I suggest these pet topics are like vitamins, not meat. When one surveys the sermons we can actually read in the Bible, particularly within the New Testament, we (especially in the Church of Christ) are surprised to find the content of apostolic preaching in the bible to seldom contain these topics. They hardly addressed them at all. It simply wasn’t the meat to feed a church with. So, I do plan on addressing these things, especially as I saturate myself in the study of the topic of worship in general in preparation for a new series and annual theme.

**Musical Instruments**

Almost always the first thing people notice about our worship services is the lack of musical instruments, a praise band or concert setting. While it is my personal conviction that outside of the worship assembly, to restrict one from using an instrument – let’s say, a guitar – to sing songs of the Lord in glory to him (see 1 Corinthians 10.31) would be to unbiblically bind too much, within the worship assembly it is best, and most scriptural, to simply sing.

There are so, so many reasons for this. It would take a book to enumerate them all. Reasons vary from historical, social, and theological factors. One could point to our traditions and how they’ve stemmed, historically, from the Reformation: *“In general, the Reformed tradition’s tendency is to pit a specific ‘biblical’ pattern of worship against the rituals that had accrued in the medieval catholic heritage. Hence, the question of worship is no mere ‘external’ matter over which Christians need not see eye to eye provided that the gospel is proclaimed. Instead, it is a matter of fidelity to the pattern found in the Bible.”* (Mattes, p.120). But we prefer to point to the simplicity of New Testament practice: Ep.5.19, 1Co.14.15, Co.3.16, Ac.16.25.

I realize this is not exhaustive and doesn’t answer all the questions, but suffice it to say for now, it is *not* because we hate music or concerts; instead, it’s because we love singing. Sadly, churches have lost something recently in their effort to modernize to be like any other convocation that provides a concert and a Ted talk to entertain the masses. Many members are content to be mute while they watch professional worshipers sing for them. When you enter these churches, they might have a classical sound, or perhaps a contemporary sound. But the sound of our church is of the people singing.

**Communion On the First Day of the Week**

Some church traditions emphasize eating the Lord’s Supper quarterly, annually, or bi-weekly, while many modern, mega- community churches scarcely partake at all. We take it every Sunday. Why? It’s very simple. The fixture around which New Testament worship was based was the sacrifice of Christ, specifically observed in the wine and unleavened bread. One could argue it was the main thing that separated this worship for any other. You can read about this meal which united disparate people under the common banner of Christ’s sacrifice in these passages: Mt.26.26-29; 1Co.11.17-34; Ac.2.42. But Ac.20.7 gives us a rare glimpse into New Testament worship. There it says the disciples gathered on the first day of the week. Read any commentator and you’ll find this was Sunday. Why was this the first day of the week? Because, according to Jewish reckoning, Saturday was the last day of the week, the Shabbat (or, “sabbath”) and Jews rested on this day in remembrance of God resting after creation. They do so till this day. The reason why Christians began meeting on Sunday instead is that Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath (Saturday) by resting in the tomb after his crucifixion, and then burst forth from the grave in glorious life on Sunday, the first day of the week, symbolically marking a new week, a new start, a new creation. Sunday is resurrection day, always. That’s why Christians met to worship on that day.

Now, we observe the Lord’s Supper that day because they did. And we do it every week, because, in the spirit of Ac.20.7, how many days have a Sunday? Every week. If you study, you’ll find the practice of the early church in the first few centuries following the New Testament era supporting this very tradition. History is on our side.

**Entertainment and the Church Building**

This, as the other topics, can grow very complicated depending on how many strands of information we want to tie in – and I think you’ll only find that our case grows stronger the more facets you consider - but, again, we’ll keep this simple.

Admittedly, it’s hard to make a case that the building can only be used for worship when one wonders how we established authority for purchasing a building in the first place. We don’t see the New Testament church do that. This point is not lost on me. And the rules can get a little confusing. So, let me just make one simple point. Brownsburg is interested in being a light and serving this community in whatever way possible, however, that does not mean Brownsburg is interested in buying into pleasing the American culture of entertainment and confusing the sacred with the secular, confusing pleasing God with pleasing people’s unregenerated appetites. I know that sounds harsh, but we stand by this in love for the truth and for not drowning our distinctions as a body of Christ for gimmicks that will not move a single soul to love Jesus more.

I couldn’t say it better than Alan Hirsch, who actually has experience growing a megachurch: *“If you have to use marketing and the lures of entertainment to attract people, then you will have to keep them there on the [same] principle because that is what people buy in to….Win them with entertainment, and you have to keep them there by entertaining them. For a whole lot of reasons, this commitment seems to get harder year after year. We end up creating a whip for our own backs.”*

This building is a modern convenience so that the saints in Brownsburg can meet together to worship, grow, and stir up one another to love and good works. For those who are non-Christian, we want to be clear: we offer Jesus, nothing more, nothing less.