

The following article is located at:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/tc/2001/005/3.35.html>

## TODAY'S Christian

### **What's Wrong with this Worship Service?**

*The answer surprised me*

by Robert D. Smith

A few years ago, on a business trip, I visited a church near my hotel. Arriving a bit early, I was greeted warmly by the pastor.

Unfortunately, the service was different from what I was used to. The music was not to my taste, and the order of service was unfamiliar.

Why would people have a service like this, I wondered. It really doesn't facilitate worship at all. I wish I'd asked a few people where I should go this morning.

I was relieved they weren't having Communion. No telling what they would do to that.

I really felt drawn to the pastor, which made me even more interested in helping him with his services. As I met him at the door, he gave me my chance.

"Bob, it was great to have you worship with us," he said. "I hope you liked being here as much as we enjoyed having you."

"Your sermon was excellent," I replied. "I'd never seen that application of those verses. It'll help me in at least two relationships."

My voice dropped a bit as I said, "But I have to say I feel a little different about the rest of the service."

"Oh," he said brightly, "what was it you think . . ."

My heart jumped. This was the opening I wanted, to say what I'd prepared during the service. But as he finished, I realized he'd said, "What was it you think the Lord didn't like?"

My heart jumped into my throat. He wanted to know what I thought the Lord didn't like! I was totally unprepared for that question.

I cleared my throat and mumbled. "Well, I don't suppose there was anything the Lord didn't like. I was talking about me, but it really isn't about me, is it?" I offered my hand. He smiled, looking deeply into my eyes, as if he could see into my mind.

"Oh, yes," he said, "there was something in there the Lord didn't like."

I smiled back, relieved. "And what was that?" I asked, expecting him to say he'd forgotten his best joke or something. But he just smiled again and said, "It'll come to you."

Then, "Will we see you tonight? I hope so." With that he turned to the line of people behind me.

### **Reading God's mind**

I spent the day wracking my brain—thinking through every detail I could remember. But I couldn't find a single thing the Lord would've been upset about. The people seemed happy to be there and sincerely worshiping him. The crying baby wouldn't have disturbed him; he loves little children. Not the coughing, surely. Not even the music. I didn't like it, but the Lord . . .well . . .may have. Anyway, the pastor couldn't have meant the music; he probably picked it.

I went to the evening service—not because I expected it to be better, but to ask the pastor again what he meant. I told him how much the question was bothering me and jokingly begged him to tell me.

He had a twinkle in his eye, when he said he guessed I'd just have to pray about it. Then he smiled and said, "Pray about it. The Lord will show you."

I did pray about it that night, and during the next day I thought about it several times. Nothing. Dining alone at the hotel restaurant, I asked the Lord again to show me what he hadn't liked in that service.

### **Right before my eyes**

As I sipped my coffee, God answered my prayer with divine insight. The only thing he'd disliked in that service was my attitude—my critical reaction to the worship—my focus on what I liked, rather than caring, with the pastor, about what pleased God—my holding back in the singing, in the sharing of praise, even in the prayers. My eyes welled up when I remembered that I'd wanted to avoid Communion.

Back in my room, I bowed ashamed before the Lord. I thanked him for the pastor's insight and patience. I begged God's forgiveness.

Most important, I promised him I would, from that moment on, join in wholeheartedly every chance I had to worship him with the Body of Christ—with whatever music they chose, however well they played or sang, whatever their order of service, whether they read their prayers or raised them spontaneously, kneeled or stood, raised their hands or clutched their hymnals, shared their praises and needs aloud or listened quietly, passed a Communion tray or knelt at a rail, took an offering or set a basket at the back. And I'd stop saying how we should do it (I mean, not do it) back home.

Since then, I can say I've never participated in a Christian worship I did not like. And that's a great blessing.

But the real benefits are not in my experience of worship. They're in my new love of the Body, a greater desire to support others in their work for God, and to bear others' burdens. I understand what God wants the Body to be and what he wants me to be in it.

*A [Christian Reader](#) original article.*

Copyright © 2001 by the author or Christianity Today International/*Today's Christian* magazine (formerly *Christian Reader*).

[Click here for reprint information.](#)

September/October 2001, Vol. 39, No. 5, Page 35



[www.ChristianityToday.com](http://www.ChristianityToday.com)

AOL Keyword and CompuServe GO: [ChristianityToday.com](http://ChristianityToday.com)

Copyright © 1994–2006 Christianity Today International